

Oakridge Presbyterian Church

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“Let Me Tell You,... Now I See”

Mark 10: 46-52

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I find it interesting that the gospel writer of Mark records Jesus and the disciples came to Jericho, and then in the next sentence they are leaving Jericho – nothing in the time between is worth noting, even though Jericho is home to many of the priests and Levites who serve at the temple in Jericho, and they are aware that Jesus’ teachings ‘rock their world’ of religious practices – the timing wasn’t right. And Mark is not as wordy as some other gospels in many cases, but not so for the story of blind Bartimaeus. This story is important to the Gospel writer.

A large crowd was leaving with them because they were all headed to Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus would be talking, as was the custom of Rabbis – to teach as they walked. And Jesus had quite a reputation so everyone near would be listening intently. This large crowd going 15 miles uphill to Jerusalem would be generous more than usual because of the holy pilgrimage and so it would be a most important time for beggars to be by the roadside to make their living. So Bartimaeus had his cloak arranged to capture the money that would be tossed his way.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell of Jesus healing a blind man, but only Mark gives him a name. One commentary suggests his name may have been known because he joined Mark’s church. Other than that we don’t know much about Bartimaeus, *son of Timaeus*. We don’t know how he lost his sight but he was not blind from birth because the scripture says he wants to see *again*.

This is the last miracle Jesus does before they reach Jerusalem where the events leading to the crucifixion begin to unfold. It seems to sum up what the disciples *should have* learned by now. Between chapter 8 when Jesus heals another blind man, who remains nameless, and this story of Blind Bartimaeus, Jesus has been telling the disciples how they ought to behave as his disciples, like being humble and being servants to all instead of wanting to be important. Jesus told them three times now that he must die and they just don’t seem to get it – not even the inner group who witnessed the transfiguration. The first time Peter told Jesus off for talking like that, the second time the disciples argue over who of them is the greatest, and the third time James and John ask if they can have the best seats in the kingdom, if they could sit on his right and his left when he comes to his glory – they are blind to his vision.... Jesus tells them once again they must be humble – that greatness equals being servant of all.

I wonder what it was like for Bartimaeus that day.... Maybe he gave a testimony at Mark’s church and that’s how his name came to be remembered.... I wonder if it might have sounded something like this:

Hello everyone, my name is Bartimaeus. I would like to tell you how I came to be here with you ...what Jesus did for me ... and how important he is for all of us –

(slide 2) It was pretty hot out that day, sitting by the roadside waiting for people to have mercy and help me out with some spare change or food, ... that was my occupation.... It was a sad lot in life but people were taught to be charitable, even though it wasn't a pleasant lot in life to say the least, and I did okay. That day was sure to be a good day for getting ahead. I wasn't going to move from the roadside, I had nowhere else to be, and with crowds going by to get to the Passover celebration the odds for getting what I needed to keep me for awhile were really good. Anyway, there I was sitting by the side of the road. People were passing by in droves heading for Jerusalem – I could hear the loud tramp of feet - the Passover was mandatory for most of the males over 12. Suddenly the noise level started to pick up.

“What’s happening” I asked?

“It’s Jesus of Nazareth coming, do you know who he is?” a lady says to me.

YES ! I know who he is, I said to myself, I know!

I’d heard so many stories about this man named Jesus – he had healed a lot of people, some really sick, ... not long before this time I’m telling you about now he even made a blind man see – a blind man just like me - Jesus ... there’s something special about him. I’ll bet anything he is the one, you know the Messiah, and I’ve heard rumours that he is on his way through Jericho to go up to Jerusalem for the Passover. He’s had quite a following. I hope it’s not too crowded....

I thought, I’ll yell out to him if he passes by ... I wondered maybe.... I wasn’t born blind, you know. Ohhh to see again---! I still remember things I saw, I bet my dad Timaeus would be amazed if he saw me now.

This is my one chanceHere goes...

