

Mark 10:46-52
“Take Heart . . . He is Calling You”
WRCoB 3.8.20

Last week, I preached on the rich, young ruler
Someone who had everything
And ended up with nothing!

Mark doesn't mention his name.

Today we look at the story of a blind beggar
Someone who had nothing
But ended up with everything!

Mark tells us his name.

His name goes down in the annals of history
Recorded for all time in Holy Scripture.

Ironic, isn't it, a man rich with wealth and prestige
Ends up in the Bible as an anonymous person.

And then, there is Blind Bartimaeus, a virtual nobody
Just one of the countless beggars
With their cardboard signs
Standing by the road.

I mean doesn't this speak directly to Jesus' teaching
That the last shall be first and the first last!

~~

The story of the healing of Bartimaeus
Follows the third of Jesus' passion predictions.

Mark 10:33-34 (NLT)

³³ “Listen,” he said, “we’re going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die and hand him over to the Romans. ³⁴ They will mock him, spit on him, flog him with a whip, and kill him, but after three days he will rise again.”

~~

Instead of the disciples surrounding Jesus
With their love and support
Commiserating with him

James and John request to sit
At the left and right side of Jesus in his glory!

Not knowing when they crucified Jesus
Two thieves took their places
On either side of Jesus.

It was not that Jesus didn’t try . . .
All along the way, Jesus tried to instill in his disciples
A servant/leadership style that not only eluded them
But continues to elude followers today.

Mark 10:43-45 (NRSV)

⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

As the story goes, they were on their way to Jerusalem
And came to Jericho.

And when they were leaving
A large crowd followed them out of town.

This whole mass descended on poor Blind Bartimaeus
Who was sitting **BY** the side of the road.

~~

Being blind in any time and place is not a good thing.

Charles Spurgeon wrote in a sermon on this text.

This poor man was beset with two great evils—blindness and poverty. It is sad enough to be blind, but if a man that is blind is in possession of riches, there are ten thousand comforts which may help to cheer the darkness of his eye and alleviate the sadness of his heart. But to be both blind and poor, these were a combination of the sternest evils.

One was at the mercy of those around them.

In most places in the world
The only way to survive was to beg.

You took your place alongside
The crippled, the leper, and the widowed.

You spent your years alongside a road somewhere
In hopes that someone would pass by and take pity.

This is where we find Bartimaeus.

He had heard of Jesus of Nazareth.

He had heard he was the Messiah, the Son of David.

He had heard of Jesus' abilities to heal.

So when the crowd descended upon him
And hearing that Jesus was in their midst

The poor, blind, beggar Bartimaeus
Shouted at the top of his lungs
Hoping he would hear him
Over the noise of the crowd

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!

The crowd heard him . . . and told him to shut up.

This only prompted him to shout louder
Son of David, have mercy on me!

~~

From the depths of despair
The voice rises up not to be silenced.

From the lips of all those, then and now
Who lay by the roadside of life
Broken and beaten, without hope.

All who have been left marginalized and cast aside
From the Syrian/Turkish border
To the corner of Parham and Broad
They cry, have mercy!

And who will hear them
Above the noise of our crowded daily lives?

~~

You know, this plea of Bartimaeus'
Has become a popular prayer.

The Catholics pray the Rosary repeatedly.

The Orthodox pray this prayer like an incantation
Over and over again

Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Even in the Protestant tradition
Bartimaeus' plea has become
What they call the *Sinner's Prayer*
Often used as a formula for salvation.

~~

And as focused and burdened as Jesus was
Determined to walk that lonesome valley
To his destiny in Jerusalem

He, nonetheless, stopped.
Listened.
And heard the faint cry of the beggar's plea.

Call him here.

And the sweetest words ever to be heard
By anyone beaten down by the side of the road

Are spoken by the disciples, *Take heart . . . He is calling!!*

Imagine the hope that rises within a heart
Upon hearing these words?

Take courage, rise up, he's calling you.

Throwing off his cloak, he jumps up, and goes to Jesus.

What do you want me to do for you?

It is the very same question
Jesus asked James and John
When they wanted to make their request
For fame and glory.

What do you want me to do for you?

This time the answer is simple and sincere.

Teacher, I want to see!

~~

For years, he ate the dust from the travelers' foot
As they passed him by

For years, downtrodden, beaten, and oppressed
Spending years just trying to keep alive

Years, he had prayed for healing
Years, he sought God's blessing.

Years he prayed for mercy
Again and again, over and over
As people, side-stepped him by the roadside

Now Jesus the Son of David stands before him
Prepared to respond to his deepest yearning
What do you want me to do?

*“Heal me, Jesus! Oh, Sweet Jesus, heal me
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, make me whole again!”*

~~

Jesus heals Blind Bartimaeus
With the words forever
Go, your faith has made you well.

And which way does Bartimaeus go?

Does he go the way of the rich, young ruler
Walking into anonymous obscurity?

**Mark 10:52b NRSV Immediately he regained his sight
and followed [Jesus] on the way.**

~~

The ex-slave trader, John Newton
Who was overpowered by God’s grace
One night on his slave-ship Pegasus

Wrote his experience in the form of a hymn, *Amazing Grace*.

The song evokes the story of Blind Bartimaeus.

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.*

*I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see.*

The story of Bartimaeus resonated with Newton
For he also wrote a poem concerning him.

*Mercy, O thou Son of David!
Thus blind Bartimaeus prayed;
Others by thy word are saved,
Now to me afford thine aid:
Many for his crying chid him,
But he called the louder still;
Till the gracious Saviour bid him
Come, and ask me what you will.*

*Money was not what he wanted,
Though by begging used to live;
But he asked, and Jesus granted
Alms, which none but he could give:
Lord remove this grievous blindness,
Let my eyes behold the day;
Strait he saw, and won by kindness,
Followed Jesus in the way.*

*O! methinks I hear him praising,
Publishing to all around;
Friends, is not my case amazing?
What a Saviour I have found:
O! that all the blind but knew him,
And would be advised by me!
Surely, would they hasten to him,
He would cause them all to see.*

~~

Take heart, brothers and sisters . . . rise up . . . He is calling
Earnestly and tenderly, calling for you and for me.