

## “I Want To See”

Mark 10: 46-52

In our text today, we hear about Bartimaeus who is a blind beggar whom Jesus heals. There really isn't anything unusual about this story. It holds a lot of the same elements as other healing stories do in the Gospel of Mark. Like the other stories, we hear about someone who needs healing. We hear about Jesus seeing this person or hearing this person calling out his name. Like all the other healing stories, we hear about Jesus healing this person. There really isn't anything unusual about the story of Bartimaeus.

So why did Mark think he needed to add one more story to this Gospel? Was he needing 1000 words to complete his assignment and without this story of Bartimaeus he was only at 700 words? What is the reason behind adding just one more healing story?

Well, to help us understand the reason why there is just one more healing story in this Gospel, first we need to understand that for Mark the focus of this healing is not Jesus. The focus of this healing is Bartimaeus. I know this sounds crazy. As people of faith, we turn to the Gospels to learn more about Jesus and

now the preacher is telling us this story is not about Jesus but about some blind beggar.

Well, yes. Because sometimes in turning to the stories of faith, we put on blinders, reading the stories with certain expectations that blind us to what is really going on in the text. Most of the time, in reading our stories of faith, we tend to forget that the transformative power of Jesus was not just found in who he is as the Son of God. It was and is also experienced in the people he interacted with, broke bread with, talked with and yes even healed. Jesus was more than just power to calm the storms. He could and did see everyone as a child of God. And for us as people of faith, that is what makes all the difference.

Let me explain: As I said before, there really is not much that is different about this healing story. As I said before, it has all the same elements as many other stories in the Gospel of Mark. If there is something that sets this story apart and calls for us to pay attention, it would be found in the actual act of the healing itself.

Usually in the Gospel of Mark, when Jesus heals someone, the healing is done in private with no chance of anyone finding out about it. And then when the healing is complete, Jesus tells the person, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen. Don’t tell anyone about what happened here!”

Which usually didn't happen because one of the first things people did after being healed by Jesus was go and tell everyone they met. And who could blame them? Just imagine after being healed from a disease that plagued you for years, after being healed from a disorder that kept you from your family and friends...Just imagine after being healed from an illness that because of it, you had been pushed to the margins and ignored for years, now finally you were healed, what's the first thing you would do?

We all know that when it comes to really good news, none of us can wait to share it with everyone we met. Just look at social media. Facebook and Twitter are filled each and every day with people telling everything about their day. Whether it is what they ate for breakfast that morning or what milestone they just achieved, people share good news. And no matter how small that news may be, we can't wait to make it Facebook official. Can you just imagine what your social media's newsfeed would look like if you had just been given back your life because now you are healed? Everyone's phones and computer screens would be dinging, tweeting, whistling or binging so much that you might just start to wonder if you were trending that day.

The fact of the matter is good news cannot be silenced! It was great that Jesus thought to ask people to keep quiet about him being the Son of God and all,

to keep quiet about experiencing the Kingdom of God in their midst but that was never going to happen. Good News cannot be silenced!

Notice in this particular healing, Jesus doesn't ask Bartimaeus to be silent after he heals him. Jesus never tells Bartimaeus to not tell anyone what happened here today. In fact, Jesus does the complete opposite. Jesus lifts Bartimaeus from the midst of the crowd, brings him center stage where everyone can see what is going on, and then he heals Bartimaeus. No commands. No requests. No admonitions to keep quiet. The good news cannot and will not be silenced. This is what sets this healing apart.

It is not done behind doors where no one can see what is happening. It is out in the open for all the world to see. Now we may find ourselves asking, "Why would Jesus tell others to be quiet and not Bartimaeus? Well, as they say, Timing is everything.

This is Jesus' last miracle before he triumphantly enters into Jerusalem. In the very next chapter, Jesus will be riding in on a donkey, surrounded by the crowd, shouting Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the Name of the Lord. Jesus will be going through the gates of Jerusalem while the crowd surrounds him and celebrates the coming of the Kingdom of God. As soon as Jesus enters the gates, things will be different. The mighty will fall. The people will be restored. At

least that is what the crowd expects. Or should I say, that is what the crowd wanted or hoped would happen.

