

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
Quinquagesima  
Luke 18:31-43  
February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The time of the Passover is getting closer. Imagine, if you will, crowded streets, men and women with their kids walking along the road toward Jerusalem. They are making their annual pilgrimage to the Holy City. Jesus and His disciples are among the droves of travelers. They will make their way to Jericho, where they are in the Gospel text, to Bethphage and Bethany, and then they will enter Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday. But first there is something Jesus must tell His disciples. He will prepare them for what will happen in Jerusalem. He said to those men who knew Him best, *“We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.”* We get it. We know that Jesus was talking about Himself, what would happen and how it would happen. We know, but the disciples did not know. It says in verse 34, *“But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.”* You see, this last Sunday of “Pre-Lent” helps to make us “Wise unto Salvation,” like the banner on the wall behind the font says. Quinquagesima – 50 days from Easter – where it will all be understood by both head and heart.

And then a little further down the road Jesus, the disciples, and a large crowd approached Jericho. There was a man on the road. He was blind. His name was Bartimaeus. We know his name from the Gospel of Mark. Because he couldn’t see he asked the crowd that lined the streets with him who was approaching. You see, it was the Jewish law for all who were twelve years and older and within 15 miles of the holy city to go to Jerusalem for the Passover. If for some reason you were unable, you lined the streets and watched the pilgrims who made their way to Jerusalem instead. That’s what Bartimaeus would do and the crowd with him told him that Jesus of Nazareth was coming.

He shouted at the Savior, *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* Those who led the crowd tried to get him to be quiet but he shouted all the louder, *“Son of David, have mercy on me!”* I want you to know that it was very significant that Bartimaeus called Jesus, “The Son of David.” This was a Messianic title and Jesus could see the blind man’s faith through this simple confession. Bartimaeus knew who was before him, though he couldn’t see a thing. There is a whole lot of irony here. It’s ironic that the disciples at the beginning of the text could see quite well. As a matter of fact they had the privilege to see more than most everyone – the miracles, the wonders and the signs. The disciples could see, but they could not see. Bartimaeus, however, could not see for he was blind, but he could see Jesus perfectly in faith.

And if this whole situation of seeing and not being able to see and who really is the one who “sees” in faith is not ironic enough for you – here’s another twist. Those on the “inside” with Jesus – namely the disciples – were left on the “outside” of understanding – namely they were not able to comprehend what Jesus was talking about. Bartimaeus, who was on the “outside” to the world – namely an outcast to all society because he was helpless and had to beg for food – was on the “inside” with Jesus in his understanding of exactly who this man really was, that is, King of kings and Lord of lords.

And if that’s not enough for you – here’s one more. The disciples wanted Bartimaeus to keep quiet because he wouldn’t stop calling out. To those who were listening to Jesus’ teaching as He

walked the uproar was an offence. They tried to silence Bartimaeus, but no one was going to take from him his one chance to escape from his world of darkness. So, he cried out with such violence that the crowd walking to Jericho had to stop. Jesus, however, didn't want Bartimaeus to stop crying out. Rather, Jesus wanted Bartimaeus to stand before Him and talk more by answering a question to which Jesus already knew the answer.

All of us today have heard the call of Jesus to stand when He calls – to move into action when He desires us to do so. But how many times have we said in effect, “Wait until I have done this,” or “Wait until I finish that.” But Bartimaeus came like he was shot out of a cannon when Jesus called. There are certain chances that come along in life that only happen once. Bartimaeus acted in faith and jumped on that one chance. Sometimes we have a wave of longing to abandon some habit, to purify life of some wrong thing – to give our life completely to the Lord. We may want to be better church attenders, be a more faithful reader of God's Word in personal devotion. We might want to be better with having devotions with our family or just taking the time to talk to God in prayer. So very often we do not act on changing our lives or disciplining ourselves by putting priority number one on what Jesus gives to us – sight – the ability to see – like Bartimaeus. Why do we not jump up like being shot out of a cannon each time Jesus offers these gifts? Why are we willing to let the chance to receive His precious gifts offered here slip by?

Beloved I wish you were blind... I wish I were blind. No, I really am not hoping that you lose your sight. But I do wish we could be blind to what we see... and deaf to what we hear that continues to corrupt our soul. Things that should not be the most important become so because we lust after the way they look or like the way they sound. These things have gotten in the way of seeing what the Lord would want us to see clearly.

Seeing or not seeing with the eyes on the front of our head is really not important. Seeing or not seeing with the eyes of faith is what matters for each and every one of us. Beloved in the Lord, trust that the Lord will heal you. I don't know if you will get any better by the doctor's standard, but I know you have much more by the standard given by Christ for your life eternal. That's what Bartimaeus had. He went from being an outcast to being a follower. Without Christ, we are on the outside. With Christ, we have been given the means to follow a Savior who gives us the ability to see more than we could ever imagine.

On Wednesday we will begin to take a special journey like we have each and every year. Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent. We will be led by our Savior through Jericho, Bethphage and Bethany with our Savior. We will be led by our Lord, in a faith given by Him for you to the Mount of Olives just outside of Jerusalem. Then, we will see Him mount a donkey and enter triumphantly. We will see Him... and we will sing. Singing with the Exiles is the theme for our Lenten Midweek Services. The exiles are the children of Israel who were in captivity in Babylon some 500 years before Christ. They were given permission to return to the Holy Land and to restore their home. In faith, the sight given by God to see God, we are restored – forgiven – to sing, to give thanks, to live.

We are getting closer. The blind man's faith has given him sight. And so much more than sight – life. That's what you have as well – whether you see well or you don't see so well – you live by sight. You live by a faith that sees what has happened for you on the holy hill. You live by what Christ has done for you. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.