

Mark 10:46-52  
October 28, 2018

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

Several years back while on internship I encountered an elderly member while visiting the nursing home where she lived. She was sitting at a table putting pieces of a puzzle together. I decided I would lend a hand as well; however, I didn't see a box and was unable to know what the completed picture would look like. So, I asked, "Do you have the box, so I can see the finished picture?" She responded, "Oh, heaven's no. That box is long gone." Apparently, over time the box had just fallen apart and now the pieces were just stored in a small plastic container. "Well, how do you know where the pieces go?" I asked. "It's up here (pointing to her forehead). I have put this puzzle together so many times I don't need a picture."

She then went on to describe in detail the finished picture. It was a beautiful garden full of fresh flowers with a radiant blue sky above with a handful of clouds dotting the sky. It sounded lovely; but, I just couldn't quite make it out based on her description. Were these flowers roses? Violets? Daisies? What was the shape of these clouds? Even with her detailed description I still didn't have the entire picture to connect all the dots and place all the pieces. As we talked, I was fortunate to find a piece or two but really wasn't much help. I looked at my watch and realized an hour had passed and I was due back at the church for a meeting. Thus, I left and indicated I would stop in later in the week to see the final picture. When I returned a few days later, the puzzle was done and revealed an even more beautiful picture I had envisioned in my mind. A complete picture. In fact, now I could see the flowers somewhat bending to one side indicating a gentle breeze must have been blowing the day that picture was taken. Several of the petals held a small droplet of water revealing it must have rained shortly

before or perhaps there was still morning dew on the flowers. My eyes were finally opened fully to the picture I couldn't fully grasp until that moment.

Bartimaeus, too, needed his eyes opened – physically. But spiritually, he had 20/20 vision. He is the first person in Mark's gospel to use the title, Son of David, when calling upon Jesus, which, clearly appears to be validation he is aware Jesus is the Messiah. The long-awaited king Israel had hoped for to deliver them and reconcile them once again to God was near. Over the last few weeks of passages from chapters 8-10 of Mark we have heard stories where not everyone's eyes are fully open to the knowledge of who Jesus is and what it means to follow him on the way – to Jerusalem. Even his disciples – those closest to him.

This isn't the first blind man Mark has introduced us to. Early on in chapter 8 we have another healing story. This time it was a blind man brought to Jesus at Bethsaida. If you recall, this is a rather interesting story as Jesus spits on the man's eyes, places his hands upon them and asks him if he sees anything to which, the man responds, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." So, Jesus placed his hands one more time upon the man's eyes and this time his sight was fully restored, and Jesus sends the man home. This healing has always been somewhat challenging to me. Was Jesus' inability to heal this man meant to emphasize Jesus' humanity and the limitations that come with being human? Or, was Jesus just having an off day? Or was Mark telling us something more. Did we have the whole picture?

Bartimaeus had the whole picture. You see just verses following the healing of that first blind man in Bethsaida Jesus makes his first prediction that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer, die and rise again. And before we get to our healing story this morning he will have made that same prediction two more times. The full picture of who Jesus is, what he has come to do, and

what that will mean for the world has been laid out and it seems this blind man has comprehended it fully. Perhaps, that is the difference between these two healings. The first man couldn't quite grasp who Jesus was, which resulted in his eyes not fully being opened initially. Yet, this second man was fully aware. Somehow, he had heard the full story of who Jesus was. He knew of the other healing miracles. He knew of his ability to cast aside forces that held people captive to a full relationship with God. The seed of faith that had been cast in his heart had taken hold and he was made well. And not only that, but he followed Jesus on the way to Jerusalem when others have turned back or will leave his side as he nears the culmination of this journey.

We have that final picture as well. We don't have to try and connect the pieces of the puzzle in our minds. We don't have to conjure up an ending to the story. We know Jesus! The Spirit has instilled in us the same faith to believe the healing power of Jesus that comes to us in a plethora of different ways and anew each day. Jesus indeed gave us the greatest prayer (i.e., The Lord's Prayer) but perhaps, in Bartimaeus, we have the second greatest prayer found in the Bible, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me." It has become known as the Jesus' prayer and perhaps even many of you have used this simple prayer. It acknowledges who Jesus is. It confesses we can't go it alone and need his help. It is a statement of faith that Jesus does have the power to bestow mercy upon us in our time of need. And, oh how it is a prayer we cry out today with so many following the tragic events of yesterday in a Pittsburg synagogue where 11 were killed and many others injured due to one man's hatred. "Have mercy."

And we have confidence, through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts and minds, that in fact the Son of David will have mercy. God will bring healing to God's people.

Just as God has done throughout the centuries again and again to people in their time of need. We may not experience the physical healing of blindness or another illness that attacks our earthly flesh but that doesn't mean Jesus' healing touch isn't near.

I have been lifting-up quite often lately about the church's need to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in all it does. Not simply proclamation through our actions as we serve our neighbor but perhaps more importantly through our words. We Lutherans tend not to be as well equipped at doing this. So how might we take a text like today and proclaim the good news of it to someone else? How might we tell about a time we experienced the healing touch of Jesus.

If it were me, I think I might share a moment in my life where I have felt all alone, and they have been many, and I know there will be more of those days to come. Alone almost as if I, too, were sitting alongside a roadside alone with no one hearing my cries for mercy. Times when I have felt lost. Even wondered if God heard my cries and still loved me. Then, I would tell the story of how in those moments the words God proclaims to us in the waters of baptism, "You are my precious and beloved child" come to mind. Offering to me yet again the soothing balm of God's unconditional love. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ I would proclaim. Jesus has healed me. He has picked me up and called me to follow. Despite my limitations and brokenness. My flaws, imperfections, and weakness. Despite all that, he loves me. He is with me. This is the healing news my aching body so long to hears. This is the good news the world longs to hear. So, how have you experienced Jesus' healing? And how might you share that story with someone else?