

Mark 10:46-52

First some fun in the “naming” of this blind man. Bartimaeus son of Timaeus...Bar means “son of” so it’s literally “the son of Timaeus, Son of Timaeus.” Not sure why the repetition here! And the name Timaeus in Hebrew describes someone that is dear, valuable or honorable.

The Bartimaeus Healing is the concluding bookend to the section of Mark’s gospel where blindness is the unifying theme. It is also a narrative bridge geographically as Jericho is on the way from Galilee to Jerusalem...and this is the last healing in Mark’s gospel.

It began with Jesus restoring sight to a blindman in Bethsaida...then Jesus confronts the spiritual blindness among his closest followers who seem either unwilling or unable to see and accept the radical message of Jesus...His claims of suffering, rejection and death...and their blindness to the upside-down - right side up world that Christ was ushering in.

But even the blindness of Jesus’ own disciples can’t impede the inbreaking of God into the world through Jesus the Christ! Just because you can’t see something doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist...Can’t see Oxygen but better get some of that people...And sometimes those closest to the thing can’t see it...it’s like that old saying that you can’t see the forest for the trees...it’s hard to see the whole picture when you are inside the frame.

Notice the two ironies...First Bartimaeus “an actual blind man” sees Jesus as the Son of David...he recognizes Jesus as the Christ...somehow this guy is connected to God...Jesus is proclaiming God’s Kingdom is here and the Messiah has indeed arrived!

So the blind guy sees very clearly that which those around him with their sight have been blind to up till now...and Bartimaeus is out here proclaiming it loudly for all to hear!

The second irony is that Bartimaeus then follows Jesus “on the way”...most healing stories end with Jesus sending those He healed away...and usually Jesus is telling them to be quiet about it.

But this guy is now following Jesus to Jerusalem...he is now following the Messiah and naming Him...the transition from teaching and preaching to action is now taking place in Marks’ narrative.

And soon they will all arrive in Jerusalem...but they will not get a King’s welcome by those in power...we know how this story ends...but they don’t so far.

Jesus will be arrested...He will suffer... and then He will die... and His disciples and all His followers will scatter to the wind like sheep without a shepherd.

The disciples will return to Galilee and they will no longer be blind once Jesus returns!

Bartimaeus is the apex of faith in Mark’s Gospel! And Bartimaeus knows how to deal with people who try to silence him. His persistence adds substance to his bold expression of faith in Jesus.

In the final verse, Jesus names faith as what motivates Bartimaeus. The rest of the story shows us what that faith looks like. Bartimaeus’s faith is not about reciting the correct dogmas or theologies...or having the correct religious views...instead he is grounded unrelentingly in his conviction that this Jesus can actually heal him.

Bartimaeus grasps who Jesus is. No one else so far in Mark’s gospel has been able to perceive so much about Jesus from so little information.

The title Son of David appears only here in Mark’s gospel; therefore we cannot say too much about exactly what that expresses about Jesus. For Bartimaeus, the title obviously indicates that Jesus is God’s agent introducing Jesus as the Messiah.

Bartimaeus, despite his blindness, also discerns that Jesus is able to enact God’s mercy and healing in the world.

He persists despite the hindrances of his physical handicap and the shushing of the crowd around him. Faith does not come easily to people in Mark's gospel... people must overcome obstacles in order to obtain what they seek...there is an active, reciprocal and participating quality here for the recipient...we too have to be active participants and agent as well as God!

This again is about connection and relationship with both parties actively being involved.

The crowd rebukes Bartimaeus, demanding him to shut his face. This detail reminds us that blind beggar's dwell at the bottom of the social ladder...homeless handicap people have no standing in society...they have no value and are a nuisance and an embarrassment to those around them...therefore they should be made invisible...and they should have no voice! But that's not God's MO, is it? Jesus always sees these folks...despite their lack of value, privilege and social standing given to them by us and the ways of man.

People in power or with status seem to think that they are somehow more deserving of God's attention! They tend to put their own needs before the marginalized in society...this theme is woven throughout the entirety of the Bible...God values folks regardless of how they are looked at by us.

