

I Want to See

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“They came to Jericho. As he 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.” (Mark 10:46-52).

1. Three Blind Singers

The other day I saw a recording of a gospel concert in Korea. The group is made up of three—a couple and one other man. I learned that all of them are blind. The couple are a pastor and wife, and the other member is their friend. The couple had a baby last year. Raising a child as a blind couple is a challenge. However, the couple don't complain about their blindness but are grateful that the Lord is able to use them for God's kingdom. Although they are physically blind, spiritually they see what God is doing through them.

2. A Blind Beggar, Bartimaeus

In today's scripture, Mark 10:46-52, we find a blind man. His name is Bartimaeus. When Jesus and the disciples are leaving Jericho for Jerusalem, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, is sitting by the road. As soon as he hears that Jesus is passing by, he begins to shout, “**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.**” The disciples rebuke him and tell him to be quiet. Jesus does not ignore him but tells the disciples to call Bartimaeus to him. Bartimaeus tosses aside his outer cloak and jumps up and comes to Jesus. Jesus asks him, “**what do you want me to do for you?**” Bartimaeus says, “**My teacher, I want to see.**” Jesus says, “**Go, your faith has made you well.**” When Bartimaeus realizes that he can see now, “**immediately he follows Jesus on the way**” (52).

If we were Bartimaeus, what do you think we would do? We would be excited and give thanks to Jesus. We might jump up and down for joy. We

might run home and tell everyone in our family that we can see now. However, instead of going home to tell his miracle story to his family, Bartimaeus follows Jesus and goes to Jerusalem with Jesus.

His response makes us wonder what Bartimaeus really wanted from Jesus. When we read this narrative, we might think that Bartimaeus would want his physical blindness to be healed. But the more we read this story, the more we feel that Bartimaeus was searching for a deeper healing for his spiritual blindness.

When Bartimaeus calls Jesus, he calls Jesus, "**Son of David.**" "**Son of David**" was a messianic title at the time. The Jews believed that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David (Isaiah 9:7). In the Gospel of Mark, this is the first and the only time the Messiahship of Jesus is mentioned. How does Bartimaeus know that Jesus was the Messiah? He probably heard of many miracles Jesus had performed. If Jesus restored his sight, Bartimaeus may have wanted to follow Jesus as a disciple. What Bartimaeus said and did make the disciples believe that Jesus was the Messiah even before Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead.

Bartimaeus calls Jesus, "**My teacher.**" In the Greek, the term "rabbi" is meant to mean one who helps his disciples to experience spiritual awakening. It is clear that physical sight was important for Bartimaeus. Yet, Bartimaeus seems to want more for his spiritual awakening.

When Bartimaeus says, "**I want to see,**" Jesus does not touch his eyes, but simply says, "**your faith has made you well.**" Jesus knows what Bartimaeus really wants. Jesus lets Bartimaeus know that he has both his physical and spiritual sight. Bartimaeus confirms that Jesus was the Messiah that the Jews were waiting for. When Bartimaeus finds the Messiah, he follows Jesus immediately. Through Jesus, Bartimaeus finds the meaning for his life and his mission. This is not a simple healing story of Jesus, but a story of transformation in the life of Bartimaeus.

3. A Blindman at Bethsaida

In the four Gospels, we find many healing stories. Do you notice the difference between the story of Bartimaeus and other healing stories? In Mark 8:22 and the following, a blindman at Bethsaida is brought to Jesus. Jesus spits into the man's eyes. Jesus places his hands on the blind man. The man's eyes are healed. Do we know the name of the blind man? Mark does not tell us his name. However, Mark 10 tells us the name of the blind man, Bartimaeus. Why do you think Mark tells us the name of the blind man in chapter 10, but not in chapter 8? This is probably because Bartimaeus lived the life of the disciple, but not the blind man in chapter 8.

When Mark wrote the gospel, Bartimaeus was probably well known among the people for his devoted life to Jesus.

4. The Baptism of Kim and Audrey

I am so happy that Kim and Audrey were baptized today. Many people think that baptism is a religious rite of putting water on a person to symbolize becoming part of the Christian church.

While baptism is a sacrament in the United Methodist Church, the act of baptism is much more than a church sacrament. Romans 6:4 says, ***“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”***

According to St. Paul, baptism symbolizes the death and burial of our old ways of life and live a new life. Paul tells us that baptism should be a turning point in our lives. It is like a wedding between Jesus as a groom and us as the bride.

When we are baptized, we are making a public declaration that we are deciding to follow Jesus and live a new life in Christ. The Bible doesn't tell us that Bartimaeus was baptized when he began to see. However, his story in Mark highlights the same turning point that led to him living a different life for the rest of his life. I pray that today's baptism could be an eye-opening experience to Kim and Audrey. I hope all of us remember our own baptism and renew our commitment to Christ Jesus.

5. Conclusion

When Bartimaeus comes to Jesus, Jesus asks him, ***“what do you want me to do for you?”*** If Jesus asks the same question to us, what would we say? For Bartimaeus, there is nothing more important thing than being able to see. That's why he says, ***“I want to see.”*** Jesus knew that Bartimaeus wanted to see physically and spiritually. That's why Jesus says to him, ***“your faith has made you well.”***

6. Application

Many people would want to go back to normal because we became tired of the global pandemic. However, don't you think that we should be grateful to the Covid-19 because it taught us how fragile we are and how much we need our Lord each day. Coronavirus is challenging us to reevaluate and live our lives differently. May God open our eyes so that we may live our lives with the meaning in Christ and God's purpose. Amen.