

“HEALING OF BLIND BARTIMAEUS: A REAL EYE OPENER.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Mark 10:46-52

Introduction.

It has been a rough week in our world this past week. It's painfully obvious that we live in a broken, fallen, sinful world filled with evil and evil people with evil intentions. First, the senseless killings at the Boston Marathon, then the continued explosions and deaths in the following manhunt. More news of terrorism, suicide-bombings in other countries, and sabre rattling in North Korea. There is a thread, a link between them all. It's the sin and evil in the hearts of every human being, inside my heart and yours.

And with every breaking news story our hearts grow a bit more numb, a bit more calloused, a bit more removed and distant. Tragedy repeated blurs things and desensitizes. Compassion turns to anger which turns to hate which turns to apathy. After a while we don't have the emotions to care anymore. How many times can we keep giving to disaster relief or humanitarian aid?

What are we to do in a broken world full of sin and evil? How then shall we live? When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?

In the sweet providence of God our text for this morning is a beautiful microcosm of how we should all live and respond in a world of suffering and sin.

Remember where Jesus was going, to Jerusalem where His life would be violently taken in a terrible act of injustice and barbarism. Yet God is sovereign and in control and has a purpose and plan that cannot be thwarted and must work for His glory and our good. Let's take a closer look at the story.

Mark 10:46-52.

Jesus was deliberately and purposefully leading His small band of 12 disciples from Jericho west on that road that leads up from Jericho thirty five hundred feet to Jerusalem, twenty hard miles away.

There are beggars by all the main roads and especially at this time of year as thousands of Jews make their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover. If you have to beg this is a lucrative spot. Sort of like on the Guide in Bellingham on a Canadian holiday.

None of us here know the darkness of blindness and the suffering of total poverty. None of us know the shame and indignity of begging. Being a blind beggar was a double curse in those days. He knew nothing but the constant condemnation of the population and the callousness of people whose compassion had worn thin a long time ago.

Bartimaeus had the good fortune to be begging in this spot when Jesus walked by. Hearing the crowd he inquired who it was and he was told Jesus of Nazareth was walking by. He was blind but he wasn't dumb or deaf, he knew something about this Jesus and that He could heal him. So he started shouting and raising a ruckus.

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

He was told it was Jesus of Nazareth but he called out “Jesus, Son of David.” What faith! He was calling Jesus the Messiah.

Don’t miss the incredible irony of this scene. The Son of David was about to go to the City of David where He would be denied and rejected and killed, but a blind man in Jericho, the city of Rahab the harlot knew who Jesus really was, the Messiah, the Son of David.

Blind Bartimaeus saw things the Pharisees and the Disciples didn’t see. What did Jesus say about the Pharisees, having eyes yet not seeing?

John 9:39 Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”

Bartimaeus had never seen a single miracle of Jesus, but he believed for one. He had heard and he believed.

Now as is sometime the case with people around individuals who are different or people who are socially inappropriate or who are loud or who make us uncomfortable, many in the crowd tried to silence Bartimaeus. Their hearts were cold, they lacked compassion.

They were numb to this man’s pain and his condition and what he had suffered all his life at the hands of strangers and family alike. This man had been in the School of Suffering all his life born without sight, without hope in this world, left to a life of sitting on dirty roads begging, crying out for help to the only one who could help.

Undaunted, perhaps because he no longer cared what uncaring people thought, he shouted louder, he persisted, he was in earnest, and he got Jesus’ attention.

And here is the remarkable thing, for a second time in human history the Son stood still, Jesus lets the voice of a blind beggar stop Him in His tracks.

Jesus asks him the same question He asked James and John when they made a request of Jesus. “What do you want me to do for you?” The difference is James and John asked for glory. Bartimaeus ask not for wealth or power or success but for physical sight.

He knows exactly what he wants, what he needs more than anything else. “Make me to see. Open my eyes.” And Jesus said, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.”

Jesus hears his prayer, Jesus answers his prayer. Jesus’ power over sin and all its effects overcomes the blindness and restores the poor man’s sight. Luke tells it this way:

Luke 18:43 And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

What does he do with his sight? What does he do with this wonderful gift he has received? He follows Jesus. He uses his new found life for Christ. It was cause for worship, it was cause for gratitude. It was cause for giving up his old ways and following Jesus.

Application and conclusion.

What should we do in the face of the tragedy of sin and all of its effects? What should we do when we are confronted with evil in our own hearts or in the hearts of someone else? What should we do with the spiritual blindness all around us?

Acknowledge the truth about our sin and its effects (repentance).

Know the truth about you and tell the truth about you. The first step of being a Christian is “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner.” And the continuing steps of being a Christian are, “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner, even the chief of sinners.”

Why are people so half-hearted about faith and about God these days? Why are people so easily put off the path of following hard after God?

Because they don’t have a clear sense of their need. Bartimaeus wouldn’t be deterred. He knew firsthand his darkness and suffering. We must know our own disease before we will pursue healing, we must know our sin before we will beg for the remedy. When you know your guilt, then you seek your pardon.

