

October 28nd, 2018
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mark 10: 46-52

[They came to Jericho. And] as Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaheus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, he is calling you." He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Background:

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If we step back into Mark's gospel, there is another beautiful facet of this gospel to discover. Recall the gospel from two weeks ago, the story known as the Rich Young Man. The man came to Jesus asking what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Although he had kept the commandments since his youth, he was unable to accept Jesus' invitation to come and follow him because he had many possessions. The gospel says that he went away sad. (Mark 10:17-30)

However, Bartimaeus, when he learns that Jesus is calling him, throws off his cloak, springs up, and comes to Jesus, never looking back. Beggars would usually spread their cloaks before them to collect coins that were tossed in their direction. Those hearing this gospel would assume that as Bartimaeus responds to Jesus' invitation, the coins that he has collected are being tossed through the air as he jumps up. The contrast between the response of the two men to Jesus' invitation is a delightful part of the text that might be overlooked.

Even earlier in his gospel, Mark recorded another story of Jesus encountering a blind man. (Mark 8:22-26) This central section of Mark's gospel is framed by the two stories of Jesus encountering blind men. In this section of the gospel, Jesus has been revealing who he is and what events await him in Jerusalem. But the disciples have been unable to comprehend Jesus' teaching, and they have needed to be instructed repeatedly on the role of being a disciple of Jesus. In these final verses before Jesus enters Jerusalem, Mark presents us with this Jesus who is the servant even of the blind and the outcasts, and Mark presents Bartimaeus as a model of the faithful disciple who leaves everything to follow Jesus to Jerusalem.

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2. Why would the crowd, who are normally looking to see some sign of Jesus' power, tell Bartimaeus to be quiet?
3. Have you ever felt like others were trying to prevent you from having a voice?
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5. Place yourself in the scene of today's gospel. When Jesus asks Bartimaeus what he wants him to do for him, you...
6. And if Jesus were then to turn to you and ask you, by name, "what would like me to do for you?" You would respond...
7. Can you talk to God with the same honesty as Bartimaeus about the ways you experience being blind, about where God has given you sight, or about some other aspect of your relationship with God that arose from your reading of this gospel?

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Behold, I will bring them back from the land of the north;
I will gather them from the ends of the world, with the blind and the lame in their midst,
the mothers and those with child; they shall return as an immense throng.
They departed in tears, but I will console them and guide them;
I will lead them to brooks of water, on a level road, so that none shall stumble.
For I am a father to Israel, Ephraim is my first-born.

The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.
When the Lord brought back the captives of Zion, we were like men dreaming.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with rejoicing.
Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."
The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad indeed.
Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the torrents in the southern desert.
Those that sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.
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They shall come back rejoicing, carrying their sheaves.

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He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness
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No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.
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But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."

He threw aside his cloak and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Excerpts from Jeremiah 31:7-9; Psalm 126:1-6; Hebrews 5:1-6; and Mark 10:46-52

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