

Bartimaeus (2)

Sermon - August 7, 2022

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

Golden Verse: “*Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.*” Luke 18:42

Many of you might be familiar with H.G. Wells’ short story *The Country of the Blind*. Somewhere in the mountain's shadow, in a dark valley, a wanderer discovers an isolated community, the country of the blind. Their blindness slowly spread over many generations since the children were born blind.

The community had fully adapted to life without sight. The blind community realizes that this new person, who is visiting with them, says all kinds of funny things to them, talking about colours. They examine him, and they find some abnormality on him. He has two strange bumps under his forehead, and they think that this would be why he is saying strange things. This makes him ill, irregular, and strange. They decide that they should remove those two bumps, and then he will be as “normal” as the others. Then the fight begins. This guy is fighting for his two eyes.

A week ago, we read the same story of Bartimaeus, who was blind. Day by day, he was sitting at the same place beside a busy road, begging for his daily needs. He was not able to help anybody, but he was a burden for everybody.

Last Sunday, we saw that blindness comes in many forms. Spiritual blindness is a condition that an individual has when they are unable to see God and to understand His message. We faced the sad reality that we were born spiritually blind and, for this, we cannot see the invisible or each other as we should. Most people don’t see God, because spiritually they are blind. Although God is working all around us, showing us His glory, some people cannot perceive His divine workings. Those who reject God are spiritually blind. They cannot understand the truth of Scripture, which sounds foolish to them. The spiritually blind don’t see how other people might feel in a difficult situation, and this is why so many people make so many mistakes or say things that hurt God and hurt each other.

Do we really know ourselves as well as we think we do? Are we wise and humble enough to recognize that we, too, were born blind, and we need God’s help? The Lord Jesus said that He came into this world, that “*those who do not see may see.*” John 9:39a

The great good news of this story is that Jesus opened Bartimaeus' eyes. The Lord Jesus wants us to see the whole reality, to see ourselves as we are, to see the narrow way that leads to eternal life. The Lord Jesus wants to help us to see each other and be mindful of each other, to see the invisible; to see God as our loving Heavenly Father; to see Him as our good shepherd, and to see our tasks.

How was Bartimaeus healed? How did he get his eyesight? We see three simple steps here in the Bible: he heard about Jesus, believed what he heard, and when Jesus was there, he cried out to Him.

Please put yourself in this scene. Bartimaeus is sitting on the roadside begging. An anonymous person sits next to him and talks to Bartimaeus about Jesus and His power. He saw Jesus in person; he had the opportunity to listen to Him and saw as Jesus healed others who were blind. Bartimaeus learned from this anonymous person that Jesus was the Messiah, and he took that message seriously. As this unknown person talks to Bartimaeus about Jesus, he gives Bartimaeus hope that maybe someday he might have the chance to meet Jesus. Maybe Jesus would heal him as well.

The hope starts to increase in Bartimaeus that Jesus could heal him, too. He hopes now that he does not have to be blind until he dies because there is somebody who can help him. Bartimaeus starts to trust in the unknown Jesus, and from this moment, he is waiting for Him. He cannot go anywhere to find Jesus, but Jesus might be able to find him. Not only hope, but faith awakens in Bartimaeus. The Bible says that faith comes by hearing the word of God.

As we see, Bartimaeus' faith and hope were influencing Jesus to come to Jericho. At that time, Jesus was on his last journey to Jerusalem, where He knew He would be arrested, tortured, and crucified. However, before that, Jesus was still interested to meet Bartimaeus, who had an enormous hope to meet Him. Jesus wanted to make Bartimaeus healed, joyous, and happy.

The day came when Jesus walked on the streets of Jericho, surrounded by His disciples and a large crowd. Bartimaeus hears people shouting Jesus' name. Bartimaeus does not know where Jesus is, but Jesus knows exactly where Bartimaeus is. For this, Jesus walks closer to the place where Bartimaeus is sitting and begging. Bartimaeus begins to shout. Many people try to silence him. He is not listening to those voices; the louder they shout, the stronger is his purpose; He is

crying out as long as necessary, as loud as he can, proclaiming that he is expecting mercy from Jesus, the Messiah.

I want to take a short break here to explain something.

Remember that, in Jerusalem, the priests arrested Jesus because He called Himself Son of David, the Messiah, which was considered as the biggest blasphemy. The priests tried to shut down the children who were greeting Jesus shouting that He is the Son of David, which meant He is the Messiah, the Saviour, the Son of God. Just days before Palm Sunday, Bartimaeus proclaims his faith that Jesus is the Messiah. Bartimaeus knew that he might be arrested and punished for proclaiming Jesus the Messiah, but he is shouting from the bottom of his heart: Jesus, you are the Messiah, the Son of God, have mercy on me. He knows that this is his ONLY opportunity to be healed. For him, Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, God on earth, who has all the power in heaven and earth, and Jesus is the ONLY ONE who can create eyes for him to see.

People are telling him to be quiet, but he shouts all the more: “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stops and says, “Call him.” So, some people are calling the blind man: Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you. Bartimaeus is throwing everything he has in his hands, he jumped to his feet and is led to Jesus. *“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. “Rabbi, I want to see.”* Mark 10:51-52

Bartimaeus asked the Son of God for a divine gift. Not for a little more comfortable blindness, but vision, knowing that only Jesus can provide a fundamental, radical solution. *“‘Go,’ said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you.’ Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.”* Mark 10:49-52

I assume that Jesus was the first person Bartimaeus saw in his life and, for this, Bartimaeus decided to follow Jesus along the road. He wanted to stay with the person who healed him miraculously.

There are many people around us, who would profit from Jesus’ help, but they don’t know Him. We have to talk about Jesus: to create FAITH and desire in them. Maybe one day they will shout the same way as Bartimaeus did: Jesus, have mercy of me. This would be their first prayer.

Today, many people are waiting for Jesus the same way as Bartimaeus did, but they never heard about Him from somebody who fully trusts in Him. Would you like to be the first one who will create faith and hope in their hearts to help them? They would like to believe, but they don't know whom they should believe or how to start to gain faith. They would accept Jesus with confidence, but they need somebody who would introduce Jesus to them. Our Lord will respond to their faith, and He will increase FAITH in our hearts.

What could happen to those whose eyes would be opened?

I heard about a young woman, who by the grace of God, allowed Jesus to touch her, and she opened her heart for Jesus. As she said, from that day, everything was different in her life. She noticed how much her mother was struggling to keep their house clean, and she started to do the dishes, then to vacuum the house. Everybody was surprised by watching her. Then she noticed that her sister was struggling with some school subjects. She sat down with her and helped her with the patience to understand the subjects and to prepare her homework. Before that, they were fighting like cats and dogs, and now they were studying together, then they played together. She noticed her mother carrying groceries from her car. She ran to the car to help her. Everybody was wondering what happened. She said that she accepted Jesus in her heart, and now Jesus is showing her what Jesus would do, and she allows Jesus to act in her and through her.

If we see Jesus, we will have the ability to see the invisible God, and step by step will have a greater understanding of the world. Then we will see ourselves from God's perspective: as we are and who we are. God gradually will open our hearts, our minds, and our lips. He will increase our intention and ability to talk about Jesus and to lead others to Him. The other person will be more important for us than our own needs. We will see clearly what we can do for Him. We will be happier with who we are and to whom we belong. We will see that we are free and rich, enriched by God as His children.

May God be merciful to us, that if we don't see Him yet, may He open our eyes to see Him. If we feel still in darkness, we should not give up. Jesus is here today, and everything is possible because He is here. Amen