I yelled, “ Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

I yelled again, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

(He has to be the Messiah – that’s why I called him Son of David – I knew he would understand)

Well the crowd was nasty that day – they didn’t care about me at all- they just sneered at me and said “be quiet” and “shsh”

...now why would they do that - they had heard about the other miracles Jesus did. ... I didn’t care – this was too important, I just kept calling...

Things got quiet for a few seconds, I held my breathe

Then I heard the words I hoped I would hear, but he wasn’t speaking to me, he was speaking to people around me.

He said, "Call him here." It was like he was telling them they were going to be a part of this miracle. Their attitude changed, just like that! (Almost like they were transformed! - he has that effect on people)

They said, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you."

I was so excited!!! He called me!!! I jumped up, threw off my cloak and got over there as fast as I could, bumping into people all the way.

Then Jesus said to me, "What is it you want me to do for you?"

"*Rabbouni*, that is how you address a great teacher, my Teacher, let me see again." I humbly spoke.

– and then he healed me, ... just like that. He said, "Go, your faith has made you well. What a wonderful sight – to see Jesus!

I had the strangest sensation he had come to find me. I wasn't even near the synagogue – it was like he came looking for me.

He said "Go" ...Well, ... I followed Jesus all the way to Jerusalem. I had no desire to be anywhere else.

He was crucified there, you know. ...(slide 9) It was horrible. But that's not the end of it. He rose from the dead and we saw him alive. He promised the Spirit would be with us until he returned one day.

And then he went back into the heavens.

I was so overwhelmed by all I witnessed when I followed Jesus. He did that for us! He took our sins on himself so we can be right with God - Can you even imagine the love it takes to do that?

I am here at Mark's church now – he knows this is true too – Anyway I just had to share this news with you, Jesus lives and reigns.

I was blind, but now I see!!!

Great story isn't it? This whole section between the two blind healings in the Gospel of Mark from chapter 8 to 10 – it all comes together in Bartimaeus – he was blind but now he sees – he is the model for the disciples – he is what the disciples are to be; and even though he didn't fully understand Jesus when he called out "Son of David", because that held the idea of a 'conquering' Messiah that the disciples held, he had faith, and that made up for the inadequacy of his theology; then comparing the story of the rich man who cannot follow Jesus because he can't give up his wealth or status, Bartimaeus tosses aside his cloak – all his wealth; he is humble sitting by the side of the road, and persistent and focused – he knew what he needed and he never gives up; and he had faith, which is also translated as loyalty from the Greek.

It is unusual for Mark to name him, but I think Bartimaeus is named in Scripture because he followed Jesus: he began with need – calling out to Jesus, and when that was met he didn't go on his way, back to his old life, but he went to gratitude and followed Jesus, finishing with loyalty. This is what William Barclay calls a perfect summary of the stages of discipleship. ... and then he shared his story.

People's stories are important, especially stories of faith. Sharing them with each other makes us stronger as a community of faith. Not all stories are happy, but the story of Jesus, his life, his death, and his resurrection, though terrible in places, brings us to the most promising future. And Bartimaeus didn't start out in a good place, begging along the side of the road, *but when he met Jesus it all changed*. He would still have great struggles, it wasn't easy for Christians to live through that time, ... the risen Christ was their strength. The risen Christ is our strength today.

Do we have a story to share with someone that might help them see Jesus? ...a story to share that might bring the kingdom of heaven to earth? Have we seen Jesus in the church or in the hands and feet and heart of others?

If we have a story and we want to share it, we will have an opportunity. Not all stories are meant for sharing with a church full of people, some are, some are better in a small group or one on one. But I believe when we share our stories about how we met Jesus transformation happens – our stories are part of his story –

Jesus brings healing and he went to the streets on God's mission – Bartimaeus was part of that. I think the Gospel Writer is telling us we should follow his example.

All glory be to God, Father Son and Holy Spirit

Focus Quote: The LORD has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced. *Psalm 126:3 (NRSV)*

Sources:

William Barclay. The Daily Study Bible, Gospel of Mark (Rev.Ed.) 1975

The Bible (New Revised Standard Version)1989

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Commentary in <https://www.sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/mark-1046-52/>