

Faith Sees the Unseen

Texts: Job 42:1-6 (10-17)

Hebrews 7:23-28 (Series B, 22ndⁿ Sunday after Pentecost) Ps. 34:1-8, 19-22

Mark 10.46-52

Let us Pray:

Have you ever been in a cave? Have you any idea how dark it can be in a cave? In 1975, as a student, the youth group of my church in Kitzingen Germany went on an excursion to Bamberg in Bavaria, Germany.

We went several feet under the surface of the earth, you will be impressed with the beautiful rock formations down below, with spotlights off, of course.

We were told to stand still for a moment while the guide turned off the lights.

And as we stood there in total darkness, he explained to us that this darkness is 40% darker than the darkest night ever experienced on the surface of the earth.

It was so dark that you I couldn't see a hand in front of your face. Well, it will give you a pretty helpless feeling as you stand there in a cave with such deep and total darkness!

And that is also the helpless condition in which we find Bartimaeus in the Gospel reading today. The Gospel doesn't tell us how he got blind, perhaps he was born that way. None the less Bartimaeus could not participate in the regular activities of life — because he was blind.

And that brings us to the theme of the message today, namely, from darkness in the Light, and, as we delve into the story, we shall see *three thoughts*:

1. *Bartimaeus, in his blindness, calls on Jesus;*
2. *Jesus tells His disciples to go and call Bartimaeus; and*
3. *Jesus calls Bartimaeus out of darkness into His glorious light;*

But in the meantime, Bartimaeus is sifting along the roadside. The Bible tells us that he was a beggar. We may safely assume that 'begging' is the most humiliating way of making a livelihood. A beggar is totally dependent on others.

Bartimaeus was also blind which made him even more helpless. He completely depended on the kindness and mercy of other people. Day after day he would sit along the road calling out, "Please, change perhaps from time to time, he would receive something and say, "Thank you, thank you!" Then he would have to ask again, "Please change!"

But today was going to be a good day for Bartimaeus because the Passover Feast was going to be held in Jerusalem. Thousands of people were on their way to this great feast. Large crowds would walk past the spot where Bartimaeus was sitting.

And you know how it goes: when people are going to a festival, they are usually in a good or generous mood. And furthermore. . . the more people - the greater the chance that Bartimaeus would collect some shekel money. Yes, Bartimaeus expected to have a good day!

But. . . . Bartimaeus was blind!

There are many, many people in nursing homes who would love to have someone bring a little sunshine in their lives. Those are people to whom you and I can show some kindness. Jesus says to His followers, "You go and call them."

That means that you and I are not calling them to follow us.

We don't call these people to ourselves. We invite them to come to Jesus, Who, in the first place, called us. We may tell those people that Jesus can do something for them--something that you and I cannot do. All we have to do is to tell them that Jesus is calling them.

After Jesus instructs His disciples to go and call Bartimaeus, a hush may have fallen on the crowd as the disciples make their way to Bartimaeus who still sits there along the road crying out, "Son of David, have mercy on me."

The disciples encourage Bartimaeus and tell him, "Cheer up. He is calling you!" Bartimaeus jumps to his feet, throws his mantle to the side and while the people step aside making room for the disciples — one of them possibly holding Bartimaeus by the hand — they make their way to Jesus.

Here we have one of the greatest confrontations possible. On the one hand Jesus, the source of Light and Life. . . and on the other hand, possibly on his knees, blind Bartimaeus.

- *The all seeing God and the nothing seeing man.*
- *The all powerful, majestic Being and the helpless unfortunate human being*
- *Total Light and total darkness*

It is Jesus Who is the first One to speak. He asks, “*What do you want Me to do for you?*” Just imagine: Jesus Himself asking you this morning, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

Bartimaeus was used to getting pennies and nickels and dimes in answer to his call for mercy. Most of the time he got nothing. Sometimes he became the object of foul play. Not many people would ever ask him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And now, imagine this, not just anybody, but Jesus Himself asks him, “What do you want me to do for you?” All he had to do is ask for it!

