

Mark 10: 46-52

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

Meditation: We begin this story with a blind beggar and end it with one who becomes a follower of Jesus on the way to Jerusalem. How does this happen? On the surface it may appear that the healing of this blind man is the key. But this would be mistaken. The key is faith. The blind man has faith in Jesus - in who he is and what he can do. And as is typical in the gospels, the mark of genuine faith is stubborn persistence. Bartimaeus does not give up. He calls out in spite of the jeers and calls for him to be silent. He calls out louder and louder. He will not take no for an answer. He will not be ignored. This is the kind of persistent calling out in faithful trust in God and in Jesus - God's representative on earth - that alone can bring healing however these are revealed to us.

Persistence in faith and in prayer is also about 'steadfastness' (another biblical word used to describe God's love). 'Faithfulness' is another related word, as is 'perseverance.' Nothing in life that matters can be achieved or fulfilled without persistence, steadfastness, faithfulness and perseverance. And these dimensions of faith are all so necessary in this time of Covid-19. Unlike something traumatic that happens all at once, leaving us to deal with the aftermath, what we are all undergoing collectively is a longer, drawn-out crisis, with no clear end in sight we can definitively see. Our prayerful communion with God requires persistence, steadfastness, faithfulness and perseverance in our practice of it, keeping it alive and real. Like Bartimaeus, we will not give up until we see the light and the path following Jesus may yet take us.

Prayer: Grant us greater faith, O God, the kind of faith we need to meet this day and this time of our lives. Inspire in us persistence, steadfastness, faithfulness and perseverance, so that we don't lose our way but find it in the midst of this pandemic. May you become ever more real as a presence and force in our lives; Amen.