

Before we begin, I want to confess my shortcoming as a preacher. I can talk too much. C’mon, no ‘Amen?’ I can’t help it. I am a sermon ‘junkie’... as I get deeper and deeper into the *four* lectionary passages, there is nearly ALWAYS more stuff about the passages I encounter than I really have time for. And yet, perhaps too much in the BACK of my mind, I DO know that there is a directly inverse relationship between one’s **attention span** and the **time spent sitting on one’s rear end**. Sooo, for today’s passage, I will try to employ the Biblical ‘K.I.S.S.’ method: ‘Keep It Simple, Student.’ (Well, in sales there was another word which I won’t use... 😊)

For today, we will focus on just one short passage. One commonly known simply as “Blind Bartimaeus.” Probably one of the more well-known names, and stories, in the New Testament. WHY? Because of its length... 7 verses... is it more easy to remember? ‘Keeping it simple?’ Perhaps its familiarity is because it uses one of the more well-known statements made by Jesus: **“Your faith has made you well.”** Or, is it because of its universal relevance to our human condition... that we are all, in our own ways, like Bartimaeus: **“Blind Beggars”?**... After all, this ‘Good News’ that we believe... aka, “Evangelism”... was described by a 20<sup>th</sup> century Christian theologian from Sri Lanka, D.T. Niles, as **“one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.”** You could substitute ‘church,’ or simply ‘Christianity,’ for that ‘scary word,’ evangelism. This is our ‘Christian cafeteria.’ Our Sunday morning ‘food pantry.’ That place where we ‘beggars’ come to find ‘bread.’ The Living Bread of Life, Jesus Christ.

As I read through this passage a few times, it occurred to me that there were a number of things we ‘people of vision’ might learn from this ‘blind guy.’ Actually FIVE things. Five ways in which in which this seemingly minor figure in Scripture might indeed lend us a ‘hand’ in our own struggle against ‘blindness’... a lack of ‘vision’ *spiritually*...

First, Bartimaeus **boldly approached Jesus**. In that first verse we read that he **“was sitting by the roadside.** (And) **When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out...”**

Here’s Bartimaeus, sitting on the side of the road as countless people go by that couldn’t care less about this worthless beggar. Any number of thoughts could have been going through his mind, probably most of them not good. ‘Why am I like this? How am I going to survive? Why

doesn't anybody care?' But in the midst of his suffering, he hears that this miracle worker from Nazareth is RIGHT THERE NEAR HIM! Hope stirs within 'BB' ('Blind Bartimaeus'). This is 'the One' who can heal him. But he must NOT let this opportunity, quite literally, 'pass him by.' He must ACT! He must speak out to catch his attention. So he shouts out to the Master... which no doubt upset Jesus' entourage. But when they "**sternly ordered him**" to quiet down, "**he cried out even more loudly.**" He would NOT be denied. He was determined to 'connect' with Jesus...

We too should be 'determined' in our effort to 'connect' with Jesus. No matter what 'voices' may try to dissuade us from doing so. Perhaps those outside voices who doubt the truth that God DOES listen to our cries. Like Job's detractors. Or maybe our own internal voices of doubt. And yet we must never lose hope that our Lord listens to us... especially in our times of suffering and despair. We must call out His Name 'loud and proud,' confident. In the words of Hebrews: "**Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**" (Hebrews 4:16)

Second, Bartimaeus' **words displayed his trust** in Jesus. Do you recall how 'BB' addressed the 'Rabboni,' the Teacher? "**Jesus, Son of David.**" That may not seem like a big deal to us, but these names indicated his awareness of the gravity of who he was talking to. The Promised Messiah, the one foretold that would follow in the leadership of revered King David, *Yeshua*, "the One who SAVES." He is saying 'Even if I can't see you with my eyes, I KNOW in my heart who you are. You are my SAVIOR! I **TRUST** in You!'

And then he goes on to, in a more subtle way, express his 'trust' in the "**Son of David.**" He says, both times, "**Have mercy on me!**" Now, this also may not seem like a big thing, but what might you expect a *blind man* to ask for? 'To SEE!' For healing. But he doesn't. He says, "**Have mercy on me!**" Perhaps it is an initial cry for **compassion**, seeking Christ to simply stop to consider his plight. Perhaps it is for **forgiveness** for the ways he has not been a faithful follower of the One True God. OR, maybe it is that Bartimaeus wants to leave latitude for God's will to be done in his circumstances, not just what HE wants. To **trust** in God's wisdom. That maybe it is in God's plan for him to not yet regain his physical sight. Perhaps in his way, 'BB' is living by that petition in the Lord's Prayer: "**Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**" Not 'MY' will be done...

We too are acknowledge the compassion and forgiveness of God in Christ, and to believe that ultimately our best interests will always be served in God's wisdom and timing. In the words of Proverbs, you and I are to ***"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths."*** (Proverbs 3:5-6, NKJV)

Next, after boldly approaching the Son of God... trusting in His Divine nature... then Bartimaeus **leapt at the chance to be in Jesus' presence**. It says that when he was told by friends/disciples to ***"take heart, (and) get up, he is calling you,"*** he 'threw off his cloak,' and ***"sprang up and came to Jesus."*** Now tell me, just how easy do you think this was for a BLIND MAN? Could you imagine your eyes completely covered by a blindfold, that you could NOT take off, and you would have to remove your coat, 'spring up' from sitting on the ground and 'come' to someone over uneven terrain? I sure imagine him **stumbling** around! But he did not hesitate. His Lord beckoned his name, and he sprung into action, no matter how difficult it might be or how silly he looked. God's Son was calling HIM!

