

October 25, 2009

Scripture: Mark 10: 46-52

Sermon: "The blind leading the blind"

For the last few weeks, we have traveled with Jesus and the disciples along the road to Jerusalem. Each week they have inched closer and closer to Jerusalem. Each week, the band of disciples continue dream about what will happen when Jesus walks through the gates of Jerusalem. And each week, Jesus brings the disciples back down to earth by talking to them about what it means to be a disciple, what it means to be a person of faith, and what is required to be a person of faith. And each week, the disciples don't get it.

It is like they have this huge blind spot when it came to understanding, "seeing" if you will, where the Kingdom of God really is in this world. They have this huge blind spot when it comes to seeing and understanding who Jesus really is. They have this huge blind spot that prevent them from understanding Jesus' true ministry for the world.

A blind spot that prevents their faith from truly grasping their calling as disciples and prevents their faith from developing into a deeper relationship with God.

Jesus is trying every which way to get them to see what it is in those pesky blind spots that the disciples have developed when it comes to discipleship. Jesus wants to them to see what is blocking their faith from growing into a true relationship with God. Jesus wants to remove the blind spots along the disciples' journey of faith and really get them to see what it means to claim the term followers of Jesus.

"Okay, disciples, we are getting ready to enter into Jerusalem, what I need for you to do is to check your blind spots. Disciples, I need you to check your blind spots, really see what is preventing you from being into true relationship with God and from becoming the person that God created us to be. Disciples, I need you to check your blinds and really see the Kingdom of God at work in the world. Disciples, I need to you to check your blinds spots and really see your faith at work.

Remember the rich young man. Blind spot. He didn't want to give up his possessions. They were more important than his relationship with God. Remember that time when I told you to let the children come. Blind spot. Disciples, you have to be like a child-trusting, faithful, and hopeful to truly experience the Kingdom of God. Remember, when James and John asked me to give them spots of privilege in God's Kingdom. Blind spot. Disciples, God's Kingdom is about serving others, recognizing the power of compassion, and seeing that God's Kingdom works differently."

Okay Disciples, now that we have reviewed the lessons, and we are ready to get out on the road once more, let's ease out and meet up with the crowd once more. Just remember to check your blind spots. Check your mirrors of hope. Check your mirrors of grace. Really see where the Kingdom of God is working in the world. Check your blind spots and really challenge your faith. Help your faith grow by seeing God all around you.

And like any good student drivers, the disciples' hands at 10 and 2 on the steering wheel. They check out the situation and gently ease into the flow of the traffic of the crowd. The disciples are making it along and whew, according to Mark, make it through Jericho, no incidents! And then bam! Just on the outskirts of town, they have a collision with the Kingdom of God because they weren't aware of what was going on and who was in their blind spots.

It is like they had blinders on. The disciples could see what is in front of them: Jerusalem. They were busy making plans for the celebration. Blind spot. They were busy figuring out what their first act of power would be as Jesus' dream team. Blind spot. Their vision was becoming more limited with each step they took closer to Jerusalem.

Jesus and the disciples come upon Bartimaeus just outside the town of Jericho. He is a blind beggar and sitting square in the disciples' blind spot. Bartimaeus cries out: "Have mercy on me!" And then wham! Collision with the Kingdom of God! There he was sitting up against the walls, wearing a dirty cloak, hoping that someone would see him and have mercy on him, hoping that someone would give him back his dignity once more, hoping that someone would see beyond the blind beggar exterior and really see the child of God that dwells inside.
Blind spot!

A beggar. A blind beggar. Someone who was pushed to the margins and told to stay there.
Blind spot!

The crowd rushes by and barely takes notice of him. A few coins are dropped nearby and Bartimaeus clumsily feels along the ground for the coins. The crowd rushes by, holding their nose because the stench is so much. The crowd rushes by and doesn't see Bartimaeus because he sort of blends into the wall.

Blind spot!

If only the crowd would checked their mirrors, their mirrors of compassion, their mirrors of grace, their mirrors of discipleship, then they would see Bartimaeus and understood that God was working in the world. They would see him and knew that as a child of God, Bartimaeus deserved better. They would see him and knew that God's Kingdom was not limited to just a few. If only they would check their mirrors of hope, then the crowd would see that here was a chance for healing, for wholeness, for restoration.

Blind spot!

As the disciples approach the gates, they hurry past as well. But Jesus stops. Jesus sees the Kingdom of God at work. Jesus calls to the disciples and says here is a child of God in need of healing, in need of wholeness, in need of restoration. Disciples, remove your blinders and see the Kingdom of God at work in the world.

Check your mirrors of hope. Check your mirrors of grace. Check your mirrors of compassion and really see God Kingdom at work in this world.

So Jesus calls to Bartimaeus and asks: What do you want me to do for you? And Bartimaeus responds: Let me see again. Let me have the opportunity for wholeness. Let me have the opportunity for renewal. Let me have the opportunity for restoration. Let me have the opportunity to be seen as a child of God once more. Remove the blind spot and use this healing as an opportunity for the world to see God's Kingdom at work in the margins. Remove the blind spots and open our eyes to see and our minds to understand that God's grace is not limited to a certain few. Remove the blind spots and show the world that we are called to be responsible to and for each other.

And Jesus says Your faith has made you well.

Bartimaeus is healed by his faith. Bartimaeus shared his prayer with Jesus and he was given sight. Bartimaeus shared his deepest desire with Jesus and he was given his life back. And that is the faith we are called proclaim. That is the faith that we are called to practice, to remove our blind spots, to check our mirrors of compassion and hope, and to really see God at work in the world.

The author of Mark uses the story of Bartimaeus to show a difference in the blind spots that are a part of our journeys of faith, to show us the blind spots that we create along the way, to show us the blind spots that prevent us from truly understanding our call and the faith that we proclaim.

The disciples were called to follow and to see the miracles of Jesus, to see and experience his teachings, to see the coming of the Kingdom of God but they didn't get it. They couldn't see. They were blind to all that Jesus was doing. They couldn't see who Jesus really was until Jesus' triumph ride into Jerusalem.

Their blind spots would not be removed until after the cross, until after they experience the risen Lord in their lives. Their blind spots would not be removed until after they really opened themselves up and understand who Jesus really is.

On the other hand, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, who is sitting outside the gates of the city, waiting, sees that Jesus is the Son of David and cries out to him for mercy. He may be blind but he knows who Jesus is. His blind spot is removed. He doesn't need palm branches and shouts from the crowd to know that this man, this Jesus is special, that Jesus will bring him sight. Bartimaeus knew who Jesus he was unable to see him. He recognized the Kingdom of God at work in the world.

And today we are given the same opportunity as Bartimaeus and as the disciples. We have been given the opportunity to remove our blinders and really see God at work in the world. We have been given the opportunity to name the things that prevent us from growing in our faith. We have been given the opportunity to truly see who Jesus is in our lives. We have been given the opportunity to accept the challenge to remove the blind spots and show this world that God is at work in this world.

Because we claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. We proclaim a faith that has the “courage to speak and to announce for [all of God’s children] a new possibility. We proclaim a faith that “sits, leaning forward, ready to leap at the opportunity to answer God’s call whenever it might come.” We proclaim a faith that changes, that heals, that brings wholeness, and that sees all as children of God.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we look at this world through the eyes of faith, through the eyes of the cross, through the eyes of hope, and through the eyes of new life and we can see and fully understand that God is working in our world.

As we continue our journeys of faith, may we always be aware of our blind spots and continue to grow in our relationships with God. Amen.

Rev. Heather McColl
Midway Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)