

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Mark 10:46-52

Romans 3:19-28

“God breaks the bow and shatters the spear;  
burns the shields with fire.  
Be still and know that I am God.” AMEN!

Hey there, welcome to Reformation Sunday!

The annual celebration where  
we recognize and recall  
the work of Martin Luther,  
and the other reformers of the church,

who worked to steer Christianity back to grace.

Of course, it was much  
more complicated than that, but today  
following in the line of the reformers,

I have been called to venture away from  
the standard Gospel of John text -  
that is assigned to today and replace it  
with the lectionary reading from Mark.

I know, it's not that bold of a move!

It's not the kind of move  
that will get me excommunicated, nor  
will cause me to go into hiding from  
the church hierarchy. :-)

At least not yet...

But when I read the story of Jesus  
healing the blind beggar, Bartimaeus,

it was apparent that this is  
a perfect Reformation text for us today.

There was the obvious connection  
that Martin Luther was called by God  
to risk life and limb in order to proclaim  
the gospel of Jesus.

And Bartimaeus was called by Jesus  
to change his status of beggar and  
become a disciple who followed Jesus.

Bartimaeus took a risk in leaving his  
place sitting by the roadside.

Patterns, even uncomfortable ones,  
can be hard to break.

We may not see it right away but Bartimaeus  
did risk some basic securities.

He had a cloak  
which was used to collect money,

he had a place to spread the cloak and  
he was collecting alms.

The text tells us, at the calling of Jesus,  
he cast the cloak aside (the money on it, too)  
he sprang up, and went to Jesus even  
before he was healed.

It was physical act of faith, and reformation, in Jesus.

Clearly, Martin Luther and Bartimaeus  
were both called by God. (Pause)

But even more than that realization,  
the real reason (there's two actually)  
for why I simply had to read and preach

on this text is that Jesus asked  
the same question to him that  
he asked James and John last week

when they came with that absurd request  
to be in positions of authority with Jesus.

When they said, "Teacher, we want you  
to do for us  
whatever we ask."

Jesus said to them, "What is it you want

me to do for you?”

It's the same question Jesus asked Bart  
when the blind man shouted out for mercy;  
and sprang up to go to Jesus.

Where James and John  
pretty much looked like fools last week,  
Bart is no fool.

He wasn't wasting time deceiving himself.

He knew he was blind and he knew  
he needed Jesus to help him see, again.

And he was ready to learn and be changed by God.  
(Pause)

Have you ever noticed that some of  
the hardest people to be around are those  
that pretend to know everything or  
have all the answers?

They think that learning and  
positive change are signs of weakness.

The same thing is true for people that  
desire only to climb the ladders of success  
in order to be in the places of distinction.

Once they get there, they never want  
to leave or lift others up.

They lord it over others.

Martin Luther was more like the blind man  
who called out to Jesus and wished to see again,  
than he was like James and John  
who wanted to climb  
the ladder of success and  
sit at places of distinction.

Would the Reformation of the Church  
be a long lasting as it has been if  
they'd have made Martin Luther the pope?

Doubtful...

The second reason why this spoke to me  
so strongly is that Bartimaeus,  
though desperate, knew that in  
calling out to Jesus,  
he was calling out to God.

Bartimaeus knew he needed rescue,  
he'd heard about Jesus and  
cried out to him,  
begging for mercy.

What we ask today is, “Do we?”

Do we know we need Jesus to rescue us?

Are we able to call out to God and beg for it? (Pause)

A holy teacher put it this way,  
“We must listen to what is supporting us.

We must listen to what is encouraging us.

We must listen to what is alive in us.”

These are the trustworthy voices.

Voices that shame, harm, or diminish ourselves,  
or other people, are not the voices of God.

They are the ego voices.

The ladder climbing, know-it-all facades  
we think we must use to get by.

And over our history, these are the voices  
we’ve listened to and used for ourselves.

Yet, God’s Spirit persists and reforms.

The voice of God tells us over and over again,  
“All have sinned and all fall short of  
the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23).

The prophets we need to listen to say,  
“God writes new covenants upon our hearts  
so that all shall know God,  
from the least to the greatest,” (Jeremiah  
3:34)

Jesus called Martin Luther.

Jesus called Bartimaeus.

Children of God, Jesus calls you, too.

Will you spring up, and cast away  
a comforting possession or life pattern,  
and follow Jesus on the way?

Caution, however...

Being like Martin Luther and  
Bartimaeus is not sexy. (Pause)

In Jacqueline Bussie’s book “Love Without Limits”  
she wrote about the way human beings  
“quantify and commodify everything,

but love (she writes) wildly refuses

to adhere to our market economics of scarcity.

The more there is [of love]  
the more love multiplies.

Agape is more like algae, not amethysts.

Agape is more like mosquitos,  
[than it is like] money.

Algae? Mosquitos?

See, I told you it's not sexy." :-)

You see, following Jesus on the way  
doesn't equate to climbing a ladder but  
it does mean we rise up and live better lives.

We go to Jesus and it means  
we are loved and called  
as if we are the only ones  
that God loves and calls.

The walk with Him on the way, however,  
teaches us that God's love isn't  
restricted or sectioned  
to only a particular few.

Picking up again with Jacqueline's book,



“God wrote the truth about love  
on the pages of the universe,  
but we keep missing the memo.

The universe balloons bigger and bigger  
with every passing second,  
which sounds terrifying like something  
that would annihilate us.

Turns out, though, it’s exactly the perfect pace  
for everyone to thrive.

The universe whispers: *love like this.*” (Pg36)

Like Bartimaeus, we wish to see again and  
Jesus called him to a deeper mission  
that brought him into community.

Following Jesus will sound like a voice of risk,  
a voice of trust, of surrender, of destiny, of love.

It will never sound like a voice of shame,  
or guilt, or exceptionalism.

God’s voice calls to our deepest self  
and it always frees us.

May the church, our community, the world,

and each of us continue to be  
formed and reformed.

Thanks be to God, we will!

AMEN!