

Spiritual Smart Glasses

22 Pentecost B

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Gospel: Mark 10:46-52

Bartimaeus comes to Jesus with faith, asking that he might see again. Recognizing Jesus' identity, Bartimaeus is the first person to call him "Son of David" in the Gospel of Mark.

⁴⁶As Jesus & his disciples & a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out & say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹Jesus stood still & said, "Call him here." & they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." ⁵⁰So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up & came to Jesus. ⁵¹ 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." ⁵²Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight & followed Jesus on the way.

Overview - Restored by Grace

The word for today is *restoration*. Both the Old Testament reading & the psalm speak of God's restoration of the people of Israel, gathering them from sorrowful exile into joyful community. The gospel tells the story of Jesus healing Bartimaeus, restoring his sight in response to his faith. Today we do not have the same understanding of "clean" & "unclean" people; however, those who are sick or separated and still need restoration. There are people who are hospitalized for extended periods of time who need to be restored to the community. There are folks in nursing homes who long for the connections they once had to a worshiping community. There are people in prison who are cut off. There are people who have been hurt or disappointed by the church who need restoration. There are people who inside their head & heart feel fragmented, separated, confused, overwhelmed or alone. This promise of restoration is acted out through worship. Much of what happens in worship is concerned with restoration. In the word, in the meal, in confession & forgiveness, we are restored to wholeness (& *holiness*) with God & with one another. In the sharing of the peace we act out the restoration & reconciliation we all need. In the Lord's Prayer we ask, "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." What is this if not a plea for restoration?

This restoration is not through our own merit, but through the love of Christ & the faith we have been given.

Theological Reflection

When Bartimaeus identifies Jesus as “Son of David” (Mark 10:47, 48), it is a statement of faith proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. This statement has political implications, but it is more than political. David is described as a “man after [God’s] own heart”. So too is Jesus, the heir to David’s throne, whose actions toward Bartimaeus reveal to us God’s heart—a heart of mercy & healing. How is knowing that Jesus is a man after God’s own heart good news to you this week?

Service Element or Rite

Bartimaeus cries out to Jesus, begging for mercy. Jesus responds, asking Bartimaeus, “What do you want me to do for you?” (Mark 10:51). What if Jesus asked *you* that question? What is the mercy you seek? Bartimaeus is boldly specific in his request. Bartimaeus, once separated from participating in the temple rituals because of his ritual uncleanness, has been restored to the community of worshipers. Jesus has healed Bartimaeus not just for the sake of healing, but so Bartimaeus can enter the presence of God. This is why Jesus heals & forgives—for the sake of a restored relationship with God.

[Mark 10:46-52](#)

Placed in parallel positions flanking the centerpiece of Mark’s gospel are two stories of healing of the blind. Mark’s use of the name Bartimaeus (“son of Timaeus”) may be a play on Timaeus, a character in a dialogue of Plato in which philosophers use their eyes to see the truth in the heavens. For Mark’s community, Jesus gives sight so that truth can be seen. Calling Jesus son of David recognizes him as messiah, although hidden—the true heir of King David. The blind man trusts that Jesus has the creative power to heal him. “Immediately”—the word is used 27 times in the NRSV translation of Mark—the healed man follows Jesus.

Like Bartimaeus, we are all blind to the truth, unable to see Jesus as messiah unless our eyes are opened. But Jesus of Nazareth, Son of David, the teacher, has mercy on us & makes us into followers who can see in him the truth of God, & we follow him to his cross & resurrection.

Here Mark tells us the name of this “blind beggar”_. Bartimaeus makes a politically charged statement: Jesus is “Son of David” (v. [47](#)), King of the Jews, & Messiah. Elsewhere, Jesus orders silence on the matter, but not here: his time is approaching. For the first time, a sane person immediately proclaims Jesus’ true identity. The “cloak” (v. [50](#), garment) Bartimaeus throws off is probably the cloth he uses to receive handouts; in Mark, *garments* often indicate the *old order*, so Bartimaeus has accepted the new. Jesus’ question in v. [51](#) is the one he asked James & John when they sought status in the kingdom ([10:36](#)), but Bartimaeus’ approach is different: he comes in humility (“My teacher”, v. [51](#)). Jesus simply tells him that his “faith”, (v. [52](#), his receptivity of God’s healing word), “has made you well” (also meaning *has saved you from impending destruction*). Bartimaeus is cured immediately & becomes a follower of Jesus (“the way”). When Jesus meets Bartimaeus, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem (10:32), with the full knowledge of what awaits him there. He has shared this difficult truth with his disciples 3 times (8:31; 9:31; 10:33), news which, on each occasion, was met with misunderstanding (9:32; 10:37) or even resistance (8:32). In an effort to redirect his disciples’ attention away from glory & power, Jesus tries again by describing his mission to them in different terms. He has come not to exercise his authority but to serve; that means his death will be an act of service.

Images in the Readings

The last words that Martin Luther wrote before his death were, “We are **beggars**; this is true.” It is not easy for persons with a high sense of entitlement to know themselves as beggars. That we are saved in community is important for the OT reading for today: who is saved is the **people**, the remnant, they, them, a great company. The individualism popular for several centuries in some parts of the Christian world is always corrected by the communal language in the Bible, which understands salvation as a communal event, a collective experience. In the twenty-first century, the continent in which the highest percentage of residents attends worship on Sunday is Africa, where cultures have retained more of a sense of communal identity than has the West.

- Contrast this story of a man w/ nothing who even drops his cloak w/ the rich man who has many possessions (earlier in Ch 10) but can’t let them go so he can journey with Jesus.

- Can you recognize when Jesus is ‘walking by?’ Do you see him around you?

- Do you see yourself clearly? ...and what you truly need or that you would ask Jesus for?
- Is it time for an update for your spiritual prescription lenses? How might you get that?