

## Sermon – Pentecost 22 2021

**TEXT: Mark 10:46-52**

Grace, mercy and peace be with you from God: Creator, Savior, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today, an amazing encounter unfolds in a relatively few verses from Mark's Gospel. Allow me to share with you why I think this is true and what this word of life could be saying to us today.

Mark, the oldest of the Gospel texts --- the first to be recorded --- a transition from oral tradition to written word. Decades had passed since that day when the tomb was discovered to be empty, from the times when disciples encountered the risen Lord in a closed room, on the road, at the shore, and from the day when Jesus ascended leaving the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit to empower them as witnesses to God's saving grace.

I believe that it is important for us to remember this truth about the Gospel while contemplating the report of Jesus' interaction with Bartimaeus who is first described as a "blind beggar" ... "sitting by the roadside".

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem where, as we know, he would be first welcomed as the one who "comes in the name of the Lord", but soon the peoples' voices would call out to "crucify him".

I mention what is to come not as a way to "spoil" what will soon happen, but to lift up an important reality in today's Gospel text.

Bartimaeus HEARS that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by where he sat at the side of the road...and he begins to shout out seeking to be recognized. It is apparent that at some time Bartimaeus had heard about Jesus, but now sitting by the side of the road, a beggar who could easily be passed by...sitting there in darkness...Bartimaeus calls out "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Bartimaeus identifies Jesus with words that would again be heard from people when Jesus enters Jerusalem... "Jesus, Son of David"... "Hosanna to the Son of David".

Bartimaeus would not be silenced by the crowd moving along the road with Jesus. Jesus stops --- Bartimaeus has his attention. "Call him here". "What do you want me to do for you?" .... "let me see again". There we have it...and it seems that Bartimaeus had not been blind from birth, but had lost his sight after being able to see. "Let me see AGAIN". Maybe we can relate to this while thinking of our faith journeys... "let me see again".

If the question put to Bartimaeus by Jesus sounds familiar there is a reason, it is the same question Jesus asked the disciples, James and John, just a few verses earlier in this chapter of Mark's Gospel. The brothers had approached Jesus after the Lord had again told the disciples what would happen once they all reached Jerusalem, and they, James and John, requested Jesus to do whatever they asked Jesus to do. So Jesus asks "What do you want me to do for you?" The same question Jesus asked Bartimaeus. James and John asked Jesus for positions of power and importance in the Kingdom to come.

So, putting together the responses of James and John, and Bartimaeus...who is truly unable to see? James and John were blinded by the possibilities they imagined could be theirs...blinded by desire for power. Jesus tells the disciples, "whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant....For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve..."

Jesus said to Bartimaeus, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately Bartimaeus **REGAINED** his sight and followed Jesus on the way.

In the world we find ourselves today, are we looking for power that can blind, or are we looking to see again? It can be enticing to seek power and glory...but Bartimaeus reminds us that it is much more important to "see" so that we may follow Jesus as servants in a world that puts great emphasis on power, not on service.

Julie Grindle, Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy and Mobility in this Synod, shared the following closing to her "musings" on this reading of Scripture: "Healing. Wholeness. Life. Community. Freedom. Restoration. Sight. Jesus asks, 'What do you want me to do for you?' What will we say? What will we say?"

"Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; naught be all else to me, save that thou art: thou my best thought both by day and by night, waking or sleeping, thy presence my light." In the name of our Triune God. Amen. (Text: Irish, 8th cent)

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