

Pentecost 23; October 28 & 29, 2018

Mark 10:46-52

Every reporter has an agenda. Ask five people who witness an accident to give an account of what happened, and you'll get five different testimonies, even if they're all trying to be objective. Every re-telling or reporting of a story has a purpose. That's true of current events, and it's true in biblical narratives. This event is recorded by three out of four of the Gospel writers. Therefore, you can't help but to ask the question: *What was Mark's purpose in recording this event?* In Mark's Gospel account of this event, there are a couple of details that Mark mentions that the other writers do not. It is the shortest of the four. Mark tends to get right to the point in the events he describes. So, when Mark *adds* a few details that are not recorded in the other accounts, you can't help to take notice of that.

Mark records this miracle as the last of Jesus' miracles before he enters Jerusalem during Holy Week. Mark wasn't establishing that Jesus *could* heal the sick; that he has already done numerous times. Mark wanted his readers to see *why* Jesus had come. Jesus had come to do a miracle that was much bigger than just restore a man's eyes to see. Jesus had come to shine light into sin-darkened hearts. You see that when you look at the other events that Mark records in this same chapter. He wanted to open the sin-darkened heart of the rich young man. He wanted direct James' and John's ambition to be turned to not benefit themselves but God' kingdom. When he talks about his death, he makes clear why he was coming to die. Jesus did not come to setup a glorious kingdom here on earth. He came to rescue this world from its sin.

Today, he will use a man named Bartimaeus to show that he came to save all, no matter who they are or what they do in life. Mark is the only writer that calls this blind man by name. We don't know how long he had been blind. All we know is his name. His name means "*son of Timaeus.*" "*Son of Timaeus*" – it almost has a ring to it, doesn't it? What picture of him do you have in mind? Poor Bartimaeus. Right? But does that picture change if I tell you the name of "*Timaeus*" means "*defiled, unclean, nasty, corrupt?*" That makes "**Bartemaeus**" the "*son of the nasty guy.*" Strike one.

Where did this "*son of the nasty guy*" live? In Jericho – a city that had been conquered by Joshua and the children of Israel as they entered the Promised land; Jericho – the city whose walls had come tumbling down; Jericho – a city that had been cursed by Joshua (Joshua 6:26). Strike two against him. The third strike this man has going against him is that he was blind. In that day, there wasn't much a blind man could do. No one would hire him. His family has perhaps abandoned him. Or they were a family who struggled to get by from what he was begging on the street. After all, who would want anything to do with the *son of the nasty guy*? All he could do is sit along the side of the road and beg. All he could do is to hope for a few coins to continue to exist in his hopeless condition. It's no wonder the crowd tried to have Bartimaeus be quiet. But Jesus had other plans for him.

This blind, poor, beggar of a man, *saw* more than the whole crowd who was surrounding Jesus. Mark tells us: **"When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' So they called to the blind man, 'Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.' Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus."**

Perhaps, as this man had sat there in the dirt, he listened to Jesus. God had brought him to trust in this man they called Jesus. Bartimaeus may have been poor and blind and an outcast of society, but he knew who Jesus was. This is the **"Son of David."** This is the Messiah that had been promised to David. This is HIM. When Jesus calls him for him to come over, he gets up, throws his coat to the side and goes to Jesus. **"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."** In this man's words, we see another difference in Mark's account compared to the other Gospel writers. Here he records the man using the term "**rabbi.**" That may not sound like such a big deal. After all, there were lots of rabbis and teachers. Everyone knew Jesus was a great teacher. But the Greek word that this man uses for Jesus is the same word that Mary used on Easter Sunday morning, when she saw the resurrected Jesus standing before her, she cries out – **Rabboni.** (John 20:16) – my dearest teacher. Through the eyes of faith, he saw Jesus for whom he is.

This blind man believed in Jesus. It was more than just hoping that Jesus could fix his eyes to see. Through the eyes of faith, he saw God's mercy. He pleads for Jesus' mercy. He saw Jesus as his Savior. This man's story is also your story and my story. We were born into this world with our eyes blinded by sin. We were unable to see Jesus for who he really is. But then God did something about our blindness. Through the water of Baptism, through the power of his Word, God opened our eyes. He opened our eyes so that we could look at Jesus and say: "**Rabboni.**" – "My dear teacher."

If you can't see Jesus as our Savior, our *Rabboni*, our *Messiah*, then you can't make any sense out of this life. Then all you're left with is thinking that the purpose for this life is about ourselves, our stuff, our family, making this world a better place. It's not that any of those things aren't good. It's just so incomplete. Then we are just left grasping at things in this world.

Maybe you've heard the story about three blind men who were trying to figure out what they were touching when they were asked to describe what they were touching. They were all touching the same object. One described it as a big long snake, another a spear and the third as a wall. What they couldn't see is that what they were touching was an elephant. They were each just touching a small part of the animal. They only had an incomplete picture. They couldn't see the elephant standing before them.

That's what Jesus does. He gives us the complete picture. He opens our eyes to see him as our Savior. He opens our hearts to believe in Jesus. That's what Jesus wanted this blind man to see. He gave him faith. With that faith, this man was going to be okay. Mark closes this section with these words: "**Go, your faith has healed you.**" **Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.** Jesus is not saying that this man's faith had caused Jesus to take away his blindness. Jesus is not saying that this somehow this man earned Jesus' healing. If he did, think what that would mean? Then you would have to ask yourself the question: *Do I have a strong enough faith. Maybe I just need to pray harder, do a little bit more, be a little bit better.* Then Jesus will answer my prayer. How depressing that would be? How easy it would be to think that my faith has failed.

A better translation of the words that Jesus says to this man would be: "*Go, your faith has rescued you, your faith has delivered you.*" He isn't telling him that he isn't going to have any more struggles in this world. But he is saying that through the eyes of faith his perspective of this world will change. He now has meaning and purpose in Jesus. He now sees a Savior who came to give light to a sin-darkened world. He has come to give light to you. Even when we might fall back into that darkness of sin, we throw ourselves at the feet of our Savior and hear his words that he says to us: *I have forgiven you. You're mine. Go. It will be okay.*

That's what Jesus wanted this man to see on that road outside of Jericho. He wanted him to see a Savior who was going to a cross. Mark wanted his readers to know that even if this man might have been known as the *son of the nasty guy*, Jesus had healed his soul. That faith has made him okay before God. This morning, your God wants you to know that everything will be okay for you. Your faith has made you okay. Let's live in the light of Jesus. Amen.