

SERMON: The Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 25)

Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Psalm 34:1-8, 19-22

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52

On my way to Church this morning there was the most beautiful sunrise in the eastern sky. Most of us have been given the gift of sight in which to see God's beautiful creation, but I think we have also been given the gift of 'Insight'. Insight is being able to view the interior of anything; it is mental penetration, it is getting a clear understanding of something, and it is also the power to be able to discern. In other words, I think God wants us to be able to *see* with the *eye of our heart*. God wants us to see things more clearly on a spiritual level and not only on a physical level. The lessons today are about seeing, both physically and spiritually.

In this the final saga of Job, we hear how he responds to his encounter with God. From the time that Job lost everything and became afflicted, his friends have been telling him that it is because he had sinned that all these tragedies have come upon him. Job has been insisting that he has not sinned and he would just like to talk to God about everything that has happened to him.

Last week we heard how God finally made an appearance to Job in the form of a whirlwind, and even though God did not answer Job's questions, God was able to show Job that God alone is in control of the world and only God understands why the good are allowed to suffer.

This encounter with God leaves Job both overwhelmed and humbled, and summons Job to a heightened sense of the divine

presence of God in his life and in the world. Job now understands that when everything is gone, God is still there and God's love and care is enough to withstand any amount of suffering. Job's eyes are now opened and he is able to see with the *eye of his heart*, he has a deeper understanding of who God is; and realizes that God's Love reaches out to all people in every circumstance, be it good or bad.

I heard a story yesterday about a people of great faith, and it gives me a lot of hope. The women in the Sudan when they were going through the war and their families were being killed and just about everything was being taken from them, through all this they knew that God was walking alongside them every minute of the day. These women did not feel the need to question where God was during their suffering, they knew that their God of Love and Hope had not abandoned them.

In Mark's gospel story we hear about a 'blind' beggar who was also a person with deep insight, he could see with the eye of the heart.

As we come to the end of this section of Mark that we have been reading for several weeks, we see how Mark in Chapter 8:22 starts this Section with the story of an anonymous blind man who was healed by Jesus, and Mark concludes this section with the healing of another blind man, Bartimaeus. Throughout this section of Mark, Jesus has been trying to make his disciples 'see' on a spiritual level by teaching them how they are to help one another by being a servant to all, but unfortunately, his followers, the de-ciples, just do not seem to get it. They seem to have been 'blind' to the spiritual things Jesus was teaching them?

Bartimeaus, is a blind beggar, who is sitting by the roadside as Jesus and his disciples are leaving Jericho. As the crowd passes Bartimeaus he calls out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy

on me!” The crowd tells him to be quiet, but Bartimeaus shouts even louder, he wants to get Jesus’ attention, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” At this point Jesus tells the disciples to bring Bartimeaus to him, and the blind man jumps up throws off his cloak and approaches Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, “**What do you want me to do for you?**” “My Teacher, let me see again,” he cries out, and without even touching the man, Jesus says to him, “Go, your faith has made you well,” and Bartimeaus becomes one of the people following Jesus.

I think that this very simple story that happened long ago, can certainly speak to us today if we just take the time to look a little more deeply into some of the things that took place. Maybe by our looking at the story on a more spiritual level we can learn some things to help us as a community here at Trinity, and help us in our walk with God.

Bartimeaus is physically blind, but as I said earlier, I think he is a man full of insight, he sees with the eye of his heart. Bartimeaus knows who Jesus is; he calls him the ‘Son of David’. This is the first time in Mark’s gospel that we have heard Jesus referred to as the ‘Son of David’. This was a popular way to address Jesus as the Messiah, and Bartimeaus knows who Jesus really is. When Bartimeaus *asks Jesus to have mercy on him*, he is acknowledging his own helplessness before Jesus, and he says this twice before he gets to talk with Jesus. Sometimes we forget that we need to humble ourselves before asking God for favors. Let us not be like James and John who in the gospel last week, very boldly asked Jesus if they could sit one on his right hand and one on his left hand when he comes into his glory, but instead let us be like the blind beggar who fell on his knees to ask Jesus to have mercy on him. Notice that it was the blind beggar who received what he asked for, and not James and John.