So too must we be listening for the ways that God calls on US... and how we too are to 'leap' at the chance to come into His presence. The call of Christ is not mere words to be listened to and pondered... but one's to ACT on. A calling that can come also come through the voices of his 'disciples'... by our friends. While others might yet be discouraging in heeding that call. May we remember these words of Jesus from the Apostle Luke: ***"Blessed are you when men ...insult you, and scorn your name... for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven."*** (Luke 6:22-23)

Bartimaeus, after 'leaping for joy' at the opportunity to stand before Jesus, 'seized that moment' by **speaking honestly and directly to Christ**. After having spoken to the Lord in more general terms, hoping for an 'audience' with 'the King' (or 'Prince of Peace'), 'BB' found even greater encouragement and boldness by the attention Jesus was showing him. There was a sense of 'relationship,' of importance, that allowed him the freedom to speak more openly as to his need. And so, Timaeus' son says to God's son, ***"My teacher, let me see again."***

Now I know that this next association I came up with to the manner in which Bartimaeus spoke 'directly and honestly' to Christ may seem really random... hey, it IS me! For some reason,

a scene from that classic Christmas movie “It’s a Wonderful Life” came to mind. That pivotal scene where George Bailey, after the depths of despair had driven him to doubt his own worth, to question his reason for living, realizes... through the help of a ‘messenger of God’... that his life is indeed quite valuable. That as he stands near ‘the side of a road’ over a bridge, broken yet filled with hope and encouragement, he cries out to God, **“Let me live again! Let me live again!”**

Sound familiar? Like, ‘Let me SEE again!’? It was with the same sort of hope and encouragement that ‘BB’ cried out to His Lord. Open, honest, real. The way that we are to come before God with our petitions and supplications. We are, in Paul’s words, to **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything... let your requests be known to God.”** (Philippians 4:6) And as we do, that ‘peace that surpasses all of our human understanding WILL guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus’...

That same Jesus made it quite clear to Bartimaeus that he was ‘guarding HIS heart and mind... and body.’ **“Go.”** Jesus said. **“Your faith has made you whole.”** And upon hearing this ‘good news’ of healing... due to the faithful acceptance of the ‘Good News’ of Jesus Christ... just where does he ‘GO’ in response to Jesus’ ‘news?’ Because of being made whole, *formerly* ‘Blind Bartimaeus’ responded... **he followed Jesus.** Jesus had given him a ‘new life.’ Therefore, in return, Bartimaeus would commit that new life to Jesus.

As we too have witnessed first-hand the healing that God in Christ has done in our lives... as we come to know the truth of Jesus’ words to US: **“Your faith has made you whole”**... we too are called to ‘follow Jesus.’ How do we say ‘thank you’ for all that God has done for us? How do we demonstrate ourselves to BE the ‘Christian’ we profess to be? By following Jesus. In His words in John’s Gospel, Jesus says that **“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”** (John 12:26)

We can learn a lot from this seemingly obscure character in Scripture named ‘Bartimaeus.’ **Boldly approach Jesus. Trust in Him. Leap at the chance to be in Jesus’ presence. Speak directly and honestly to Christ. Follow Jesus.**

And I would leave you with one last reminder of why this name is so important. What’s his name? (Bartimaeus). AKA, the ‘son,’ or ‘bar’ in Hebrew, of Timaeus. A name that means, in the Greek, **“honor.”** As in, “My Father will **honor** the one who serves me.”

But if you try to find any information on that name 'Timaeus,' what you will find will likely NOT be about the Biblical figure, but about a central character in one of Plato's writings by that name. In the great philosopher's work, Timaeus begins with a distinction between the **physical** world, and the **eternal** world. The physical one is the world which *changes* and *perishes*: therefore it is the object of **opinion** and **unreasoned sensation**. The eternal one *never changes*: therefore it is apprehended by **reason**. ... Timaeus continues with an explanation of the creation of the universe, which he ascribes to the handiwork of a '**divine craftsman**.'

Friends, we do indeed live in a physical world which 'changes and perishes,' filled with 'opinions' and 'unreasoned sensation.' We look toward that eternal world that never changes, giving us a 'reason' to live. Both of these were created by a 'divine craftsman.' Let us continue to honor that 'divine craftsman' by pointing others to the promised land that never changes, even as we labor in a world of constant change. How do we do that? Like Bartimaeus: "**one beggar showing other beggars where to find food.**" That 'living bread' known as Jesus...

#### CHARGE

"Bartimaeus" – besides being 'Son of Timaeus,' (Latin: "*honor*") can also be defined as "Son of the **unclean**, defiled." US! **Both** unclean... and **honored**.

We are both that 'blind beggar,' scorned by many and quite '**unclean**' in our sinful natures, left to our own devices on the side of the road; AND one who receives the '**honor**' of being cleaned, made holy... SAVED... by our caring, loving, attentive Lord Jesus Christ. Like the Bartimaeus whose vision was restored, may our eyes be opened to **SEE** all that God has done for us. AND may we respond as he did... to **FOLLOW** after our great Healer and Savior, Jesus Christ. As you go out that door to SEE and FOLLOW, know that you do not go alone...

#### **Questions for Reflection**

**What can you do to bring someone to Christ?**

**How can you help someone find his or her healing?**