

“Blindness and Sight”

Mark 10:46- 52

29 October 2006

the Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

[Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church](#)

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They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Jesus stood still and said, ‘Call him here.’ And they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Take heart; get up, he is calling you.’ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ The blind man said to him, ‘My teacher, let me see again.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your faith has made you well.’ Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Prayer.

“If it would be a snake, it would bite ya,” my mother was fond of saying. “It’s right in front of your eyes,” Cynthia often tells the boys and I, even as we stare blankly into the open refrigerator. With the risk of being politically incorrect, I’d suggest that it might be a guy thing; that the inability to see and recognize objects is somehow gender related. At some point, I’d like to compare notes with you fathers who have all daughters.

There is a difference between seeing and recognizing.

Bartimaeus was physically blind; he could not see with his eyes. Yet, he could recognize Jesus a mile away. He recognized that Jesus was the Son of David; the messianic ancestor of King David, who had been sent by God to save Israel. He recognized that Jesus was a teacher; that he had knowledge and insight. He recognized that Jesus had the power to heal, and that power was driven by his mercy. “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me ... let me see again.”

The similarities between blind Bartimaeus and us today are where the real good, low hanging fruit of today’s lesson are located.

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I've been a disciple of Jesus for all my forty- five years of life, and an ordained parish pastor for twenty- one of those years, yet I've never set my eyes upon the physical Jesus. As far as I can tell his body ascended into heaven and has been seated at the right hand of the Father ever since. His Holy Ghost has been alive and present, but his body has been absent. And I suspect this is true for most others today.

Like Bartimaeus, we can feel his presence. We are aware of his approach. We know who he is; Jesus, Son of God, teacher, Savior, and friend. We know that he has a compassionate heart, a merciful heart, and through Christ's mercy comes the healing touch.

Too often the similarities end there.

Oh, if only we shared the same faith driven enthusiasm of Bartimaeus. Is it because he is blind? Or a beggar? That we don't "lower" ourselves, that we don't stoop down to his level, to learn and follow his example?

Do we have the faith to shout, even though the crowd tells us to be quiet? Even though some of Jesus' closest disciples tell us to be quiet? Or have we become so acculturated that we lose our voice – we accept war as the only alternative, we accept the death penalty as the only response to capital crimes, we tolerate crooks in government, put up with slow moving or bad legislation because it's always been done that way?

Do we have the faith to leap even when we can't see? I love William Sloan Coffin's metaphor for faith: ***Faith is not believing that you can fly. Faith is jumping first, believing that you will then grow wings.*** Bartimaeus throws off his cloak, springs up, and immediately goes to Jesus ... even though he can't see a thing.

Is it possible to act with such gusto, simply knowing that what we are doing is the right thing to do? To stop and help the person in distress, to feed the person who is hungry, to provide clothing for the person whose cloths are worn, to visit the person in prison, even though they may not be lovely or thankful? Is it possible to just be and to do, without calculating the cost, evaluating the risks, or being concerned with the liability?

Do we have the ability, like Bartimaeus, to be completely forthright and honest with Jesus? "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked. "The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again.'"

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“You don't get what you don't ask for.” It is a truism in business, in commerce, in medicine, in just about every area of life. Part of surrendering it all to Jesus is surrendering our meekness, our timidity, our humility when it comes to dealing directly with God.

Look no further than the book of Job for examples of complete and utter honesty when confronting God. If God is great enough to have created the world and all that is in it, then certainly God has big enough shoulders to bear our burden, to receive our anger, to listen and respond to our anguish. Who is it we are attempting to protect? Are we really afraid of being sent to hell by a punitive God? O, Please ...

God loves you so much that He sent Jesus to you; to be the focus of our praise and our anguish; to be the source of forgiveness and healing; to become the font of salvation, that you may no longer fear the depths of hell. Jesus has been sent to you for the purpose of you asking for what you need. God wants you to ask. Jesus wants you to ask. So ask!

“Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your faith has made you well.’” It is not so much the miraculous power of God through Jesus, but it is the substance of faith that does the healing. On this occasion, healing is a cure for his physical blindness. Of course, the power of God could have been worked for Bartimaeus' miracle; but, in this instance, Jesus tells him that it was his faith that made him well.

There is an old saying that I've never believed, and it goes like this: “God never gives us more than we can bear.” I don't believe this, because I've seen enough people in psychiatric crisis and on enough psych wards to know that there are a lot of people for whom life has overwhelmed them. But I have learned something else by working with people suffering from mental health concerns.

This is what I've learned: everyone has been given a measure of faith. It may be as small as a mustard seed; but everyone has all the faith that is necessary for healing and wholeness in life. Bartimaeus had a lot; enough to make him throw off his cloak, jump and run even though he couldn't see. Bartimaeus had a lot to approach Jesus with honesty, and to petition him “let me see again.”

My measure of faith is much smaller than Bartimaeus,' as I suspect most of you are nodding your head in agreement. But, whatever you have, your faith is sufficient. Your faith is sufficient to make you well; to see you through these days of troubles and

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grief, to see you through sickness and surgery, to see you through legal and financial jams, to see you through rehab and abstinence, to see you through sin and death.

Your faith, like Bartimaeus,' is sufficient.

Dearly beloved, look and see this coming week. Look and see the goodness of the Lord. Look and see the depth and breath of faith; and know that it is sufficient for the healing that you seek.

The Word of the Lord, as it has come to me this day. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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