

Bartimaeus (1)

Sermon July 31, 2022

Scripture Reading: Psalm 1 & Luke 18:35-43

Golden Verse: “Lord, I want to see.” Luke 18:41b

I heard about a blind man sitting on the side road, holding a sign and a plate in his hands. The sign says: “I am blind. Help me.” Most people passed him with ignorance, so his plate was almost always empty.

Once, a graphic designer came by. He was looking at this blind man, spent some time in front of him; then, he replaced the sign the blind man was holding. A half-hour later, he came back and realized that the blind man’s plate was almost full, not with just coins but with bills, too. What happened, you might wonder? What did this graphic designer do? He exchanged the sign the blind man was holding in front of him. The old sign said: “I am blind. Help me”. The new sign said: “It is spring, and I cannot see the flowers or the sun.”

This well-known story we heard from the Bible is about Bartimaeus, a man who was blind and, for this, he was in great misery. At the right time, Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus, who came closer to him, and by His mercy, Jesus delivered Bartimaeus from his grief and became a completely different person.

Who is this Bartimaeus? How was he healed? Is this possible even today to be healed? Bartimaeus was a neglected person. Bartimaeus did not even have his own name. He was just called simply after his father. Bar - means son. Bar-Timaeus means the son of Timaeus.

Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, is sitting by the roadside begging. He is an anonymous nobody. Nobody cares for him because nobody can benefit from him. He is just a problem and a burden for his parents and his society. He is escorted to the road every day to beg for what he needs.

His entire life is the roadside, where he is begging. He is blind, and that makes his world quite narrow. People come and go by fast on a busy road. Some people are in a big hurry because they don’t want to notice him because they don’t want to give. His world is narrowed to a few metres of hearing. That’s his whole world – a few metres around him. From some conversations, he catches half-sentences, and he tries to find out what is going on in his small area.

By the way, he begs in the most beautiful city. In Jesus' time, Jericho was considered the most beautiful city: the city of palms and the city of balm. Their main business was growing the plant balm, and they produced various fragrant and medicinal ointments.

The Bible is telling us that we all are spiritually blind when we are born. We can see only the visible but cannot see invisible things. For this, we live in a small, narrow world, and we notice only the visible world which surrounds us.

As I was walking in my street a few days ago, I overheard a conversation between two people. Both live close to my house. "You seem to be new in this area," one said. "I have lived here for 20 years, and I never saw you walking your dog." "No, I'm not really new," the other guy said. "I've lived here already for seven years, and I walk my dog every day."

Often, this can happen to us as well, that we don't notice each other, not even in the congregation.

There are more severe forms of blindness.

Just one example: there is a conversation between a couple. It often happens that one person talks roughly about the other one. Once, a husband spoke in a very derogative way to his wife. He also raised his voice, which is not right. The woman's eyes fill with tears. After a while, she could no longer hold them. Her tears flowed down on her cheek. She left the room to wash her face.

As she left, I took a big breath, and I asked him how he allowed himself to be so rude and insensitive with his wife. He said he was not. I asked him why he made such a rude and painful comment about her. He said he did not say anything. I said that I don't want to repeat what he said, but we can ask his wife what he said. He said he did not remember what he said. I asked him if he realized the pain he caused her, and that she left the room crying. He said he did not notice anything.

The wife came back, and she tried to smile, but that was a very forced a smile. As the wife stepped into the room, the husband asked her if he said something to her, which made her cry. "Yes, you did," she said, "but it is not a big deal anymore." She said this because she wanted to be polite.

God works mysterious ways. The husband humbled himself, repeatedly asking his wife to tell him what he said, and the way he was hurting her. There was a tearful

conversation. In the end, the husband's eyes were open to see the pain he had been causing with his temper for years. He was able to see himself from God's perspectives, and he was able to apologize.

To his credit, the man apologized with remorse. He could not hear what he was saying, and he could not see the wound on the soul of the woman closest to him. Even tears welled up from him. It is a kind of internal blindness.

We all have moments when God wants to show us our faults and our mistakes. Based on the Bible, our failures, trespasses, or mistakes are called SINS.

As a husband and a father, as a friend, I often asked my wife, my children or my friend to tell me in a gentle way when they see any wrongdoings, sins in my life that I cannot see. In that way, I might have an opportunity to see them and to make positive changes.

Quite a few times, I was in a situation when my wife or my children or my friend told me what I could not see in myself. I have to say to you that, as human beings, sometimes, as a first reaction, we have the temptation to create a big protest, a big defense speech. How many times do we either deny things or create a big story to defend ourselves and to explain why we were wrong? Often, people, instead of seeing their sin, try to accuse others. Often, people say: "It is all your fault because if you would not say this and this to me, I would not get angry and I would not say things." I often heard people saying that "You forced this out from me" Well, my answer is that only those things can be forced out from us that is ALREADY IN US.

Because we are humans and sinners, we cannot see how we hurt each other, and we cannot see that only the apology could make some changes in our lives. In those situations, we should learn to say: I'm ashamed, I didn't notice what I did or what I said. I don't want to be like that. I will try to change myself.

But if we are blind, we cannot see what we did and how we harmed each other.

Once, as I was waiting at the airport in the line, I saw a young couple with two little children. The oldest one was about three years old. Standing next to her parents, she could see only legs. She was begging the father to take her in his arms. As the father did, she started to tell him a story. The father did not pay attention to her at all. He was busy watching other travellers. The little girl, with her two hands, tried to hold her father's face straight so that he would listen to her. As the

father turned his face away from her, watching others, the little girl tried to ask him to focus on her. “Daddy, daddy, listen ...” Daddy did not listen. The little girl was begging for a little time, a little attention from her daddy. But daddy got fed up and put her down in an angry way. The little girl hugged his legs and cried. The father did not realize that his daughter was begging for a little love, a little attention, a little care.

But let's see the opposite. When our Lord Jesus Christ opens our eyes, we go through enormous and miraculous changes. I have the privilege to hear from some people how God changed their lives. I once met a person who opened up and shared with me many things that he committed. He said: “You cannot imagine how bad I was, how I behaved with my family, and what kind of person I was. But the grace of God opened my eyes to see who I was, and to see that in that way, I would destroy everything around me. I would destroy myself as well. God opened my eyes to see who I was and who I can be with Him. He led me, and He changed me.”

Another person said to me that I could not say more bad things about him than he could say about himself. But the Lord Jesus opened his eyes, and the Holy Spirit made him new.

Unfortunately, we are all born blind. We cannot see many important things. People around us are begging for a little recognition, encouragement, or gratitude which would not cost a penny, but would make them feel recognized and happy. Just a little love and attention would make them feel that they belong together. They would feel again that they can count on each other, that it is worth being in that marriage, worth living, and it is also worth sacrificing. But we look at each other with an empty face. It is so sad that we often don't see each other's expectations and pain. That is why we do not see their needs either. Those who are the closest to us become beggars.

The good news is that Our Lord Jesus Christ is here today, and we can ask Him to open our eyes, to renew our lives, and to help us to live differently.

Please come to the Lord right now as you are. Tell Him that you want to see clearly. Tell Him that He is your only hope. Tell Him you trust Him that He will show grace and mercy towards you, and you will experience His touch. Then you will be able to sing that song, written by the Gaithers: “He touched me.” Amen