

*"The Faith of the Blind"* based on Job 42:1-6, 10-17 and Mark 10:46-52

Delivered at Absecon Presbyterian Church Oct. 24, 2021 by Ruling Elder David R. Watts, Pulpit Supply

Most of us are blessed with decent eyesight. For many of us glasses are needed, especially as we approach an older age, but do we see and react, to what God places in our path? Using our sight are we able determine what God wants us to do as one of His followers? Often, opportunities and obstacles are plainly in front of us? Bartimaeus recognized Jesus as the "Son of David" without having sight. He displayed a faith of clear vision that many of his disciples were unable to show. He listened to those around him and understood what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus. He displayed a clear faith.

When we picture a blind man from the time of Jesus, what comes to mind? It may be a homeless street person, living in a cardboard box, in an alley of some town, (other than our own). They are photographed by the news, huddled against a building, wrapped in their only possession, a dirty unwashed blanket, used to keep out the cold and provide their only comfort. They are mindless, and of no worth. Change that homeless person, to a blind man and we would be inclined to add a cup to the picture, for begging. Not the type of person, Jesus would choose as a disciple, or would he? Jesus chose, fishermen, sinners and yes, even the sick and blind. Often, as in the case of Bartimaeus, they got up and followed Jesus.

In Mark's reading from Chapter 8:22 we see Jesus make mud and spit then cure a blind man in Bethsaida. This time Jesus heals without touching the blind man, He states, "Go, your faith has made you well." No mud, no touching a hem of His cloak, just faith. The faith strong enough to make Bartimaeus a follower, even during the week of Jesus' passion and death on the cross. What a moment to regain your sight? To become a witness to these events of death and resurrection. Would this cause your faith to increase and strengthen or to be defeated? It could go either way, causing someone to run away in disbelief.

Bartimaeus is portrayed as a model of Christian Discipleship. He repeatedly calls to Jesus recognizing Him by the title "Son of David" and casts aside his cloak, leaving his former life behind. It is very reasonable to view his cloak as his only possession, treasured and possibly the only results he has to show for his meager begging. To him it is more than something to keep him warm through the cold nights. It is pictured as his entire fortune, maybe the only thing he has ever purchased and clung to.

After Bartimaeus calls to Jesus, Jesus responds with the question, "What do you want me to do for you." This is the same reply Jesus gave to James and John in Mark's gospel. James and John asked Jesus to deliver the impossible, to sit at His right and left when he comes to his glory. Bartimaeus response is very different, he says, "My teacher, let me see again." Maybe this is equally impossible, but because of his faith, it is granted. Jesus says, "Go, your faith has made you well." Bartimaeus is an example of someone being annoying, yet persistent, calling to Jesus, even though the crowd and disciples, would have silenced him. The blind man does not care about how the crowd or the disciples view his worth. He is waiting to hear what the "Son of

David” has to say, knowing where true power resides. He calls, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” This is the last healing performed by Jesus before entering Jerusalem for His passion and death. The name Bartimaeus means “son of Timaeus”, Jesus is reminding us that he is creating a new family: “Whoever does the will of God, is my brother and sister and mother.” (3:35) These become examples of people who are valued as the least in society and are so easily passed by, yet they shine out as examples of true faith. They hear the Word, accept it and “bear fruit in good soil” (Mark 4). Trust and faith save these lost and broken children of God. We could learn humility from those whom we and society would easily pass by. Instead of preventing these sinners from approaching Jesus we need to enable them to move forward in faith, valuing that what they may have to say, may be worthy of our attention.

Jesus uses this example as a means to teach his disciples and us the value of healing, teaching and challenging power structures. He connects healing to the faith of those healed and the prayers of those around them. Bartimaeus’ life has been dust and darkness, now it is light and ministry. This blind beggar speaks to the power of Jesus’ message to the poor, the sick and the sinful. It affirms the mission to the marginalized and those whom the world rejects. Thinking of the faith of Job, we realize that God has the power to reward his faithful with abundance and joy. Job has been returned to a state of wealth, well being and even old age among four generations of offspring. Bartimaeus regains his sight and a purpose in life.

When Jesus asks the question “What do you want Me to do for you?” How would you respond? Would you ask Jesus to give you a clearer vision in a murky and unsettled time? What could you gain with improved sight? Would you receive a vision of increased blessings, detecting God’s presence in this world? Would you discern the Spirit’s movements to distinguish between truth and falsehoods? Would you see paths between justice and righteousness? Are you willing to pray “Lord, help us to see more clearly, so that we can follow You more clearly?” Would you be willing to put your prayer into action?

Once his sight was restored, Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the way (v. 52) This way leads directly to Jerusalem beginning in Mark Chapter 11 among waving branches and shouting crowds. Along the way Bartimaeus sees Jesus cleanse the temple, debate the religious authorities, praise the generous widow and confront civil authorities. The way leads to the cross, following Jesus being betrayed, arrested, denied, sentenced, beaten, abandoned, crucified and buried. Bartimaeus sees that the way does not end with the tomb, he bears witness to the mystery and power of the resurrection. He may have been one of the last to become Jesus’ followers in the gospel, but this was only the beginning of his faith journey. His sight restored, his beliefs and faith were tested and strengthened.

If Jesus were to ask you, “What do you want me to do for you?” How would you respond? Would you be able to say you have the faith of the Blind? Would you be willing to become a better disciple of Jesus? Or are you living in a world of dust and darkness refusing to see the light? The choice is yours, but remember, that God does reward his faithful, ask Job and Bartimaeus.

The "Son of David" has given us eyesight, how we use it and what we see with it is up to us. When opportunities and obstacles are placed in our path, what do you do with them? Do you act as the Christian that we profess to be, or do you turn away, blind to the gift of faith that God is presenting to you? Bartimaeus gave us more than an example, he demonstrated a choice - for a new way of life. Are you willing to move forward and follow the faith of the blind? The choice is to live in the light of Jesus or to live in darkness. Let your faith strengthen, follow the "Son of David", and choose wisely. Remember, Jesus told Bartimaeus, "Go, your faith has made you well". What would Jesus tell you?

May the Grace and Peace of the Lord and the Holy Spirit be with you always, today and every day. Amen.

# Word Search Puzzle

from WhenWeWordSearch.com (use for free distribution only)  
words in a straight line left to right or top to bottom



Words in the puzzle are printed in ***bold italics***.

Mark 10:46-52 (NRSV) 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.