

## JESUS HEALING

**Psalm 34**  
**Mark 10: 46-52**

**Faith Community**  
**October 25, 2009**

We are going to do something a little different today. Rather than talk in general about the scripture and what it means for our lives, we will look closely at what is happening in this passage and from that glean its meaning for us. It's what we call exegesis.

This morning it will be like coming into the pastor's study and looking over his shoulder as we see what this text has to say to us. Although, what we do this morning will be a summary of a more extensive study of what this scripture is about.

We will be going through the passage verse by verse, so if you want to keep your bibles open to this text you may find that helpful.

***They came to Jericho.*** Jesus is on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem - and he knows what lies ahead in that city. He has already told his disciples what going to Jerusalem will mean: his arrest, abuse, suffering, death, and three days later, his resurrection. Jesus is heading down a road of sorrows. It is a somber, sober time.

***As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus and a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside.*** The interesting thing here is that Bartimaeus is named. We don't know the names of most of the people Jesus heals in Mark's gospel, and he heals a lot of people. Jesus heals them, they are pleased, and they go away. But here Bartimaeus is named. Some scholars speculate that his name is given because some people in the early Christian church might still know him, or at least know of him.

Bartimaeus' life is horribly difficult. Because he is blind, he has no way of earning a living, so he has to sit by the roadside and beg for money. It is degrading and humiliating, but he has to do it to stay alive.

***When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."*** Obviously Bartimaeus had heard about Jesus and trusted that he would be able to do something about his condition. We don't know anything about how he heard about Jesus, but he does know that Jesus can heal, and he knows that Jesus is a powerful leader in the line of David. Maybe he is thinking of Jesus as the Messiah.

Did he hear about Jesus by going out to the hillsides to hear him preach? Not likely. Did he hear about him from relatives or friends? Perhaps, but he clearly knows who Jesus is.

***Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"*** Why would those with Jesus not want this man to be healed? They must have had sympathy for him if they were with Jesus and were listening to what he was saying, except we see this same kind of action several times in Mark. Children try to come to Jesus and they are chased away. Others reach out to be healed or helped, and those closest to Jesus try to get rid of them.

Maybe they are trying to protect Jesus, because this healing is hard work. Or, maybe they feel like they are on the inside and don't want outsiders to be bothering Jesus. They become protective and closed off in the way that a congregation can be closed off and not welcome new people, or the way a service organization can try to limit the people it will accept for help. In any case they try to silence Bartimaeus.

***Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here," and they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.*** The harshness of Jesus' followers is countered by Jesus' compassionate care for Bartimaeus. He doesn't just get up, Bartimaeus throws caution to the wind, tossing off his coat and springing to his feet. You can picture the excitement Bartimaeus must feel. This, at last, is his chance!

Jesus' next words might seem odd. Then Jesus said to him, ***"What do you want me to do for you?"*** Wouldn't it be obvious what this blind man wanted?

But, if we look back at the paragraphs immediately before this in Mark, we find the apostles James and John asking Jesus to do whatever they ask of him. When they approach Jesus with this request he says to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" These are the exact same words that Jesus now says to Bartimaeus. James and John want Jesus to give them the best seats, on his left and right when Jesus comes into this glory. Jesus' closest disciples want honor, prestige, and glory.

When Jesus asks this question, ***the blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again."*** Bartimaeus wants the chance to see. Apparently, Bartimaeus can already see things that those apostles couldn't see. When the apostles asked their question, it must have discouraged Jesus. They have been with him all this time and still don't get it! They still want the best seats and places of honor. Jesus has talked about the greatest being the servant of all; weren't they listening?

It seems apparent that these two questions "What do you want me to do for you?" are put in contrast to each other, and they are found back to back. Seeing is used here in both the literal sense – Bartimaeus getting his sight back – and also in a figurative sense. Bartimaeus may be blind, but he sees a great deal more than some of Jesus' disciples.

***Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.*** The man is healed; Jesus has healed him. Bartimaeus trusted in Jesus and knew that Jesus could heal him. His faith was so strong that he expected to be healed, and he was.

This experience with Bartimaeus ends a section of Mark where Jesus is teaching about what it means to be a disciple and what is coming for Jesus. We have been talking about these teachings over the past few weeks. Remember, Jesus taught the disciples that greatness is being a servant, that this good news is more valuable than all the money you have accumulated, that to follow Jesus means to take up your cross and follow him.

And yet, at the same time the disciples have been vying for the greatest honor, chasing children away from Jesus' presence and trying to silence Jesus' talk about the coming cross. It looks like Jesus says to be one way, and the disciples do just the opposite.

But now we see a man who knows what it is to trust Jesus, who knows that Jesus has the power to heal, and who gives himself to following Him. Bartimaeus seems to be an example of discipleship that Jesus' disciples haven't been able to fulfill. He clearly is set in contrast to the others.

We said earlier that Bartimaeus is unique because his name is given. We don't know the names of most people whom Jesus healed. But Bartimaeus is unique in another way: after he has been healed, he follows Jesus. Most people who are healed get what they want and leave – maybe run home to tell their families or amaze their friends with what they are like now that they're healed.

Imagine the places Bartimaeus might like to go. There is a whole world to see; so much that he would just like to look at. Imagine the joy of seeing his parents, his family, and his friends face-to-face. What beautiful sites might he like to see?

Even Jesus doesn't discourage him from seeing all these things. Jesus says to him, "Go, your faith has made you well." Instead Bartimaeus comes with him.

Bartimaeus saw that he was not only healed, but he was called as well. In his healing he not only could see the world around him, but he could see what mattered most in life as well. He got his sight, but he also got a sense of vision.

The last phrase is, "and followed him on the way." "On the way" is a key word meaning to follow Jesus to the cross. Bartimaeus, who trusted that Jesus would heal him, now trusts Jesus with his life. He trusts in Jesus, and he is so grateful for what he has done that he follows him – even down that road that leads to the cross.

The wisdom and insight of Bartimaeus is not only an example for Jesus' other disciples, he is an example for us as well.

Amen