

So as Jesus was leaving Jericho, one of the oldest cities in the world – Bartimaeus asks Jesus to cure him of his blindness. . .

I think this is a good story filled with movement, energy, and drive. The verbs describing Bartimaeus' actions say a lot about faith, how one should encounter Jesus, and choosing to follow after him. We should pay attention to the fact that Bartimaeus:

Cried out to Jesus. That is, he sought Jesus' attention. He called Jesus "son of David" acknowledging he knew Jesus was the Messiah. >>

Bartimaeus knew that Jesus was more than just an itinerant preacher: Jesus was the one who could save him – from his blindness? Yes, but so much more.

Bartimaeus *kept calling Jesus.* He was persistent – even when others tried to shut him up. He knew what he needed – to encounter Jesus – and to place his trust in him so that Jesus could "have pity on him."

Bartimaeus *threw aside his cloak.* Which for a blind man, would have been the only thing he owned. So he was literally leaving everything behind in order to go to Jesus. The cloak would have just gotten in his way – slowed him down, kept him from getting to Jesus.>> Bartimaeus was a man on a mission!

He knows what he needs, he knows how to get it, and he knows who will grant his request.

After hearing that Jesus was calling him -- Bartimaeus *sprang up and came to Jesus.* So he is decisive, he doesn't amble, tarry, or hesitate. He shows some enthusiasm – he leaps up in order to encounter Jesus.

Bartimaeus *states his request.* In such simple words does Bartimaeus bare his heart to Jesus --- makes his prayer known: "Master, I want to see. The Greek word is *Rabbouni* – teacher. Yes, Bartimaeus wants his physical sight – but he comes to Jesus wanting so much more – he wants Jesus to be his teacher – one who will also grant him insight.

Bartimaeus *receives his sight.* Now able to see, he could have gone on his merry way – Jesus even tells him this: "go your way". And if that was all Bartimaeus was looking for, his physical sight, he possibly would have done just that. However, Bartimaeus received more than just sight – "your faith has saved you." Saved him from begging – sure, but saved him from his sins, and given the gift of eternal life.

Bartimaeus *followed him on the way.* Having this personal encounter with Jesus, Bartimaeus could not just go back to his own ways. This encounter formed a bond, a relationship – which he chose to deepen even further. So instead of going his own way, Bartimaeus chose to go Jesus' way.

Such need, such urgency, such conviction did Bartimaeus have! And all because Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

What do you want me to do for you? Now where have we heard that question before? Well, if you remember, it was just last week in the Gospel. Then, some seasoned disciples, not just some beggar along the road – but two brothers who had been following Jesus for quite some time – said to Jesus, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." A very bold statement compared to today's, "Son of David, have pity on me."

And when Jesus asked James and John, "what do you want me to do for you," these two, far from being humble -- boldly ask Jesus NOT for something they NEED – but for something they WANT: "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left."

And then Jesus doesn't give them what they want, rather he responds: 'the cup that I drink, you will drink, and the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized – but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give.'

So, a few questions we might want to ponder: who is really the blind person: Bartimaeus [who knows who Jesus is, humbly asks him for what he needs, receives his request, and eagerly follows after Jesus]

OR

James and John [who may or may not know at this point Jesus is the Messiah – that is, the son of David, who boldly ask Jesus for what they want --- not for what they need, who don't receive their request, but do continue to follow after Jesus – only after stirring up the rest of the disciples with indignation (that is making them angry)?

Who is the true disciple? Batimaeus, or James and John?
And who should we be most like?

Master, I want to see. . . I have to admit that one of the areas I have become very blind to in the last several years – is the good of the larger church in our diocese.

For a good ten years or so, I have NOT contributed to any diocesan causes because of the lack of vision I perceived --- but I am hoping that our new bishop, James Johnston, along with abundant grace from God – can help me receive new sight.

One of the things that gives me hope is the bishop telling us at a gathering a couple of weeks ago that he realizes HEALING will have to be on is front burner for several years to come – and healing, he said, goes beyond just those effected by sexual abuse.

Since I may not be alone in my blindness, I want to take the time to listen to the words of our new bishop – encouraging us to contribute to the diocesan campaign this fall.

[Play recording]