In their ignorance about Jesus, the focus of His message, and His concern for blind beggars...their reprimand of Bartimaeus threatens to contain and control God's power...as if to limit the range of Jesus 'compassion and grace. They have God right where they want Him...in their small limited boxes that they can control...but Bartimaeus knows better, and so he yells out even more loudly until his words reach Jesus' ears.

Bartimaeus expects healing and transformation. Jesus could have just walked to Bartimaeus to talk with him...but notice how Jesus instead tells the crowd to go get him. Those who would inhibit the beggar must now assist Jesus' in His ministry.

Then Mark adds one more detail: Bartimaeus throws aside his cloak. He expects to regain his sight...throwing the cloak away shows the trust he has in Jesus' power...for a blind beggar would keep their possessions very close at hand.

He obviously expects a change... and his blindness and his social status are only a part of the story. As with other healings Jesus restores Bartimaeus to a place of wholeness that also entails reconnecting that person back to belonging within their community.

When Bartimaeus casts off his cloak, he confidently proclaims that he will no longer sit on his garment and depend upon handouts from those passing by.

When Jesus asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” his reply is a simple request voiced with the confidence that Jesus can deliver the goods. “I want to see again,” declaring that Jesus as God’s agent... can restore healing, wholeness and deliverance to those seeking and calling out to Him.

Also recall that Jesus’ question mirrors what he asked James and John in last week’s Gospel...and Bartimaeus seeks no special privilege or entitlements like his own disciples did. This once again reiterates that Jesus has not come to bestow power and honor on His chosen few...but rather that Jesus has come to open everyone’s eyes to a new reality...the Kingdom of God...and all anyone has to do is look! And with this new vision one can now realize new spiritual, social, and material realities...all made possible when we allow God to lead.

So when it came to understanding what Jesus has come to do, the disciples who have been with Jesus since the very beginning were certainly more “blind” than Bartimaeus.

Your faith has saved you. Bartimaeus begins this story alongside the road.

And now his story continues anew and transformed once he encounters the living God along his path! This shift reflects Bartimaeus’ move from the invisible periphery of society to being now at the center and heart of the scene. The road (or the way) is a term Mark uses to indicate Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem...leading to Jesus’ own transformation... through suffering death and resurrection...and this is the same “way” that Jesus calls us, his followers to walk.

Remember that early followers of Jesus were often called “followers of the way”!

In Mark, Bartimaeus is not the first person seeking a miracle who approaches Jesus in faith, but he is the only one who actually winds up following him...straight into Jerusalem and into Jesus' own confrontation with the Kingdom of Man.

After ten chapters full of secrecy, confusion, and misapprehension...Bartimaeus shows Mark's readers what faith in Jesus should look like.

Those who tenaciously cling to Jesus out of a faith born from their urgent needs.

But please don't ever confuse a simplistic connection between faith and health. There are no promised cures... and you can't will yourself into healing for the most part...the promise here is that if you have faith and follow Jesus on the way... that you will be restored to wholeness and connection to God and to those around you!

God will always be with you along your own way...

Your faith has made you well...This is not magic, or superstition, or some simple fix...Jesus is not saying that these people somehow believed their way into wellness. Rather He is pronouncing their wellness...declaring it...and making it happen for them.

It is Jesus who heals, and our faith that receives that healing...it is in relationship and in connection that these folks are restored and made whole...not just in their present conditions or illnesses... but especially in their relationships with God and their Communities.

Bartimaeus here is a model for discipleship...because he is a person of faith with the capacity to see and hear Jesus as the one ushering in the Kingdom of God...we are also invited through Jesus to seek a relationship between faith and wholeness...

God's response is always to have mercy...Go your faith has made you well...your faith has healed you...your faith has restored you and made you whole!

Remember always that your faith...that is your trust in God... will always result in God's presence being with you through all this world has to offer...good or bad!

Now sometimes you may be physically healed...and other times not...but with faith in Jesus you can be guaranteed that you will never walk the path alone... and that through it all there will always be transformation and wholeness...connected to God and Community!

So now go... your faith has made you well...And now what's left is for you to come and follow!

Your faithful servant,

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