

Sermon Mark 10:46-52  
Proper 25B  
October 24, 2021  
CCM

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

‘My teacher, let me see again.’

It seems the obvious answer to Jesus’ question. What else would a blind man ask for? Well, it may be the obvious question...but the answer is not always so straightforward. No one wants to be blind. That’s not in question. However, the deeper question is whether we really want to see. Do we really want to see the reality of our lives, things said and left unsaid, things done and left undone, who we are and who we are not? Do we really want to see the needs of our neighbors, the poor, and those who are barely surviving on the margins of society? Do we really want to see the injustices that plague the world? Do we really...really...want to see who Jesus is? Or would we prefer that he become the person we wish and want him to be?

I can’t remember where I first read this. But according to the author, one of the worst sins that we Christians have committed over and over again throughout the centuries is attempting to domesticate the Son of the living God.

Do you really want to see? THAT is the question that Bartimaeus must answer. True seeing is more than simply observing. It implies relationship, a relationship that leads to a deeper knowing and understanding. This is the vision we are granted when we see with the eyes of faith. This kind of seeing, of course, is not without risk. If we really want to see, then we must be willing to change and be changed. We must be willing to leave behind what is in order to receive what might be.

Sometimes that risk is too much. And so we turn a blind eye and choose not to see. Again, this is not about physical blindness. This is a spiritual condition. You will remember that Peter rightly declared that Jesus was the Christ. But when Jesus began to teach the disciples about his imminent suffering, rejection, and death, Peter rebuked him for it. (Mark 8:27-33) Peter could not see how that could possibly be the fate of the Messiah, God’s anointed.

Remember also that the disciples argued amongst themselves about who was the greatest. They were unable to see that “whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35)

And again, there was the rich young man who wanted to inherit eternal life but just could not see his way clear to selling all his possessions and giving that money to the poor. (Mark 10:17-22)

The reality is that our lives are not lived entirely in darkness but too often we choose to avoid the light. There are times when we get it. And there are times when we don't. In this sense, we are all Bartimaeus. He asks, "to see again." And at the end of the story, we are told that, "he regained his sight." There was a time when he saw. Then there was a time when he did not. Sound Familiar?

At the heart of the Gospel is this great truth: Jesus came to offer sight to all who are blind, that is, a crystal clear vision of what life is really meant to be all about and the world that God hopes for and intends. To the extent that we don't understand this vision, or willfully choose to ignore it, we are blind. We live in darkness. We bump and stumble our way through life believing that we are seeing and that this is as good as it gets. The world passes us by and our lives remain unchanged. One day follows another. We want to see. But we are unable or unwilling to accept Christ's true light. Yes, grief, sorrow, and loss can get in the way. Sin and guilt can blind us. Fear, anger, and resentment can cloud our sight. Failures and disappointments can shatter our perspective. Doubt and despair can impair our vision. And there are times when we actually prefer the shadows, neither wanting to see or be seen. Perhaps the deepest darkness comes when we actually lose ourselves, not knowing who we are and not believing that we are loved by anyone, let alone the God of all creation. But we are loved. We always are.

You know, I do not know what caused Bartimaeus' blindness. It does not really matter. What matters more is that he knew that he was blind. And in his blindness, he cried out to this Rabbi from Nazareth, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" That is the cry of one willing to give himself or herself entirely to God, believing and hoping that there was so much more to who he was and what life could be. Even as the crowd tries to silence him and keep him in his place, he cries out all the more, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus hears him. "Call him here," he says to his disciples. That's what divine mercy looks like in this story. The Son of God, on his way to Jerusalem and all that awaits him there, hearing the cry of one broken man living by the side of the road in darkness, and stopping for him: "Call him here."

And then the ultimate question from the one who is indeed "the light of the world."

"What do you want me to do for you?" That, my friends, is not just a question for Bartimaeus. It is the question that Jesus asks of everyone who has ever sat by the roadside of life because they can't really see the way forward, everyone who has ever lived in darkness, everyone who has every begged for clarity in a confused,

befuddled, and mixed-up world. It is the very question he is asking each of us, right here and now, and every day of our lives. There is no universal answer. One size does not fit all. There is only the unique answer that gives light at this particular time and place in each of our lives. Tomorrow's answer might be different from today's answer.

So, what do you want Jesus to do for you this morning? Please know that I am not asking what would make you feel better, fix a particular problem, or make your life more comfortable although those are all things God invites us to pray about. Instead, I am asking what is the one thing you need from Jesus today that will open your eyes to see yourself, others, and all of creation in the way that God intends for us to see, beautiful and holy? Look deep within. Where is there darkness? Where are the blind spots? What would we ask Jesus to heal in order that we might see clearly again?

I do not know what the answer will be for you. In my own blindness, I am not even sure what the answer will be for me. But one thing I do know. Jesus is asking. Jesus is listening. And by his amazing grace, Jesus is willing and able to restore our sight so that we might follow him more nearly on the way day by day.

Amen.