We will also notice that Bartimeaus *throws off his cloak* when he was told that Jesus wanted to see him? Do you wonder why he did this? Bartimeaus desperately wanted Jesus to heal him and he had great faith that Jesus would do so. In coming to Jesus he *stripped himself* of everything he had. By throwing off his cloak he probably threw off the one piece of garment that kept him warm, but by giving up everything he had to come to Jesus, he ended up receiving far more than he had in the first place; he was able to see again and he encountered Christ. What a blessing. Bartimeaus trusted God; he had great faith and was willing to give up everything in order to have his encounter with Jesus. I think that sometimes pain and suffering brings us to our knees and lets us strip ourselves of everything in order for us to have a deeper understanding of God.

Because Bartimeaus is an outsider the crowds tend to ignore his cries to Jesus to have mercy on him, they tell him to be quiet. How do we respond to such cries today?

I have asked myself this question and I will also ask you, “Are we hearing the cries of those outside our Church who are desperately crying out ‘Have mercy on me’?” As a Church in this community, we have to listen out for those cries of need, and it will take several ears to hear these cries. We cannot just simply ignore them, because they are genuine cries and it is up to the Church to respond. I know that the Outreach Committee has some opportunities for us to help with collecting various things that organizations need, and I hope we will support these opportunities. But I also know that there are other things we can do by giving of our time and talent, so if anyone knows of some need that we could give a helping hand, please do let me know. By Trinity responding to the needs in our community, together we will make Christ visible in the world.

Another thing from our gospel story that maybe we should be thinking about; remember how the crowds tried to keep the blind beggar away from Jesus? ***“Many sternly ordered him to be quiet,”*** just because Bartimeaus was an outsider. Did the disciples and the crowd not realize that this is exactly why God sent Jesus here on earth? Why would they stop the blind beggar from seeing Jesus? Is this a question we should be asking ourselves? Are there others out there who desperately want to know about Jesus, or need to be healed of the hurt and suffering they are going through, that we are not inviting to Church, or sharing the Good News with them? Hopefully we get the idea that Jesus came for all people and we should do everything we can to bring others to Christ. Episcopalians seem to find it hard to talk about that dreaded “E” word, Evangelism. And I will admit it is because we are not taught to talk about our faith. But if you think about it this way, we all have our own story to tell. If we think about how Jesus has touched our lives whether it is today, this week, or this month, and we share this one little story with someone else, that can be a very powerful witness to someone. We do not have to quote Bible passages at great length; we do not have to get into a long theological argument to try to prove something; and we certainly do not have to stand at the corner of the street to preach. All we have to do is tell a friend, a co-worker or a relative about how Jesus has touched our lives at any one moment; we are then telling someone what we have personally experienced, and that is the best way to spread the Good News.

And the last point I would like us to look at from this gospel story is, if Jesus were to ask us, ***“What do you want me to do for you?”*** Would we know how to answer this question? Remember when Jesus asked James and John this question and how they answered, and then remember when Jesus asked Bartimeaus the same question, how he answered it.

We were offered some good, thought-provoking things to think about from the lessons this week. I hope we will spend some time to think about them on a personal level as well as how we as a Church might respond.

These lessons are all full of Hope and will be an aid to us in our spiritual journey. They show us of God's great glory as the Creator of all things and of the love that God has for all of us whether we are going through bad times or good times. The passage in Hebrews confirms that Jesus is indeed our Great High Priest who is our advocate as he made the final sacrifice for you and for me. As we gather as the Church each week we should invite and welcome all people to join us as we are fed with the Bread of Heaven and Drink the Cup of Salvation which strengthens us to reach out into the surrounding community to help those who are crying out, and when we respond to their needs, then our actions will make God visible in the world.

Amen.