

"Where the Blind Can See"

October 28, 2018

Mark 10: 46-52 - ⁴⁶ Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So, they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." ⁵² "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.



Today we conclude our sermon series, "The Upside-Down Kingdom". I hope you have enjoyed this series and that it has led you to consider your faith, your priorities, and your daily living. For the previous three weeks we have been called to a see others more than ourselves and to live with a servant's heart, seeking opportunities to serve and to help those who the world sees as the least. Today we come to the culmination point - having eyes of faith to see what God places before us. Today we find the story of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar. Jesus begins to work in his life by first removing his physical blindness. As we learn at the end of the story, Bartimaeus then follows Jesus. In this, we hope that Jesus continues to work in his life removing the blindness that many today struggle with – spiritual blindness. Let us pray...

The central character in our passage today is blind Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus has been passed by hundreds and hundreds of times. He has spent his whole life in a world of darkness, relying only on the kindness of those who walk by to toss him a coin or to give him a little food. Bartimaeus is unable to work, unable to provide for himself. He is at the mercy of the people who pass by.

Ironically, Bartimaeus means "son of honor". It is ironic because Bartimaeus would have been shown little honor. He has spent all his life being marginalized, living largely outside of society. He sits by the side of the road, day after day, begging to survive. Day after day, person after person passes him by. Yes, some may give him a little something, but most do not. They simply walk past.



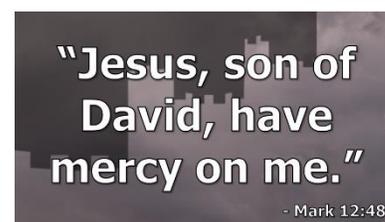
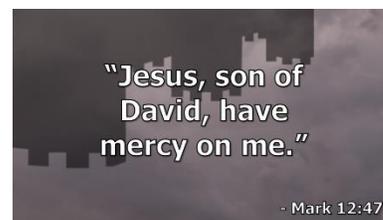
There was probably a time when Bartimaeus was shunned. To the Jews, blindness is the result of sin. We do not know if he has been blind since birth or if he lost his sight later in life. The sin may have been Bartimaeus' sin or it could have been the sin of his parents or grandparents. It did not matter. The connection that the Jews made was that sin caused the blindness. Sin was bad. Therefore, avoid or stay away from Bartimaeus and others who obviously have sin in their lives. By now, though, the one who was shunned is just ignored. He sits by the side of the road, day after day, begging to survive. Day after day, person after person passes him by.

But even the blind can hear and clearly Bartimaeus has heard not only of Jesus and the miracles that He has been performing, but he has also heard that Jesus is in town and may be passing his way. This man that has sat by the roadside, day after day, begging to survive, hopes that Jesus is on the way. Can you imagine what that would have been like for Bartimaeus? *[silence...]*

The silence was okay for a few seconds. It became uncomfortable pretty quickly. Imagine, instead of silence, that it was blindness that you experienced. It is but a very small glimpse into Bartimaeus' daily existence. I get the flu and about one day in I am ready to be done with being sick. Do not come see me when it has been three or four days. It is not pretty. Can you relate? Now, imagine being blind not for a few seconds or even for three or four days - but for years and years. Add to that what it would feel like to be an outcast, to live on the fringes of society, to have people pass you by day after day, first shunning you and then just ignoring you. You may not be able to see them, but you can hear them passing by. You know they are walking right past you. But this day, Jesus is on the way.

