

GOSPEL READING

Mark 10:46-52

⁴⁶As [Jesus] and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁹Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” ⁵⁰So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹Then 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.” ⁵²Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

SERMON

Maureen Pump

A Vision of the Kingdom

There were two men sharing a room in a nursing home. One man had recently gone blind and was living in quiet despair. He wanted to die. His roommate could see just fine but just had trouble getting around, so he rarely left the room. One day the man who could see began describing to his roommate what was going on outside the window. He told him of the mail carrier making his rounds; of neighbors walking their dogs; of teenage boys and girls walking past the window on the way to and from school. Life outside the window. As the days went on, the blind man came to live for these updates on life outside the window. His friend seemed to take joy in it and had a real gift for describing what everything looked like. Then the day came when the friend who could not get around well died and a new patient was wheeled in to share the room with the blind man. The blind man asked the roommate to let him know what was going on outside the window. The roommate replied, “I would be glad to, but I don’t know how I could do that. There’s nothing outside our window but a solid brick wall.” The blind man was bewildered for a moment. Then he realized in a flash what a precious gift his old roommate had given him. He has spun out of nothing but his own imagination, an entire world. He had created a vision of a world of joy outside the window and shared it with the blind man. The blind man realized there are things worse than having no sight. It is far worse to have no vision. Bartimaeus may have been physically blind, but Bartimaeus had vision. Bartimaeus had spiritual vision.

First, I want to back us up to the account of James and John that comes right before Bartimaeus in chapter 10 of St. Mark. James and John have a vision, but their vision was one in which they would gain honor and power. Their vision was one of being served and being a ruler. When they ask Jesus to appoint them to sit one on his left and one on his right when he establishes his

kingdom, they have a vision of power. James and John have a vision of an earthly king ruling over an earthly kingdom. They envision Jesus overthrowing Rome and establishing his kingdom and they want a piece of this. James and John may have been physically able to see but they were spiritually blind.

Bartimaeus, on the other hand, was a physically blind beggar who had a vision of being healed by Jesus. Bartimaeus had a faith that believed Jesus, The Son of David, would show him mercy and heal him. The Son of David was a messianic title. Jesus had tried to keep this title quiet because he knew it suggested a warrior king, like King David. This is not who Jesus was. Jesus is a king who will rule through sacrifice and with mercy. Bartimaeus sees, in his physical blindness, that he has a vision for this kind of king.

As Bartimaeus sits along the road, hoping to hear some coins fall into his vessel, he hears that Jesus is coming. He begins to shout at the top of his lungs, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" His vision of being able to physically see is so strong that he won't be stopped from shouting even though many order him to be quiet. Jesus hears Bartimaeus and stops moving so Bartimaeus can find him. Bartimaeus hears the crowd telling him to get up and go. Jesus is calling. Bartimaeus throws off his cloak and goes to Jesus. Jesus heals Bartimaeus. Go, your faith has made you well. Bartimaeus gains his eyesight and follows Jesus. Bartimaeus now has physical eyesight, but he always had spiritual vision.

The old man in the nursing home could envision life beyond a brick wall. He shared that vision with his room mate who could see the vision also even though he was physically blind. He was blessed and knew great joy.

Bartimaeus could envision a world where he would be able to see because his faith was in the one who he believed could heal him. His spiritual vision brought him hope.

How is our eyesight? Are we able to see with spiritual eyes a world beyond what is right in front of us? Do we see God at work even amid the chaos of the world in which we live?

The miracle of childbirth

Loved ones being healed

People being freed from addictions

People helping and supporting others in times of trial

Sunshine days

Sunrises and sun sets

God's people gathering in worship

The vision of the kingdom of heaven where our loved ones are with Jesus and where we will join them one day.

A world where there is peace

A world where there is justice for all, and all people are treated equally

This is the challenge for the church today. Be mindful of the health of your spiritual eyesight. If it's a bit blurry maybe, we need to spend more time with the great physician. Maybe we need to spend more time in the word, worship, and prayer. Praying for the Holy Spirit to heal our spiritual blindness.

The good news is: There is a kingdom beyond that which we see with out physical eyesight. Can we envision it?