

## SERMON FOR SUN. OCTOBER 24, 2021

Pent 22B Mark 10:46-52 "The way of joy vs. the way of fear."

Dear fellow redeemed of, by and for Christ, **"What do you want Me to do for you?"** Jesus asked the blind beggar, Bartimaeus.

What do you want Jesus to do for you? Do you want Him to heal you of some affliction, like Bartimaeus?

Will you follow Him whether or not this life brings either healing or blessing? Will you follow Him, but fearfully or joyfully?

Will you try to hold onto earthly wealth on the way or will you walk like little children holding their Father's hand?

Will you ask the Lord for the positions of glory so that others might serve you? Will you follow the Lord, not counting the costs, even if it leads to the cross?

These are the questions that Jesus asks each of us this morning through St. Mark. And all these questions come to a single point through the prism of Jesus' question, **"What do you want Me to do for you?"**

James and John are two of Jesus' hand-picked Twelve, following Him on the way to Jerusalem. They answer one way: **"Give to us that we may sit one at Your right and one at Your left in Your glory."**

Bartimaeus is a blind beggar sitting beside the way. He answers differently: **"Rabbi, that I might regain sight."**

When Jesus called the Twelve, he told them, **"Come after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of people. And immediately, leaving the nets, they followed Him."**

Jesus tells Bartimaeus, **"Go, your faith has healed you.' And immediately, he regained sight and followed Him on the way."**

But again and again, it is the disciples who are blind to the way of God, and they find themselves opposing Jesus.

Bartimaeus may not know that the way of Jesus will lead to death, but he does not care. All he can see is Jesus; all he knows is that he is following the Son of David to Jerusalem where he will bless the coming of David's eternal Reign.

Throughout the Gospel of Mark, it is the disciples who, failing to understand Jesus's words, end up opposing the people who Jesus chose to serve. And yet, Jesus drags them along the way and teaches them again and again: “[M]any who are first will be last, and the last first.”

You see, the Kingdom of God consists of little children and blind beggars and those willing to be the servants of all.

The Word of Jesus calling sinners to repentance will remain until the stars fall from the sky and this world is remade by fire because sin and its consequences remain.

Bartimaeus asked Jesus to give him sight, and Jesus removed not only sin's collateral damage of blindness but sin itself. That is what the Word of Jesus does.

When Jesus calls the disciples, they leave everything immediately. When Jesus heals Bartimaeus, Bartimaeus follows Him immediately.

But the disciples, who had seen Jesus for who He is, still stumbled along the way. They forgot, and denied, and misunderstood, and interrupted, and interfered.

What, though, do we know about Bartimaeus? Did his faith, which sprang up so readily from the seed of the Word, grow strong with the nourishment of the Holy Spirit?

Or was it planted in shallow, rocky soil so that it died soon after in the heat of crucifixion and persecution?

We can't know for sure, but it's interesting that of all the people healed of various maladies in the Gospel of Mark, Bartimaeus is the only one named. Why?

Unlike the rich young man, he had no wealth.

Unlike the 12, he had no pride to stumble over who is the greatest. So, in a way, Bartimaeus is the model disciple, for he speaks for all disciples of all times when he says, “**Jesus, Son of David, Have mercy on me.**”

As the old hymn says, “***Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us.***”

Like Bartimaeus, none of us has a leg to stand on when we come before the Lord. Though he was blind, he could clearly see his powerlessness and so he looked to the only one who could help.

There is no Christian who does not experience the lapses into spiritual blindness that the disciples so often displayed.

There is no Christian who does not, at times, follow the Lord with fear and trembling, as the disciples did.

But there is also no Christian who does not experience the joy of Bartimaeus, the light of Christ shining brightly on the way, even through the darkness of the shadow of death, and ultimately, into the resurrection.

Yet we are very often like the Twelve in their stumbling, blindness as they struggle to follow Jesus on the way. We deny, and forget, and misunderstand, and interrupt, and interfere.

But Jesus is the patience of God. He does not leave us to ourselves or to the world and its wolves. He continues to stop and call us through His Word.

He continues to stop when we are hungry and thirsty, and tired. He stops so that we, like blind men, can follow the sound of His voice.

He stops so that we, like little children, can catch up, and He puts His nail-scarred hands on our heads and blesses us beyond what we deserve or could even ask.

He calls us to His Supper, and we are refreshed on the way with His Body and Blood. He calls us to rest in Him, in the grace that will not let us go.

Brothers and sisters, the commandment of the Lord shines clearly, enlightening our eyes. More delightful than gold and precious stones, more desirable than honey, and the honeycomb is the Word that has enlightened us.

How could Jesus, the word of God, made flesh, not be desirable?

It is He whose words shed light on minds buried in darkness and grant clear vision to 'the light-bearing eyes' of the soul?

Sing his praises, then, Lord, and make known to all your Father God. Your Word will save me, your song will instruct me.

Confess your helplessness I have gone astray in my search for God; but now that you light my path, Lord, I find God through you. I become co-heir with you since you were not ashamed to own me as your brother.

So follow Jesus on the way, like St. Bartimaeus. You cannot know where God leads you in this life, whether it be over rough roads or smooth.

You can only know this: Jesus' way leads to the cross, to death, but it leads inevitably and without a doubt to resurrection.

The same is true for you. In the midst of your joy and your fear, take heart because Jesus repeatedly calls you to Himself.

And, hearing His voice, go on your way after Him; your faith, placed firmly in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension for you, will not only save you, but it will heal your body completely and finally. AMEN