

Sermons at First Church

A Ministry of the Word
October 25, 2015

First Presbyterian Church
Clarksburg, WV

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Mark 10:46-52

(Bartimaeus) regained his sight and followed (Jesus) on the way. (Mark 10:52 N.R.S.V.)

Planting Seeds of the Kingdom

I am a child of God. I believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. And I believe he has the power to change my life and your life.

My brother, Chesley is just 14 months older than me. When we were in grade school, we were both about the same size, wore similar clothes, and had a strong family resemblance. People had trouble telling us apart. So we were often referred to as, “The Koerner Boys, or Elwood’s boys.” Someone might say, “I was down at the store and saw one of Elwood’s boys there. No, I don’t know which one. But it was one of the Koerner Boys.”

In today’s scripture from Mark 10 we meet a man with no name. As Jesus is leaving the city of Jericho, he passes by a blind beggar Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. Bartimaeus translates as “the son of Timaeus.” So, at least at first, this may have been more of a description than a name. We know the name of the father, but not of the son. The beggar was simply Timaeus’ boy.

There is another sense in which the beggar was a man with no name. He was an outcast from society. The Jews thought that sickness and disease were a result of sin. So the fact that this man was struck blind was seen as the judgement of God. The beggar was cursed. He was literally a nobody. Most people would walk right by without seeing him.

Some might give him a coin or two as they hurried on past, but no one paid him much attention. He was a man with no name. An invisible, unwanted presence.

Hundreds of people passed through the gate that day and most of them didn’t even see the blind beggar off to the side. Jesus was different. Jesus heard Bartimaeus, stopped and invited him to come near.

Have you ever felt worthless? Have you ever felt invisible? Have you ever felt like you were just a number? It is a terrible feeling. The good news we hear today is that we are never nameless or invisible to God. God always sees us, always hears us, always cares about us.

One of our older church members in Parkersburg was telling me of a fall he had. He was out mowing his grass when he tripped and fell to his knees. The mower kept on going down the hill toward the street. This guy found himself running after the mower on his knees, and then falling flat on his face. There was a busy street there by his house. Several cars were going past. Some of them had to swerve to miss the lawn mower. Not one of those people stopped to ask him if he was all right.

The people driving past were not bad people. They were probably ordinary people with very busy lives. They didn't have time to stop. Surely someone else would stop if it was important. But no one did.

Jesus had to have been very busy that day in Jericho. He had no doubt been preaching to the crowds and was trying to get away so he could rest. But the crowds followed him, pressing in on him, demanding his attention. Yet, over all that chaos, Jesus heard the man with no name and stopped to help.

The good news for us is that this is what God is like, not just sometimes, but all of the time. The world may be numb to our problems, people may feel like we are irritating and just want to shut us up and be rid of us. But God always sees us, always cares about us and what is going on in our lives. No matter what is going on in your life this morning, God loves you, and sees you, and stops to help you. Believe it! It is the good news!

Moving on with the story, Jesus calls this nobody, this blind beggar. And Timaeus' son, responds. Throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. This is faith in action. We can't know what was going on in the blind beggar's head. We can't know what doubts he might have struggled with. What we do know, is that when Jesus called, he was all in.

He throws off his cloak. That is significant. In that area it gets very hot in the day, and freezing at night. The cloak doubled as a blanket. It was the only thing keeping this blind beggar from freezing to death on cold nights. This nobody, drops the blanket and goes straight to Jesus. Remember he was blind. Even if no one stole his cloak, how was he ever going to find it again in that crowd? Timaeus' boy becomes a hero of the faith, because he is willing to risk everything on Jesus.

So now he stands before Jesus and the Lord asks him a very important question. "What do you want me to do for you?" Timaeus' son says, "Let me see again!" Now that might seem like a no brainer to you and me, but it took courage and faith. This man may have been a beggar for years and years. Likely it was all he knew. If he received healing, everything would change. He would be expected to work and earn a living, not just sit around and beg.

Believe it or not, there are people today who sabotage their own success, because they are afraid they can't handle the new responsibilities. There are people who sabotage their healing, because the misery they currently have is a known familiar misery. It takes faith and courage to accept the healing that Christ would offer us.

You remember a couple of weeks ago, our text for the day was the rich young man who came to Jesus asking for eternal life. Jesus told the man to sell everything he had, give the money to the poor and come follow him. The rich young man knew that his life was empty. But it was a misery he knew. He couldn't let go of his present in order to accept Christ's future.

Now I want you to notice the last sentence of our text for today. Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way."

I might point out that Jesus was on the way to glory, but he was also on the way to Jerusalem and a painful, and cruel death on the cross. Bartimaeus followed Jesus on the way.

I said before that Bartimaeus was more of a description than a name. Yet as he followed Jesus on the way, he changed from Timaeus' boy, to Bartimaeus who followed Jesus on the way. It is significant that Jesus healed a lot of people, but mostly their names have been lost.

We hear the story of the crippled man beside the pool at Bethaztha who walked again. We hear about the leper who is cured. We hear about the crippled man who was lowered through the roof by his four friends and Jesus healed him. But we never learn their names, they weren't remembered. We aren't told the name of the rich young man who came to Jesus asking for the way to eternal life. He went away saddened because he had many possessions and could not give them up. He faded into history, no one remembered his name.

However, the newly healed blind man is remembered as Bartimaeus. Why? Because he was an important person in the early church. "You remember that Sunday School teacher we had that spoke so simply, but with such passion?" "Yes, that was old Bartimaeus wasn't it." "You remember that time that terrible plague swept through? Who was the guy who opened up his home and took care of so many of the sick? That was old Bartimaeus wasn't it!"

Now here is where the rubber hits the road for many of us. It is not so much that we are physically blind, but that we are spiritually blind. We need Christ's healing so that we can see the world with a new set of eyes, so that we can see the world as Christ sees the world. What a difference that makes!

Many of you here remember Anna Stotler. Anna was elderly and unsteady on her feet. She went outside one cold winter day for something and slipped and fell in the snow. She wasn't really hurt, but she couldn't get back up. A passing motorist saw her and stopped. Covered her with a blanket and called 911. This woman stayed right there with Anna until the ambulance got there, checked her out and got her back safe inside her house. What really impressed me about this story was that Anna said three days later this woman stopped by again to make sure she was all right and had recovered from her ordeal.

Sometimes it's the little things that really matter. May God open our eyes that we may also see as he sees and follow Christ on the way.

Amen.