

Mark 10:46-52

September 9, 2012 – 15th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

I Want to See!

✦ **Determined for mercy (vv.46-48)**

✦ **Healed by faith (vv.49-52)**

In the name of Jesus, who gives sight to the blind, dearly redeemed family of God:

“Before God, we are beggars all.” That’s what one university professor used to tell his students. “Before God, we are beggars all.” Problem is, we don’t know it. That was one advantage Bartimaeus had. He knew he was a beggar before God. But he also had another advantage over many American teens. You see, Bart was blind. So he did not suffer from “smart phone” distractions, taken by texting away from God’s Word. You can be physically in God’s house with your mind and heart somewhere in cyberspace with your friends. Without even realizing it, your friends become your god and a wonderful blessing blinds you to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Better to be blind like Bartimaeus. Then you could realize one of our greatest human needs. Then you could say, **I Want to See!** Then be...

✦ **Determined for mercy (vv.46-48)**

Even for a blind person in our day, it would be hard to fathom the narrow confines of life for blind Bartimaeus. If he had a family, they must have been very poor. He dependent on strangers to stop and put something into his outstretched hands, maybe even lead him to his spot alongside the road. Travelers could easily by or stop and mock him. His tiny life was blocked in by blindness on all sides.

What captures our hearts here is the compassion of our Lord Jesus, the Wide-Way Maker. On His way to suffer and die on the cross, Jesus could have chosen many other ways to Jerusalem. No one could blame Him if He were completely absorbed in the trauma of His coming crucifixion. But **“the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”** (Luke 19:10) Jesus had Bartimaeus on His mind and heart to throw open his eyes in the sunlight of God’s grace. From darkness and distress he would emerge into the shining light of Jesus’ smile and the priceless love of God to give what most of us take for granted.

On their way between old and new Jericho, Jesus and His disciples passed a blind man begging beside the road. He asked what was happening. When he heard it was Jesus, he made sure he was heard above the crowd. Forget being embarrassed; he’s a blind beggar. Forget listening to the crowd telling him to be quiet; he knows no other help. Again and again, louder and louder he cries, **“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”** In one sentence the blind man teaches us the meaning of saving faith.

Somewhere he heard about **Jesus**, the Name that means *Savior*. He did not question Christ’s history, but with humble, childlike faith trusted that Jesus is **“the Son of David,”** long promised by God to come and deliver His people from their sins. Bartimaeus was not like the rich young ruler who had recently asked Jesus what he could do to inherit eternal life. (10:17) Bartimaeus’ saving faith trusted God’s goodness where other helpers fail because of self-righteous reliance on riches and works. (10:18) Bartimaeus was better off than James and John who had just come with their mother asking for prime positions in heaven. Humble faith looks to Jesus for salvation, not personal position and power over others. (10:36ff) Most of all, saving faith looks to God for **mercy** when we know we have nothing to give but our wretched poverty. Saving faith sees Jesus not only as the world’s Savior, but as *my* Savior. It not only trusts God to have **“mercy”** on others but to **“have mercy on me!”** Resting on Christ alone, saving faith is personal, knowledgeable and stubborn. Look at blind Bartimaeus, how he was so **Determined for mercy**. The world seeks to silence us, but the greater our need, the more insistent our faith – and the more responsive our Savior who loves to hear and bless. That’s why in our liturgy the *Kyrie, eleison* is such a powerful prayer. It does not dictate to God, but relies on God to know what is best.

Are you stubbornly **Determined for mercy**? You know, you can't choose your relatives; love them as God gives them. But you can choose your friends. Do your "friends" try to lead you away from God's **mercy**? How can they help when you're sick? How can they help you **See** the smiling face of God? Do they see you so **Determined for mercy** that they want God too? Cry out to Jesus, **I Want to See!** how I can be a better friend by leading my friends to you, or leaving my friends behind if they try to lead me away from you into sin. Saving faith is better than eyesight. You see, Bartimaeus was...

✠ **Healed by faith (vv.49-52)**

Many people are afraid to pray to God for fear He's too busy. They think they can only bring the important things to Him. They miss the fact that God is good, infinitely good in love and power. For example, I heard a very different way of praying silent prayers in China. All the worshipers whisper their prayers at once. I'm not used to hearing myself pray even in a whisper, much less others around me. But it makes quite an impression how God can hear us all and help us all at the same time without limit. Blind Bartimaeus had no doubt God is good. And God did not disappoint him. Each of us can find great comfort in the simple fact that Jesus will not rush by us in our weakness and infirmity. He hears our cries. He stops and stands still to ask about our need. You see, God is all we have. God is all we need.

When Jesus called for Bartimaeus, the crowd said, "**Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling for you.**" That's why we come to church together to encourage one another to "Be of good cheer." With Word and sacrament, hymns and liturgy in Confession and Absolution God's people keep cheering each other with the Good News. Our Savior is still calling us out of the darkness of sin and unbelief into the glorious light of God's grace and mercy. Are you willing to come and cheer each other?

Blind Bartimaeus had no home, probably no sandals, begged for food. All he owned was the tattered cloth wrapped around him. But when Jesus called, he threw "**his cloak aside, jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.**" No worries about dignity; he must have come to Jesus in little more than his loin cloth. His one worldly possession meant nothing compared to Christ. What a lesson for worldly wealth. **Healed by faith**, you know God is worth more than everything in this life. You can gladly give it all up to God and His saving work spreading God's Word. Pour it out like a drink offering on God's altar freely given with no strings attached. But never ever give up your confidence in Christ. He promises gracious rewards in heaven far beyond what we can ask or imagine from our beggar's spot here beside the road.

Jesus already knew what Bartimaeus wanted even though the blind man had only asked for mercy. Jesus wants us to put our petitions into prayers from the heart. "**What do you want me to do for you?**" Jesus still asks us whenever we heed His call and come. God promises to give whatever we ask according to His will. "**Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.**" (Psalm 37:4 NIV84) "**Go,**" said Jesus, "**your faith has healed you.**" **Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road** – "**praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.**" (Luke 18:43)

Jesus actually told Bartimaeus to "go away." He did not command the blind man to follow Him. Yet the gratitude of Bartimaeus did exactly that. And that may explain why Mark's readers seemed to know "**Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus.**" He kept on following Jesus long after He was crucified, risen and ascended. He kept talking about Jesus and that day when dear Jesus turned all the lights on for him.

A famous missionary Dwight L. Moody wrote: "I prayed for Faith, and thought that some day Faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But Faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, 'Now Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' I had closed my Bible, and prayed for Faith. I now opened my Bible, and began to study, and Faith has been growing ever since."¹ Beggars we are before God, but His loving kindness will never pass us by. **I Want to See!** we cry. "Come and see," says the smiling face of God in Christ. Amen.

¹ Quoted in NETNT, 2nd ed. (January 1992), p. xiii.