But that is not what happens. Once in Jerusalem, after Jesus enters the gates, he rides around for a little bit. Jesus takes a look around, and then leaves. Jesus leaves without doing really anything. The crowd is so disappointed. Where is the Kingdom of God? They missed it.

That's right. They missed it. The crowds missed what was right in front of their faces because they could not see. They were blind and could not see that the Kingdom of God was already there in their midst. The Kingdom of God didn't come when Jesus entered the gates of Jerusalem. The Kingdom of God was already there in their midst as Jesus healed Bartimaeus and restored his sight.

You see, Jesus didn't need the triumphant ride or the shouts from the crowd to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God. It had already been announced. The coming of the Kingdom of God had already been announced through the act of Jesus healing Bartimaeus, when he restored Bartimaeus to life. The Kingdom of God had already been announced through Bartimaeus' cries for mercy. It had already been announced through Bartimaeus' cries for hope. It had already been announced through Bartimaeus' cries for someone to stop and see him as a child of God.

Jesus has been telling his disciples along that the Kingdom of God was coming. He has told them time and time again that the Kingdom of God was there. Jesus has told them over and over again that the Kingdom of God was not a kingdom of privileges or riches. Rather it was and is a kingdom where the blind would see, the deaf would hear, the lame would walk and the outsider would be welcomed. And that is exactly what happened. The Kingdom of God came and no one noticed. Well, almost no one noticed. Bartimaeus noticed and his life was forever transformed.

The Kingdom of God was there in the crowd's midst and they missed it, all because it came in the form of a blind beggar no one noticed, a blind beggar no one cared about. The Kingdom of God came in the form of a blind beggar whom the crowd had tried to silence.

After all, Bartimaeus was an outsider, pushed to the margins and had nothing really to offer. His cries for help annoyed the crowd. His cries for recognition disturbed their peace and quiet. Bartimaeus' cries for mercy disrupted the status quo. The crowd tried to silence Bartimaeus because his very presence confronted them with all the times they had not shared God's justice and compassion. So they decided that the best course of action was to ignore him. It is better to keep him quiet. Best to keep him in his place. Best to pretend he doesn't

exist. After all, to the crowd's way of thinking, the Kingdom of God only cares about the insiders, right?

Wrong! The life giving thing about the Kingdom of God is that it never does what we expect it to do. It has the power to open our eyes, to open our hearts, to open our ears to the wonderful grace and love of God that is already there in our midst, if we let it.

Because if we listen closely enough, Bartimaeus' cries are still ringing in our world today. They are echoed in people's cries for justice, in people's cries for compassion. They are echoed in people's cries for honesty and truth. They are echoed in the people's cries for food, for a living wage, for affordable health care, and affordable housing. They are echoed in the cries of the nearly 1 in 5 children who live in poverty, in the cries of the nearly 70% of poor children who come from families who are the working poor, families who work full-time yet still do not make a living wage. Their cries still echo in our world today.

And just like the crowd back then, we have a choice. We can let these cries annoy us and pretend they don't exist. Or we can look with the eyes of the Kingdom of God and see...see that there are people who need mercy, see that there are people who are hurting. We can look with around with eyes of the Kingdom of

God and see that there are people right here in our midst who are crying out just to be seen as a child of God.

**Or let me say it this way:** in November 2013 Mormon bishop David Musselman posed as a homeless man and interacted with congregants outside a Taylorsville, Utah, church before services one Sunday:

.At least five people asked David Musselman to leave the church property in Taylorsville, some gave him money but most were indifferent.

He said he disguised himself as a homeless man to teach his congregation a lesson about compassion. "Many actually went out of their way to purposefully ignore me, and they wouldn't even make eye contact," he said. Many of them I wouldn't ask for anything...no food or any kind of money, yet their inability to even acknowledge me being there was very surprising."

In our text today, no one saw Bartimaeus, well, no one except one person- the one who came to bring the Kingdom of God to earth, to usher in a kingdom where the blind would see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk and the outsider will be welcomed, who came to show us that the same Kingdom of God is in our midst day in and day out. Now is the time to open our eyes. Now is the time to listen to the cries for justice and peace. Now is the time to practice our faith by raising our voices and saying that this hate and hurt must stop. By saying no longer can we just ignore the issues. By saying God in your mercy, restore our sights. Because maybe just maybe by doing these things, we too can bring healing and wholeness to our world. May it be so. Amen.