

More than a Beggar

Mark 10:46-52

⁴⁶ 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. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” ⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

⁵² “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Beggar

⁴⁶ 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 was the last time you saw a beggar?

What was he doing?

In some cities and cultures, begging has particular contexts.

In Asia, there are professional beggars.

Some children are taken at an early age and maimed.

They sometimes have a hand or leg hacked off or they are blinded so that their appearance would evoke pity and mercy and they would take what they collected back to their masters.

Poverty can be due to neglect or abuse, where a child leaves home and lives on the streets and begging is better than prostituting or crime.

It can be due to simply hard times, being cheated, not making good decisions, war or famine or political revolution that brings a reversal of fortune.

It can be due to mental illness, drug abuse.

In Jesus' time, there were no social services, social workers, welfare or medicare, no accessibility concerns, no special needs helpers.

If you were blind or cripple, if you were not able to participate in a form of trade, and you were of age, you would be left to fend for yourself.

Bartimeaus only recourse in life was to beg.

Too Close for Comfort

⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

When was the last time a beggar shouted at you?

How did you feel? What did you do?

What did the people around him do?

Well, we avoid them. We ignore them. We walk away.

If they become a bother, people might even tell them to shut up or go away. Well, this is exactly what is going on here.

It's like a beggars hears that Henrik Sedin is coming so he yells louder to him.

People get embarassed - for themselves, for the celebrity, for the beggar.

For what? For the fact that something is not right in the world.

A world of beggars and blind people, of chaos and sickness.

Seeing the Blind

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you."⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

In a world where things are out of whack, Jesus stops and hears.
Not only does he hear, he listens.
Not only does he listen, he responds.

Frankly, I think the blind man had a lot of gumption to call out to Jesus.
Maybe he was expecting a brush off,
but maybe he heard how Jesus was different.
How this rabbi loved children, and hung out with the freaks and ghouls
as easily as with the posh and proper people.
Maybe he had hope, even if it was a longshot.
But hope for what?

Money or Miracles

What do beggars want? (not a rhetorical question)
Money for the bus, for a bite to eat, for a cup of coffee, for their baby,
for their next fix.
But isn't that what it boils down to?
It is always money.
What do you think the disciples thought the man wanted?
What do you think the crowd thought the man wanted?
And what do you think the man might have actually wanted?

⁵¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

Jesus, the Son of David, has mercy on him and asks directly.
He doesn't assume or guess or drop a few coins to expedite the situation.
He asks point blank, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

The problem when we have when we read the Bible is that we never think
about what is happening.
We already know Jesus is going to heal the man.
That's what Jesus does.
The fact is that nobody actually knows how this will turn out.
What if Bartimeaus answered, "Got any spare change, Jesus?"
What if he asked for money instead of a miracle?

More

I am sure there must have been a collective gasp.
 It's not in the Bible so I am guessing here, but it isn't a stretch.
 Beggars want money.
 And regular folk want beggars to leave them alone.
 But Jesus isn't just any regular guy - he is God.
 And Bartimaeus isn't just any beggar - he believes Jesus is his only hope.
 Bartimaeus saw beyond his begging bowl, so to speak and saw the big picture.
 Jesus saw Bartimaeus and Bartimeus saw Jesus.

I am not just a pastor.

You are not just a student or librarian or retiree or administrator or contractor
 or a mother or a church-goer or a lawyer or a doctor or a barista or that
 therapist.

Not to Jesus you are not.

You are a friend, you are his beloved.

When we pray, we are not to just ask for coins for our beggars bowl.

Steaks in the refrigerator, money in the bank, sunny weather.

We are meant to ask for more.

Bartimaeus prayed the most meaningful prayer that can be prayed.

"I want to see." Because he knew his own blindness.

What is your blind spot?

And how would you answer Jesus?

"What do you want me to do for you?"

And how are we to pray as a church? This Wednesday?

The Eye of the Needle

⁵² "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Just a few verses back, there was a man who walked away from Jesus.

He who asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

A man who was the exact opposite of Bartimeus.

He had wealth, power, position and health.

But only Bartimaeus followed Jesus and only Bartimaeus inherited the Kingdom

How about you?