It is difficult to imagine the emotion that must have run through his body, the lump in his throat, the tremble in his voice! Perhaps a tear in his blind eyes. This was it— now or never!

And so from the bottom of his heart and from the depths of his soul he cries out, “*Rabbi, I want to see!*” We don’t know how old Bartimaeus was - twenty? thirty? forty-five or sixty?, but all he wanted was his eyesight!

Jesus was moved with compassion when He heard Bartimaeus cry out like this. Yes, He was acquainted with the misery of the sick, the lame and the poor. He had seen so much of it in His three-year ministry.

Then He spoke to Bartimaeus, “*Go, your faith has healed you*”. Those words must have been like an electric shock to Bartimaeus. The gospel writer Matthew tells us that Jesus touched his eyes and he immediately received his sight and followed Jesus on the way. What a joy it must have been for this man to receive his sight! And the first person Bartimaeus saw was... Jesus!

Yes, Bartimaeus followed Jesus. What other way would he want to go? For, after all, Bartimaeus had received not only *his physical sight*, but also *his spiritual sight*. Bartimaeus could not think of another way to repay Jesus for what He had done for him than to follow Him. He gave Bartimaeus his eyesight. He led Bartimaeus out of his darkness into glorious light. Yes, also into spiritual light.

Nowadays, there are still many people who are physically blind. You may know someone, or you may see a person with a white cane or accompanied by an eye-seeing dog. But there are many more people who are 'spiritually' blind.

And that spiritual blindness is greater and deeper and darker than the 140% darkness that you will see in a cave. Because spiritual darkness is separation from God, which means: no hope, no light, no life. Total darkness!

This blind beggar withstood lifelong blindness and poverty, and then the scorn of the crowds and yet he persevered in getting the attention of Jesus. Jesus asked of him, as he asks of us, *What do you want me to do for you?*

Of course, Jesus already knew, as God knows us always. But Bartimaeus needed to ask specifically for the healing he sought. And his sight was restored because his *faith* made him well.

Our faith will make us well in many ways if we learn first to look for the *great things* God has already done for us, and to be *glad indeed in it*. We can take our tears and our songs of joy to God through Christ, seek the forgiveness we know we need, and we can always just *ask* for help with our humility and our humanity.

Even better, we can ask for help to know and overcome our own blindspots that keep us off that straight path where we will not stumble. We may ask: Please release me from my inner blindness, O Christ, to see Your light clearly and follow your way.

If there is anyone in this sanctuary today who still walks in that darkness, then you are invited to come to Jesus Who is the only One Who can lead you out of your darkness into His glorious light.

Come to His light — walk no longer in sin and darkness. Come to the Light of eternal salvation for body and soul. Live no longer in darkness - enter the joy of the Light that only Jesus can give.

When we already walk in the Light. . . praise the Lord and thank Him for His gift of salvation. It is wonderful to belong to the 'Family of God'. But having received this gracious gift of salvation and being a member of God's family makes us responsible as co-workers in God's Kingdom.

And third, Jesus calls Bartimaeus out of his darkness into His marvelous light. The Bible tells us that "salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved". **Amen.**

Let us pray: O Blessed God of the Hungry and the Privileged, Lord of those Raised High and those Laid Low, grant us the joyful yet solemn awareness that we bear within us the very substance of Your Incarnate Son. Open our souls to sing your praise as long as we live, for You who brought our common humanity and all else in the heavens and on Earth into being, and keeps Your promise forever. We ask through the Compassion of Jesus our Christ, and the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit, who live and reign with You as One God, every day, every way, always, and forever. **Amen.**

Prayer concerns: *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Wess Bourgaize, Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeoise, Ellen Eriksen, Peter Bateman, the dire situation in Afghanistan, Middle East & Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers, Christian Aid Workers held as hostages in Haiti.*

Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:

- **Lord Divine, All Loves Excelling # 631**
- **Faith of Our Fathers # 812**
- **Blessed Assurance # 638**

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

Stanley Dalt
Kimberley Foster.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Ross and Viola Bickley

October 24, 2021