October 25, 2015

Mark 10:46-52

On the Mend: Healing What Ails Us – Healing Vision

Rev. Kerry Smith

Greenland Hills United Methodist Church

Mark 10:46-52 New Revised Standard Version

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.

Jesus and his disciples are leaving Jericho for the final journey to Jerusalem and a blind man, Bar Timaeus, son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, shouts out for healing. And he is healed and he becomes a disciple himself.

Bartimaeus shouts even though people order him to be quiet. Has anyone ever been told to be quiet? This week I was at the North Texas clergy retreat and on Tuesday afternoon we had free time in the afternoon. This was when the annual golf tournament is, but I don’t golf. So, I thought about what I have been missing, about what is hard to do in my normal life and at first I thought I would take a nap. I would love to take a nap. But then I thought, I could go to the movies, and not have to pay a babysitter! So, we picked a movie, and announced if anyone wanted to join us where we would meet. There were ten preachers that went to go see Bridge of Spies. It is a great movie, but during the previews I was so embarrassed. They kept showing those ads about being quiet and these 10 preachers, the ones I was with, kept talking! Imagine, preachers who cannot keep quiet? And we were not along in the movie theater. Surprisingly there were other people at a 3 pm Tuesday afternoon movie. So, I was in a quandary, do I shush my colleagues? Luckily, they got quiet once the movie started, but Bartimaeus did not get quiet. He cried out even louder.

We keep quiet a lot because we don’t want to offend someone or hurt their feelings or be rejected. So, when someone tells us to be quiet, or when someone doesn’t give us room to talk, we fall into silence. But Bartimaeus let it all hang out. He defies his neighbors, he defies the disciples, and he cries out for help. Makes me think of when people ask you how you are and you say, “Oh, I’m fine,” but you aren’t fine. I have been thinking lately about telling the truth, “I’m tired,” but then people would say, “Oh, I’m sorry.” And so I just say, “I’m fine, how are you?” But not Bartimaeus. He doesn’t say that he is fine.

He is going to let Jesus know what he needs. We don’t know if that was Bartimaeus’ personality or if he had reached his limit and had had enough. Maybe he doesn’t care what people say anymore. Or maybe he senses that “in the presence of Jesus all the rules change and he is no longer ‘Blind Bartimaeus’ but instead ‘Bartimaeus, Child of God’”[[1]](#footnote-2).

Bartimaeus knows he is free and he seizes his faith and his courage and he lives into that freedom. Bartimaeus speaks out and Jesus says that speaking out is what has made him well.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Domestic violence and sexual assault are pervasive and life-threatening crimes that affect millions of people across our nation regardless of age, economic status, race, religion, or education. Young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence and sexual assault. And children exposed to violence are more likely to attempt suicide, abuse drugs and alcohol, run away from home, engage in teenage prostitution and commit sexual assault crimes.[[2]](#footnote-3) If you think you are being abused, you can get help. You can speak out like Bartimaeus and find shelters where you will be protected. No one ever deserves to be abused.

Bartimaeus speaks out and he becomes a follower of Jesus. He becomes a disciple. He stops begging, he stops living on the fringes, he follows Jesus. He knows that he has received much and he is going to give to others. He is going to follow Jesus and change the lives of others just like his life has been changed. We had a church workday here a few Saturdays ago, and I had emailed the church’s contact with the Narcotics Anonymous group. NA has met in this church for over 17 years. And 11 times each week, people gather in this church to share their stories, to share their failures, and to find a place where people say today is a new day. Where people are reminded that God loves them. Where people are reminded that Jesus has heard their cries.

So, I had sent this email and the individual responded saying that some of the NA folks were going to come, but I was blown away by the number of people that showed up. There were more folks helping clean up our church that day from NA than there were from our own church. One of the guys came dressed in jeans and a nice shirt because he was going to stay for the 11 am NA meeting, and he said, “Well, I came to work what can I do?” And I said, “Well, we are doing some painting,” and he said, “Is there anything else? I am wearing my best pair of blue jeans.” And I said, “Well, they are taking the stumps out of the alley in the back.” And he said, “Okay”. And when he emerged 3 hours later he was covered in sweat, he was so dirty, but he assured me that his jeans could be washed. And he was so happy, his face radiated joy. He said that he wanted to give back, he wanted to give back to this place because this place and the welcome that he received here had changed his life. And we didn’t do anything to make that happen, we just opened our doors to NA. We provided a space for people to come and to find support and love and to change their life.

This week I visited with Bert and Patsy Affleck. They haven’t been here in about a month because Patsy fell and had to go to the hospital and then she went to a rehab center in Allen because their daughter lives in Allen. They are now living in a group home because Patsy has Advanced Alzheimer’s. And as I drove up to Allen, it is a long way, so there was lots of time for thinking, I thought of Patsy’s red coat. Patsy would come to worship in this place in her red coat, and I would help her dip the communion bread into the cup of juice and she would look at that now soaked communion bread and I would say, eat it Patsy and know that God loves you. And I walked into Patsy’s room in this lovely home and Patsy told me again and again how much she loved me. I love you, she would say. Now Bert told me that she tells everyone that, but I still felt like she meant it.

And as I drove home I thought about Bartimaeus and I thought about Patsy. Some might say that Patsy is less than others in our culture. Some might say that if your mind is not what it once was, you don’t count anymore. Some might say that if you are blind like Bartimaeus or physically disabled or don’t have much money, or if you have lost your job, or you are single, or you are divorced or widowed or you are unable to have children, then you are less than others in our world. Some of us today know what it is like to sit on the sidelines. We know what it is like to be told by others what we can do and what we cannot do. The loud voices of those who seek to discourage us seem so much louder than God’s call on our lives. God calls us beloved children, holy and precious in God’s sight. That is what defines us.

When I visited Patsy this week, I received the gift of love. She told me that she loved me, and I think that she tells everyone else that she loves them because she does. Bartimaeus had the courage and the strength to cry out for help, and then to shout louder. He would not be quiet. He wanted to see again, he wanted to be healed, he wanted to find peace and joy and strength and to feel the Holy Spirit with him and Jesus told him his faith made him well. And he regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way.

We don’t know how we are going to be changed when we cry out to Jesus. We don’t know how we are going to be changed when we move toward the presence of Almighty God, but we know that we will not remain the same. Jesus says, “Your faith has made you well.” Jesus tells that to the woman who had been bleeding, suffering a hemorrhage for twelve years and has the courage to touch his robe to be healed. “Your faith has made you well.” Jesus heals ten lepers and one, only one, returns to thank Jesus and Jesus tells that one who returned to say thank you, “Your faith has made you well.”

It is Jesus who heals us, and it is faith that receives that healing. Our desire for Christ is an act of faith that God uses to bring restoration. Jesus restores, but Bartimaeus’ desire and belief are necessary to make that restoration possible. Faith makes us well. Faith opens our eyes and unstops our ears and raises us from death into new life. Faith and forgiveness, that is the power of Jesus’ word for salvation for us. We have new eyes to see that we are free from our past, free from our fear, free from old hurts and mistakes.[[3]](#footnote-4) That is the good news for us today, Alleluia. May God shine God’s light on us, in us and through us and may we become bearers of that light for others who dwell in darkness and silence. May we have the courage and confidence of Bartimaeus to reach out to Jesus. Amen.

1. http://www.davidlose.net/2015/10/reformationpen-22-freedom/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. http://nnedv.org/downloads/Policy/AD14/AD14\_DVSA\_Factsheet.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. http://www.davidlose.net/2015/10/reformationpen-22-freedom/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)