The first thing to do in the face of evil is to recognize our own evil and our need for a Savior who can forgive our sins. All human beings are profoundly sinful and all human beings need to repent.

This is why our nations response to evil is so misguided. We think we need better security when what we really need are better hearts; not more or less guns, but more Gospel.

“Surely I was sinful from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5).

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

“Repent lest you too perish” (Luke 15:5).

Blessed are those who cry for mercy for they shall be heard.

Acknowledge the truth about Jesus (faith).

Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah, the true Son of God. He is the God of mercy and grace and help. The sin and evil in our world is caused by spiritual blindness and the only person who can cure it is the Great Physician, Jesus Christ.

Bartimaeus saw things blind that everyone else with eyes was blind too. He saw the author of salvation and the power of God. What hinders you from believing? Believe. Believe in the face of opposition. Believe in the face of resistance. Believe in the face of doubt and questions. Have faith and be strong in your faith. You have never seen Jesus either, but you can believe.

I Peter 1:8-9 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Acknowledge your need for help from Him (pray).

Psalm 50:15 Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”

Turn to Jesus with your needs and your questions and your trials and troubles. Ask, seek and knock in prayer to Jesus. Ask Him to take away your spiritual blindness. Ask for spiritual vision to see Him more clearly. Ask:

Ephesians 1:17-19 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.

Make diligent use of prayer for the sake of your soul. Ask for things that are good for your soul. Do you know what your soul needs? Do you know what the diseases of our soul are?

Most people spend most of their lives neglecting their own souls. Don't be one of them.

Never undervalue the importance of perseverance in seeking good from God for the sake of your soul. Some people think all they to do is just sit and wait for whatever God will do. Idleness will gain you nothing good. Be earnest about the matters of faith.

Be a spiritual beggar, beg for what's good for your soul. If we can find words for the needs of our bodies and homes, we can certainly find words for the greatest needs of our souls.

Remember Jacob who wrestled with God and said, "I will not let you go until you bless me" (Genesis 32:26). And he wasn't seeking personal wealth or gain, he was seeking spiritual blessing, what was needful and necessary for his soul.

And in your turning to God, don't pay any attention to what others think or say. There are always naysayers, always critics and judges. Too many of us pay too much attention to the words of man and not enough to the Words of God.

Turn to God in prayer with persistence and urgency. And when you pray I promise you the Son will stand still for you and listen to you.

Are you in need, are you suffering, are you afraid, are you hurting or in trouble, cry out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" and persist and He will hear and answer.

Acknowledge your gratitude for Him (Praise, worship Him).

We of all people who have seen so much and know so much and have received so much grace, we above all people should be thankful, grateful, joyful. Make a spectacle of God's grace in your life.

Consider all that you owe to your Lord and Savior and humble yourself before Him in worship and gratitude. Praise is one of the best ways to restore a heart that is numb from tragedy or suffering. Let go of any whining or complaining spirit.

Like the Psalms when the Psalmist cries out for mercy and help and ends in humble worship. When you can praise God in the midst of suffering you can release all your fears and doubts and questions to God, lay them at the cross of Jesus. This is when you let go of the whys and you embrace the Who.

When you surrender to the mystery of God's will and God's ways and trust and obey. Yes, we grieve, but we do not grieve as those without hope. And yes we will grieve again, but again we will grieve not as those without hope. Our hope is built on the sure foundation of Jesus' blood and righteousness.

Make Jesus your treasure. Make Jesus your joy. If you are a man, in a manly way, if you are a woman, in a womanly way.

One thing I know, I once was blind but now I see. And seeing has changed everything.

Let deep heartfelt gratitude for God's saving grace be the reason you turn away from your sin and renounce ungodliness; be the reason you come here every Sunday morning.

Finally, keep your heart open to other people's suffering, show compassion.

On the threshold of Jesus' own impending suffering, He took notice of someone else's suffering. In the midst of your pain you can comfort someone else in their pain.

Have mercy on those in need just as Jesus does. Never push people away from Jesus no matter how annoying they are.

The most compassionate thing we can do for someone else is point them to Jesus and tell them the truth about God.

When all hell breaks loose on earth we can tell them:

Psalm 46:1-3 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Jesus has overcome the world and He is stronger than Satan and evil.

Revelation 21:1, 4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea...He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

“When we awake from the dream men call life, when we put off the image of the earthy and break the bonds of time and mortality...when the scales of time and sense have fallen from our eyes and the garment of corruption has been put off ... when we awaken in the everlasting morning, the face of Jesus will be the sight that will stir us and hold us. Oh, I am sure there will be many wonderful sights there: ... But most wonderful of all will be that face into which Bartimaeus looked that morning outside the gate of Jericho, after his eyes had been opened—the face of him who loved us and redeemed us, and washed us in his own precious blood.”

“And for you and me, too, that will be the greatest of all sights.” (Clarence Macartney, in *Macartney's Illustrations*).