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**October 17, 2021**  
**in the Season after Pentecost**

**We See Jesus with the Eyes of Faith**

Life is so full of distractions and so much of what we see pulls our attention away from Jesus. Sickness and sadness, trouble and worry, threats and disasters can blur our vision and sometimes make Jesus hard to see. In his love and with his power, Jesus opens the eyes of our faith and enables us to see the truth about his work for us and our place in his kingdom. In the Gospel for today, Jesus gives sight to a blind man and allows him to see the realities of God's love.

**Sermon**

**Mark 10:46-52**

**A Miracle of Sight for the Miracle of Faith**

**Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"**  
**Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.**

Introduction – His name was Bartimaeus and he was blind. He probably wasn't blind when he was born, so once upon a time he could see. Back then lots of people lost their sight. Wind and dirt were the main problems. People walked on dirt roads and lived in houses with dirt floors and no windows. The winds would whip off the ocean and blow dirt in their eyes. Of course, none of them took showers—maybe didn't even wash their faces much. Flies did the rest of the damage. The same flies that found open sewers found people's eyes. Your eyes became diseased and little by little you lost your sight. So Bartimaeus became blind, lost his ability to work, and learned to live on shekels. There's where we find him in the Gospel for today, **sitting by a roadside begging.**

So what does a poor, blind beggar who lived 2,000 years ago on the other side of the world have to do with us? ***Bartimaeus was a blind man who could see and what he could see was Jesus.*** He heard that Jesus was passing by (nothing wrong with his hearing) and so he shouted (nothing wrong with his voice), he shouted for Jesus to help. He couldn't see Jesus body or his face but what he could see was Jesus' compassion and power. He couldn't see Jesus with his eyes, but he saw Jesus with his faith. And that's what this poor, blind beggar named Bartimaeus has to do with us. We can't see Jesus either, not because we're blind, but because he's not here with us. And so just like Bartimaeus, we see Jesus with faith.

We heard in the Gospel how this episode ends. Jesus restored the blind man's sight. And just before he did, he said to Bartimaeus, **Your faith has healed you.** So this morning we're going to see how faith in Jesus relates to the power of Jesus. Here's the thought for today:

**A Miracle of Sight for the Miracle of Faith**

This would be Jesus' last trip to Jerusalem. Everything he had done for 33 years had pointed to this final journey. It was Passover time and the crowds were thick heading for the city. Jesus and his disciples were walking on the road between the ancient city of Jericho and the newer Roman city of Jericho when all at once somebody started shouting. Bartimaeus. **Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.**

This was more than a shout. This was a confession. Bartimaeus had come to believe that this rabbi from Galilee was actually the eternal successor God had promised King David a thousand years before: **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. And my love will never be taken away from him.** And if Bartimaeus believed Jesus was the son of David, then he also believed that Jesus was the focus of all the Bible's prophecies—that he was the **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**, that he would **be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities**, that he would be the **Redeemer who lives and in the end would stand on the earth** where Bartimaeus would see with his own eyes.

Why in all the world did Bartimaeus believe this? Hardly anybody in Israel bought into this Son of David stuff, least of all the religious leaders who were fixing to kill Jesus as soon as he got to town. And how did he know it? Did his parents teach him when he was young? Did he go to synagogue a lot and listen to the rabbis? Did he ponder the scriptures and pray about them? We have no clue. But in some way Bartimaeus came to see that Jesus from Nazareth, the carpenter's son, was the Son of God and the Savior of the world. ***This blind beggar saw Jesus through the eyes of faith. Nothing but a miracle!***

It's a miracle with us, too. They say that babies have trouble focusing at birth, but everything gets clear after a few weeks. Babies can't see Jesus, either. We're all blind to Jesus from the moment we're born. That's what the disease of sin does. But God changes that. Dr. Luther explains that the Holy Spirit calls us by the gospel and **enlightens** us with his gifts. The Spirit gives us the eyes of faith and then opens the eyes of our faith to see what we could never have seen on our own. It started at your baptism, then Bible stories at bedtime, then Sunday School or Lutheran School, then sermons and Bible classes and your own devotions at home. Your sight became clearer and sharper the more you listened and learned. And this isn't like learning what the moon is or how to drive a car. With eyes of faith you and I see things that we can't see with our eyes, we see what others consider impossible or ridiculous, we see things that no sane person, no person in his right mind ought to believe. But ***we see them and know them and trust them by faith. Nothing but a miracle!***