As Jesus nears, the noise of the crowd would have been building. Inside of Bartimaeus this must have been matched by a sense of anticipation. Not only that, but hope. Hope that Jesus would do for him what he has heard Jesus has done for others. As the crowd around Jesus moved along the street, drawing nearer to the blind beggar, his excitement must have been climbing too. At the moment when he must have sensed Jesus was near, Bartimaeus shouts out,

"*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*"! Bartimaeus, the son of honor, shows honor to Jesus in how he addresses Him. Acknowledging Jesus' lineage back to King David, Bartimaeus is offering Jesus honor and respect. And suddenly people notice him once again. The crowd tells him to be quiet, to stop shouting. Our passage tells us that they rebuked him. Can you imagine what was said to him? Be quiet, sinner, Jesus has no time for you. Shut up, fool, who would stop to give you the time of day? Silence, beggar, you do not matter. The crowd, the taunts, the insults – they do not matter to Bartimaeus. Jesus is his one hope. So Bartimaeus shouts even louder, "*Son of David, have mercy on me!*"! And then it happened. For once, someone noticed. Jesus hears Bartimaeus, stops, and says, "*Call him!*"



I love, love, love Bartimaeus' response. He does not hesitate. Verse 50 tells us, "*Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus!*". I'd guess sprinted may be a more accurate word. Watch out – blind man coming through! Then Jesus asks him, "*What do you want me to do for you?*"? Do you recognize the question? It is the same question that Jesus asked James and John in our passage last week. But I imagine the look in Jesus eye is not the same as it was when He asked James and John. Yes, it was still a look of love. With the blind beggar, though, there was no 'but'. There is no 'but' because Bartimaeus' motivation is pure and not prideful. He just wants to see. I think Jesus' look was simply a look of love, of compassion, of care, of mercy. Jesus was looking upon a man whose faith had the power to heal the blindness that he had endured for many years. It is the look that Jesus has for us when He reaches

down and pulls us out of that pit we have dug for ourselves. It is the look that Jesus has whenever faith restores another lost or broken child of God to wholeness. It is the look of pure love. The blind man said, "*Rabbi, I want to see*". Jesus responded, "*Go, your faith has made you well*". That's it. Plain and simple. Immediately he received his sight. Bartimaeus' response? He "*followed Jesus along the road*".



You know, God still in business of removing blindness and bringing light to our lives. Here, at this point, we begin to apply the passage to our lives and to the lives of those we know. We have all been blind in our sin. We have all been spiritually where Bartimaeus was physically – blind, lost, alone. Just as it was with the blind beggar, Jesus does not leave us there either. We have all done or said or thought things that should have never been done or said or thought. We all have. But our Jesus does not leave us there, does He? No, no He does not. He looks at us with those eyes of pure love and picks us up out of our sin and leads us to a place of repentance and He washes us with the power of His blood, making us holy and pure once again in God's sight, setting us back on our journey of faith. We have all experienced the power of redemption.

For Bartimaeus, Jesus stopped when He could have kept on walking. You know, Jesus was on an important mission. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. He was leaving Jericho, on the edge of the Judean wilderness, to make the 3,500-foot climb to Jerusalem to die for the sins of the world. Jesus was on a pretty important mission. I am glad that He made that trip to the cross. Are you glad

too? Yet I am also happy that Jesus stopped for Bartimaeus. To me this says that He would stop for me. Jesus would stop for you too.

In our passage, Jesus seems to credit Bartimaeus' faith for making him well, for healing him. It was Bartimaeus' faith that led him to call out and to trust that Jesus could heal him. Faith is the human disposition that leads us all to call out to God and to receive what God has to offer. Grace is the divine hand that extends healing. We cannot miss Bartimaeus' response to the grace and healing that he receives. He is now a disciple, a follower of Jesus. Where Jesus goes, Bartimaeus will follow. Early church tradition indicates that Bartimaeus would continue to follow, becoming a major figure in the early Jerusalem church.

Jesus will still stop for anyone who calls out to Him. As believers, we know Jesus and we can call out to Him in our time of need. Some here at our church, maybe even someone here this morning, need Jesus to reach out and offer grace. For some, it is hard to admit, for others it is hard to ask for help. So, our challenge is to see with eyes of Jesus, to see the hurting and even those struggling with blindness among us. If you need help calling out to Jesus, to connect with our healer, turn in a prayer card, send me a text, call me on Monday. I would be honored to walk alongside you.

