

"What Do You Want Me to Do for You?" Part 2
Sermon for First Christian Church of Decatur, Georgia
Season of Pentecost, Sunday, October 28, 2018
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Holy Scriptures: Mark 10: 46-52

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.

Sermon

What Do You Want Jesus to Do for You?

A child was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a bedtime story.
From time to time she would take her eyes off the book
and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek.
She then alternately stroked his cheek and then her own.
Finally she spoke up, saying, "*Grandpa, did God make you?*"
"*Yes, sweetheart,*" he said, "*God made me a long time ago.*"
"*Oh,*" she said, "*Grandpa, did God make me, too?*"
"*Yes, indeed honey. God made you just a little while ago.*"
Feeling their cheeks one more time, she observed,
"*I think God is getting better at it.*"

As we overhear the Gospel story known for the healing of blind Bartimaeus,
may we be open to the changes and growth
that we go through in life and life after life,

May we open ourselves to see the powerful process of spiritual growth and renewal,
to see and celebrate spiritual formation and social change,

not only for ourselves but for one another as well.

What Do You Want Jesus to Do for You?

[Move from Pulpit to the Aisle between the Pews]

They came to Jericho.

*As [Jesus of Nazareth] and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho,
Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside.*

The road to and from Jericho is long and dusty.

The road follows the River Jordan.

The road is steep.

Our story takes place just outside the gates of the city of Jericho.

Bartimaeus son of Timaeus is here, begging for coins, largely ignored.

Just like his neighbors who passed by,

Bartimaeus son of Timaeus most likely had four possessions to his name.

Sandals.

A garment of clothing to cover his body.

A cup or bowl.

A mantle, also called a tunic or an outer garment.

Mantles served many purposes:

a blanket to sit upon or sleep under,

a coat when it's cold,

an extra layer to keep out the heat and provide shade.

Earlier in Mark 6: 8-9,

Jesus "instructed the [disciples] to take nothing but a staff for the journey

—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—

and to wear sandals, but not a second tunic."

Point being: two tunics is one too many, but everyone needed one.

Mantles are precious and not easily forgotten or tossed aside.

Bartimaeus son of Timaeus was sitting by the roadside in the hot sun;

we imagine his mantle shaded him well.

Take a moment to close your eyes and focus

or lower your head and focus.

Imagine that you are blind Bartimaeus son or daughter of Timaeus.

Become Bartimaeus.

You are sitting by the roadside, alone.

It is quiet where you are.

Feel the ground.

Sense the dust,

the sounds of the marketplace in the nearby city,
the smells of the nearby olive trees,
hear the flow of the River Jordan.
You hear some footsteps, now many, many footsteps.
A large crowd is coming, they are excited, talking, happy;
awe is in the air.
You catch snippets of a name:
Jesus! Jesus of Nazareth! Messiah!
You had recently learned about His name,
His lineage from King David,
His love for all people.
So, Jesus is here, in Jericho!
Now the crowd arrives, filling in the space around you,
almost stepping on your feet and hands.
You begin to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Say that, out loud: *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

The people surrounding and blocking you from seeing Jesus
sternly order you to be quiet. . .

Be quiet!

Hush!

Jesus doesn't want to see you! He wants to see me!
Stay in your place, over there by the side of the road!

Yet you cry out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Say that, out loud, even louder: *"Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

The crowd is telling you to be quiet. *Shh!*

Shout even louder! *"Jesus! Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

Jesus stood still.

God stops for you.

The Holy Spirit is waiting for you.

"Call the one who is calling for me," He says. "Call the one here."

The people around you who had told you to stifle now say,
"Take heart; get up, He is calling you."

You spring up!

You rise. You rise. You RISE!

You throw off your mantle.

You leave your mantle, your tunic, behind.

You go to Jesus.

Then Jesus says to you, "What do you want me to do for you?"

What do you want Jesus to do for you?

Express yourself to the One Who Created and Creates.

Commune with the Holy.

Communicate your need, your want, your hope.

