

Holy Textures

Understanding the Bible in its own time and in ours

Mark 10:46-52

*Short, easy to use, thought provoking background commentary for your sermon, bible study lesson, or scripture reflection.
Listed on The Text This Week, www.textweek.com.*

Year B, Season of Pentecost

Proper 25, Ordinary Time 30

Sunday Between October 23 and October 29 Inclusive

21st Sunday After Pentecost 2009

Read the passage: [The Message](#) or [The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

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In the Gospel of Mark, today's reading is the culmination of Jesus' ministry before the events of Holy Week begin.

Perhaps I am reading too much into the story, but I believe Mark is asking us, the readers, to ponder 4 questions:

- Who have you seen in what has been told so far? (Are you still blind? Are you willing to see now?)
- Will you seize the opportunity when hope walks by?
- What do you need Jesus to free you to do/be?
- How will you respond when what has been holding you back is finally removed?

As someone who dislikes books with long pages of boring description, you gotta love a guy who begins a story: "They came Jericho. As (they) were leaving Jericho ..." (Verse 46)

The fact that Bartimaeus is blind automatically would mean that he is a beggar, and would be sitting by the roadside. In Jesus' time, any change from "normal" automatically put one outside of family support and participation in "normal" social-religious-economic activities.

Notice that Mark says Bartimaeus is told that it is "Jesus of Nazareth" - which identifies Jesus only by his low cast, peasant, hill billy status by birth - but Bartimaeus SHOUTS out, "Jesus, Son of David" - identifying Jesus by his God-given status.

Asides. "Son of David" was a way of referring to the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed descendant of King David who would fulfill God's promise that a descendant of David would reign over Israel forever. At the time of Jesus, this would mean overthrowing the current King Herod and routing out the occupying Roman army.

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Remember that in Mark, there are no stories of Jesus' birth. His status as God's Son is announced by voices from heaven at his baptism, Mark 1:11, and at the Transfiguration, Mark 9:7.

It is likely that the crowd are urging Bartimaeus to keep quiet because shouting in public that someone is the Son of David, the long-anticipated Messiah, would attract the attention of Roman sentries - with nothing but bad results.

Bartimaeus won't keep still, but Jesus does. So Bartimaeus leaps into action and comes to Jesus.

Notice that Jesus does not presume what Bartimaeus wants. Jesus' question, "What do you want me to do for you," does declare a relationship. And notice that Jesus' question to Bartimaeus is exactly the same question he asked of James and John in [last week's lesson](#) (Mark 10:36).

But unlike the status-seeking James and John, Bartimaeus asks for what he most immediately needs: "Let me see again." The phrasing of Bartimaeus' request acknowledges that it is Jesus who has the authority - who can "let" - to restore Bartimaeus' sight.

It is this faith, this trust, this bonding with Jesus, that is the basis for Bartimaeus' healing.

Jesus says, "Go." But Bartimaeus follows. Follows Jesus on the road - the way - to Jerusalem, and Holy Week.

David Ewart,

www.davidewart.ca

* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.