The miracle of faith put Bartimaeus in action. He starts shouting, he's shouting so loud he becomes a nuisance. **Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"** Nothing was going to stop him. Jesus heard the commotion and so he **stopped and said, Call him. So the people called out to him, Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.** Bartimaeus didn't need to be encouraged; blind or not, he was going to get to Jesus. He heard where Jesus' voice was coming from so he sensed where Jesus was. **Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.** He raced right through the crowds. When Jesus asked him what he wanted, he got straight to the point. I want you to do the impossible. **Rabbi, I want to see.** When it came to Jesus, ***Bartimaeus had 20/20 vision and 20/20 faith! Nothing but a miracle!***

I don't think I need glasses to see Jesus. I'm pretty sure who Jesus is and what he does. But sometimes the thoughts I think and the words I speak and the actions I take tell me that I'm not seeing Jesus nearly as clearly as I think—certainly not as clearly as Bartimaeus. We don't always seek Jesus with certainty like Bartimaeus did. Our sins don't bother us too much so we aren't really begging for forgiveness. Heaven is far away and we kind of like it here on earth. Sometimes we let the crowds keep us away from Jesus—the opposite of Bartimaeus. We stay silent when we should speak, we back down when we should defend, we follow the crowd instead of Jesus. We really do need to be encouraged, but sometimes we don't listen to the encouragement. Housework and homework and yard work and shop work seem more important than Jesus. We don't always follow Jesus with intensity like Bartimaeus did. We don't pray like we should, worship is sometimes more of a habit than a need, we can take or leave Bible study. ***Sometimes our vision gets blurred and our faith struggles to see Jesus.*** That's when we stumble and trip and fall and get ourselves all banged up.

Jesus said to Bartimaeus, **Go, your faith has saved you.** Nothing but a miracle! This poor blind man put his faith in Jesus and gained all the blessings Jesus gives. In Jesus he found the forgiveness of sins, life with God, power for living and hope for heaven. Those are the same blessings you and I gain with Jesus. Little faith or big, weak faith or strong, clear vision or not, faith saves us. But Jesus did more for Bartimaeus. Jesus not only saved Bartimaeus by faith, he also healed him because of faith. **Go, said Jesus, your faith has healed you. Immediately he received his sight.**

Did you notice what happened next? **He received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.** Luke adds in his Gospel, **He followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.**

Jesus gave him sight because of his compassion and love. But could it also be that Jesus gave sight to Bartimaeus because he could see what this certain, fearless, intense faith would do in the future? Was his confession that Jesus was the Son of David what moved the crowds on Palm Sunday to shout the same confession: Hosanna to the Son of David. Did he praise God again and then praise him again and then lead others to praise him? Bartimaeus is the only person Jesus ever healed who is actually named in the Gospels. Did Mark mention his name specifically because so many people knew Bartimaeus as the blind man who proclaimed the truth about Jesus? Did he become a leader in the church? ***Was the miracle of his sight connected to the miracle of his faith?*** Did Jesus heal this man of faith to prepare him for the mission of his life?

We know nothing about blind Bartimaeus besides what's in today's Gospel. But we do know that Jesus often provides physical blessings when he sees that faith will use those blessings wisely and willingly. Sometimes he grants health to those he knows will work tirelessly. Sometimes he grants wealth to those he knows will give generously. Sometimes he grants speaking skills to those he knows will proclaim fearlessly. ***When Jesus sees strength of our faith, he looks into the future and he sees that faith in action down the road.***

And so we pray: **Lord, I want to see!** I want to see you more clearly and follow you more nearly and love you more dearly day by day. Make my faith certain and strong and then use me to praise you so that others may praise you, too. Amen.