Say it in your mind or out loud;

 respond from the depths of your heart or mind or body or soul.

When you are ready open your eyes, lift your head, be totally present.

What did Bartimaeus son of Timaeus ask for?

The blind man said to Jesus, "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.

To be saved by God is to be made whole,

 to become as God intended one to be. [Preaching the Revised Common

Lectionary, Year B]

Here the man who cannot see

 asks the teacher to help him to learn to see again, to be as God intended.

Here is a man who has seen with his faith

 the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth:

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

Yet Bartimaeus' inner eye saw the true identity of Christ.

Imagine the relief and release that swept through the heart of the Son of God.

Throughout the scriptures Jesus had been so frustrated

 with followers who could not see, would not see

 that the man before them is the Son of God.

Just a few days earlier, James and John had approached Jesus, asking for a favor.

He said, *"What do you want me to do for you?"*

James and John asked whether he would grant them

 to sit at his right and left side in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said no.

Clearly God is not interested in massaging egos,

 nor in our vainglory,

 nor in our deep desire to be entitled.

When Christ asked Bartimaeus the same question,

 he said, *"My Teacher, let me see again."*

Clearly God is invested in helping us to see:

 to see our strengths, our gifts, our failures;

to see ourselves as we truly are;
to see one another;
to see the hopeful and the hopeless, the lost, the last, and the least.
God is making disciples,
and it's not accomplished by massaging egos or self-interests.
God is making disciples
who are all about seeing and hearing,
encouraging and inspiring, acting, behaving, following,
making a way in the crowd for the invisible to see God,
making a straight way in the desert for the refugees.

To do so is not that hard!

Anyone can serve.

Anyone.

When I was around 15 years old,

I was deeply moved by an article in the NY Times.

The article featured a photo taken in South Africa during Apartheid.

A young white American man of around 24

was surrounded by Zulu boys and girls in school uniforms.

The reporter asked the American school teacher

what he was teaching the young people.

He responded with such grace it took my breath away.

He said, *"These children are my teachers.*

Every day I learn more from them than I can ever teach."

I felt a stirring in my soul,

and my eyes were opened.

That day Jesus stopped. He stood still. He called. He asked.

Here's what I want from Jesus, I thought:

To be a teacher who learns from his students.

What do you want Jesus to do for you?

He is standing still for you, too.

He is calling to you.

He asks you, *"What do you want me to do for you?"*

How did you answer?

What will you say?

God has a way of filling gaps in lives, in communities, in nations.

Where are the gaps in your life?

In Christ's church? In God's city? In the world around us?

What do you need to see?

Whom do you need to encourage?

When and where do you need to make a way for another soul to see God,
to see the Christ that lives in you?

What Do You Want Jesus to Do for You?

A teacher asked her class to list what they thought
the Seven Wonders of the world should be.
Then they raised their hands and she called on them.

"The Great Wall of China!"

"The Pyramids of Egypt!"

"The Empire State Building!"

Everyone's hands were up except a child in the last row.
The teacher asked her, *"Do you have any you would like to add?"*

The girl said, *"Well, you want to know what we think are the seven wonders.
Here is my list: to see, to touch, to listen, to communicate,
to taste, to feel, to love."*

After Bartimaeus son of Timaeus received his sight, he followed Jesus.

Go forth, my friends.

Go on the way, giving thanks and praising God,

Testify only to what you know to be true.

And what have you seen and heard and experienced?

You know.

Words of encouragement are cosmic.

Students enlighten the teacher.

Teachers empower their students.

Wounded healers transform lives.

The lost become guides, the broken put pieces together.

Anyone can serve.

Anyone.

So go ahead and testify.

Be.

Act.

Love.

Share that in Jesus' name the crooked places are made straight.

The blind see.

The deaf hear.

The lame walk.

The addicted are released.

The imprisoned are liberated.

The broken are made whole.

The lost become what God intends.

The dead are raised into new life.

And the Church, the Church takes heart, takes flight,
rises up, gets up, and follows Jesus on the Way.