

Do We Really Want To See?

Mark 10:46–52

The story of the blind beggar begins in darkness. It begins in emptiness. It begins in raw need. And as such, this son of honor, which is what the word Bartimaeus means, offers us a portrait of faith, and this is what faith looks like. Faith is eager. Faith is assertive. Faith is hopeful. Faith is impetuous and persistent and risky and raw. Faith is personal and relational. Faith ends something and faith begins something. Faith is about trusting God to heal us and allowing God to lead us to places we would just as soon not go.

It is more than a story about a man with a disability who is given a physical cure. It is a story that asks us to stop and ask ourselves what we can learn about faith by walking in Bartimaeus' shoes. There are a number of statements that are important to reflect on to understand what the writer of Mark is trying to teach us. "Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me." "Call him here." "Take heart, get up He is calling you." "What do you want me to do for you?" "Let me see again!" "Go your faith has made you well."

Mark has been talking for many chapters about what it means to "see," understand, and follow Jesus. Mark has been talking about following a Messiah who comes not on a warhorse but as a suffering servant. Three times Jesus explains this, and three times the disciples fail to see. And now in this week's story, to culminate this section, Mark presents Bartimaeus as the ideal disciple: though he is blind, he exceeds the disciples in insight; though he is a poor beggar, and though the cross is just around the corner, he does not "Go," as Jesus tells him to do, but rather follows Jesus "on the Way" ([Mark 10:52](#)).

Jesus asks Bartimaeus the same question he has just put to James and John: "What do you want me to do for you?" ([Mark 10:36](#); [10:51](#)). The question does at least two things: first, it shows that Jesus wants Bartimaeus to play an active, engaged role in his own restoration; and second, it sets up a vivid contrast between James and John on the one hand and Bartimaeus on the other. While the supposed "insiders" display spiritual hubris with their answer, the supposed "outsider" models a fitting blend of boldness and humility: "My teacher, let me see again."

Jesus asks Bartimaeus, a blind beggar from Jericho: "What do you want me to do for you?" And Bartimaeus seems to know that Jesus has the power to heal and transform us. Put yourself in his place for a moment. Hear Jesus asking you that question. "What do you want me to do for YOU?" What would you say?

It should never cease to strike us that Jesus' signature line after a healing is not "Come follow me, for I have healed you" but rather, "Go, your faith has made you well" ([Mark 10:52](#)). Jesus tells him to "Go." Instead, Bartimaeus decides to come along, following Jesus on the way, even to the cross in Jerusalem. Jesus says, "go on your way," and Bartimaeus says "my way is your way." The story starts with faith and courage, results in healing, and ends with service. Mark wants us to know Jesus loves us exactly as we are and yet loves us way too much to let us stay that way.

If seeing is important to the life of faith and also has the potential to take us where we are uncomfortable and do not want to go, what are we to do? Do we keep our hearts open but our eyes closed? Do we keep our eyes open but our hearts closed? Is there some way as a person of faith to keep both our eyes and our hearts open? Do we really want to see?

Think about it – Pray about it – Live it

Bob