**Blindness** Mk 10: 46-52 October 27, 2024

***Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.***

* If I were to ask how many here ever experienced despair in your life time, I suspect that in us older folk, some hands might go up.
* But when I turn to the dictionary for the meaning of despair, I discover that it means ***total*** hopelessness, as in *a complete void of hope.*
* When I look at it in that sense, I realize that I never really experienced despair because I always had at least a thread of hope.
* Despair is something so horrible that it often finds expression in suicide.
* In my experiences, while not truly depair, however gave me an appreciation of despair such that I felt completely helpless.
* But, it was in my helplessness that I was able to come to a deeper realization of how, when push comes to shove and we are faced with decisions and questions that really matter – questions about the meaning of our lives, we have no where

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to turn except to God alone.

* I am thankful for my early Christian upbringing because without it the alternative could also have meant turning completely away from God.
* Regardless of outcome, to discover helplessness can be the opportunity to realize how our only source of any meaning in any situation comes only from God.
* Sometimes it is necessary to know or to experience the bad before we are able to appreciate the good.
* In addiction recovery programs, they say a person will not be really serious about working towards recovery until they have hit bottom – or possibly until they have experienced despair.
* Blindness is something that I can imagine could lead to a road of despair in a person.
* Those of us with sight cannot possibly know how horrible it must be for a person who cannot see. We are so accustomed to seeing the beauty around us that we cannot even imagine what it

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would be like to be in total and continuous darkness.

* Today, as bad as we might imagine it to be, blindness was an even worse tragedy in the ancient world, because a person who was blind at that time was reduced to begging and had to depend totally on others for their survival.
* Such was the man Bartimaeus who was sitting and begging beside the road in Jericho.
* Blindness pointed to despair because there was no hope of improvement in the situation, nor was there any social assistance as we would have today. The person was blind and knew that they would always be blind.
* I believe Bartimaeus understood despair. He was blind. He was a beggar. He was definitely an outsider. He was a nobody in terms of any status. We don’t even know his name. Bartimaeus is Aramaic for *son of Timaeus.*
* But Bartimaeus was unrelenting in his pursuit of Jesus.
* Despite being rebuked, he simply

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shouted all the louder, “***Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!***”

* For Jesus to stop and invite Bartimaeus to come to him is significant because I would think this might be a time when Jesus would have been very focused on His mission and the road that lay ahead of Him.
* Just a few verses before this story we read where Jesus told His disciples how He was going to Jerusalem where he was going to be betrayed, flogged and killed.
* Now at Jericho, He was within 20 miles of Jerusalem and I suspect He was thinking a great deal about what lay ahead. Yet Jesus not only heard the cry of Bartimaeus, He stopped and had him come to Him.
* Word of Jesus had spread, even to Jericho, and Bartimaeus knew this was his only hope to be healed from his blindness.
* Jesus, on the other hand, would have known the extent of Bartimaeus’ faith by the title that Bartimaeus used.

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* By calling to Jesus by the honorific title, “***Son of David***”, Bartimaeus was actually declaring that Jesus was the Messiah. The title “***Son of David***” would be expressing the Jewish conviction that the Messiah would be a Son of David.
* Also, it is significant that we read that Bartimaeus threw his cloak aside as he came to Jesus.
* This cloak would represent Bartamaeus’s entire worldly possessions.
* He was not going to allow himself to be hindered by anything as he ran to receive what he knew only Jesus could give him.
* Bartimaeus might have been physically blind when he called out to Jesus, but spiritually, I believe he had 20-20 vision.
* This account of Bartimaeus reveals really a double blessing. There was a healing miracle in that he received his physical sight.
* Even more importantly it reveals how

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Bartimaeus had the spiritual awareness to know that Jesus was the Messiah and his response was to turn to Him – to trust and follow Him.

* As bad as physical blindness must be, I believe an even worse condition is spiritual blindness.
* Physical blindness impairs us for this short life here on earth while spiritual blindness could affect us for eternity.
* The church has been entrusted with such a very imp role in helping people discover the truth and reality of what God has done for us and what God offers us.
* And once a person grasps this reality the response has to be joy and jubilation - a spiritual reawakening.
* That is the way the gospel works, or at least how the gospel is supposed to work.
* Unfortunately, the Church today seems to be caught up in some false gospels.
* There is the social gospel where the Church has fallen to the plight of serving the whims and desires of

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society.

* There is the prosperity gospel where there is an expected return of financial blessing for claiming to follow Jesus.
* And then there is the true gospel where we seek the will of the Lord and trust Him with every aspect of our lives.
* I believe this account of Bartimaeus’s encounter with Jesus represents the true gospel and offers us some very important principles and guidance.
* 1st, Bartimaeus was not caught up in worldly ways. He was desperate and knew that the only answer was to turn to Jesus.
* I have had people who had gone through some really rough times in life, including sickness, tell me that they were glad they had encountered such awful things because it caused them to realize their helplessness and turn to Jesus.
* For Bartimaeus to throw off his cloak meant that he was willing to put Jesus before everything, before any and all worldly possessions.

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* Worldly possessions are not bad, but when we put them ahead of God, then they become an idol that replaces a personal relationship with Jesus.
* For Bartimaeus to have his sight, I’m sure would have meant that he would have moved out of his status as a beggar and would have been exposed to the same worldly temptations as anyone else.
* We are not told the subsequent details of Bartimaeus’s life, but having this life transforming encounter with Jesus would, I’m sure, have set the direction for the rest of his life.
* We are called to take responsibility for our own faith walk. Jesus said “***Can a blind man lead a blind man. Will they not both fall into a pit?***” (Luke 6:39)
* Our salvation is not in the institution of the church – it is in our faith in J. C.
* Physical blindness is a horrible thing but spiritual blindness in the face of eternity can lead to real despair.
* Why we too need to throw off our cloak and run to Jesus.

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* Once we come to a point where we realize, like Bartimaeus, that we are lost without Christ, then I believe Jesus asks us, just as He asked Bartimaeus, “***What do you want me to do for you?***”
* And what He wants to give us, of course, is something that releases us from the hopeless task of attempting to seek meaning and purpose from this world.
* He opens our eyes to the reality of God’s plan for the world – for you and me.
* Jesus said:“***I have come that you might have life and have it to the full.***” (Jn 10:10)
* This is a double blessing:
  1. Fullness of life today because we know the assurance of our salvation.
  2. Eternal life.