There are also those in our community who need healing, but they do not know Jesus. These folks need God to remove their blindness, to bring light into their lives, but they do not know the healer, the source of the light. Here is where we

come in. Our call to “bring people to Christ” should place us in the paths of those who are blind in their sin and who need to come to Jesus Christ. If we are out there looking. It can happen if we are out there seeking the lost, the broken, the hurting. If we are willing to engage. If we do not walk past them like so many did to blind Bartimaeus.

This leads us to the question I ask every now and then. Who are the hurting, the lost, the blind in our community? How do we find them?

At the Reach conference, Pastor Jacob Armstrong shared some practical steps that can lead to our church finding our mission fields. The first step is to pray. But



not just here on Sunday mornings, not just at home in the privacy of our homes. We need to pray out there in our community. This can be walking the streets, it can be outside the places where we know brokenness and hurt exist, it can be at the coffee shop. By walking or riding a bike or driving through the community, praying as we go, we can sometimes hear or discern what is breaking God’s heart.



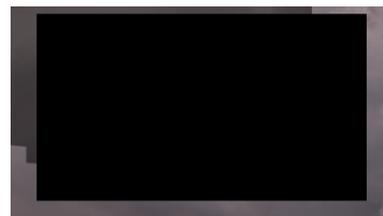
The second step is to have intentional conversations with those who Jacob called “people of peace”. This would be the mayor, the school administrators, the police, people in the justice system, people at the Resource Center, and so on.

It can also be people like Alma Small. She is one I know who is a person of peace. In talking with these folks we can hear the hopes and dreams of our community. By listening to those who serve our community and by listening to those we know as people of peace, we can begin to hear what is breaking hearts in our community.



The third step in this discernment process is to be involved in the community. Last summer our church did that at the Summer Nights event that we hosted. I think we did that Monday night as our MYF ran the concession stand at the country conference basketball games. By being at community events and by talking with those that are there, we can begin to get a pulse for the hurts and the needs in our community. Having intentional conversations and being involved can also include our neighbors, those right next door and just down the street. When we are out there watching, observing, talking, and listening, then we may also find ways that we, as the people of God, can be intentional about building the kingdom of God here on earth.

When we take these intentional steps, we will start to see who is hurting, lost, and blind in our community. If we are intentional, we will find them. To help clue us in to the brokenness and hurt that exists in our world and in every community, please turn your attention to the screens.



Right here, in Winner and in Colome and in the surrounding areas, we have all of the things shown on the first few cards. We have loneliness, fear, shame, racial divides, struggle, separation, and lost people in need of hope. And we have more. Here in this church, we also have all the truths shown on the cards in the second half of the video. Here in this church, as followers of Jesus Christ, we can offer healing for the broken, grace in the face of shame and pain, new life and opportunities to know hope, the power of forgiveness.

I particularly liked the last two cards. They represent my hope and my prayers for our church, for each of you. The card with the man on the left reads, "*My open eyes see... the hurt in the world so I will shine Jesus' love to others*". It is my hope and prayer that we have eyes to see and hearts to feel. In this way, we will be led to offer Jesus' love to others. The card on the right reads, "*My open eyes see... everyone has purpose. Even YOU!*"



Like the blind man, once Jesus touches us, we too can see. With Jesus in our hearts we can see others in a new way. When we see the world as Jesus sees the world, then we become more sensitive to the breaking hearts in our midst and we become more responsive to the needs that exist in our community.

In Luke 4, while teaching in the temple, Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah and read these words from chapter 61: "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the*

oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." As followers of Jesus Christ, we are charged with carrying on His ministry. May we each go forth with the Spirit of the Lord upon us, to share the good news, to free those in bondage to sin, to bring light to the blind, and to proclaim the kingdom of God. May it be so for you and for me. Amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) As Christians, we are ever growing to be more and more like Christ. For you personally, where have you seen growth this past year?
- 2) Where in our community might we find breaking hearts? Go and spend some time in prayer at this location.
- 3) Where and how can you be a "person of peace" this week, bringing God's light and love to another?