



Let Me See Again (Mark 10:46-52)

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost
October 24, 2021

Ascension Lutheran Church
Pastor Chris

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

My wife hates to be late to the party. Any party. Every party. She hates to be late. I, on the other hand, do not have the same compulsion. If the invitation says 5, 5:20 is fine. 12:30? 12:45 is fine. Especially if it is a meeting, I am less than thrilled to be attending...unless I want to be in the back of the room – then I will get there 30 minutes early. Two Saturdays ago, I officiated a wedding for two of my wife’s co-workers who have become our friends. The wedding was in a private room at a restaurant and was scheduled to start at 5:30pm. At least that was what was on my calendar. My wife argued with me telling me the wedding was starting at 5. I ignored her. She pulled out the invitation and said, “See 5 o’clock.” “Wow,” I said, “Good thing you showed me the invitation.” I was still super confident that the wedding was starting at 5:30pm. But we left for the restaurant and arrived at 4:30pm and upon entering the restaurant, went upstairs and got everything set-up. And at 4:37pm, when everything was set up, we headed back downstairs to enjoy a drink while we waited for the wedding to start at 5:30pm. But at 5:00pm the owner of the restaurant, came to the bar and asked all of us to go upstairs for the wedding to begin. I smiled at the owner and then looked at the group of people next to us and said, “Take your time – finish your drink, the wedding isn’t until 5:30pm.” They said, “Are you officiating?” and I replied, “Yep, 5:30pm.” We got upstairs and the room was fuller now. The bride and groom were milling around talking to their guests. I grabbed my binder and the microphone and walked over to the bride – Are you ready to begin, I asked. She looked at me and said, “No, we said we would start at 5:30.” To which I replied, “That’s what I said!”

Blind Bartimaeus, as he is known in some corners of the church, is all too happy to be late to the party. To be honest, he doesn’t even know there is a party. When the story begins, Bartimaeus has not been invited. Jesus and the disciples make their way to Jericho and Mark does not tell us why Jesus is there. In verse 46 Jesus enters Jericho and in verse 46 Jesus leaves Jericho. I kind of want to know why Jesus goes to Jericho, but apparently it does not matter. What does matter, is that Bartimaeus is sitting by the roadside on the day Jesus comes to town and before Jesus leaves, Bartimaeus hears that Jesus is there and calls out: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” And, of course, the people around him told him to be quiet. Because – who wants to be embarrassed by the city beggar when a celebrity shows up. We still do the same thing today. Cities, preparing for major events, will often gather up their homeless and move them out of the city for the week that the event is in town. But Bartimaeus is not to be deterred. The Bible says he called out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” And Jesus, hearing Bartimaeus, told the crowd, “Call him here.” And the crowd looks at Bartimaeus and says, “Take heart, get up, he is calling you.”

Sometimes I think we should have the New Revised Sarcastic Version of the Bible. So that when something like this happens and Jesus calls someone to him, and the crowd then tells that someone to go to Jesus – the translation could be more sarcastic. “Hey blind guy, Jesus is calling you, if you can figure out how to get to him.” So that bugs me just a little. Jesus, who, we are told, is always going to the lost, the hurting, the dying, the broken – can’t walk across the street to Bartimaeus but makes the blind man come to him. I wonder if anyone in the crowd offered to assist. In some ways it feels like a cruel children’s game of Marco Polo – come on Bartimaeus you can do it. Bartimaeus, you say Jesus and Jesus will say Christ. Jesus. Christ. Jesus. Christ. You get the idea. I mean, come on, the guy is blind, begging on the side of the road – was it really too much for Jesus to walk over to where the beggar was sitting?

Yet the invitation does not seem to faze Bartimaeus. The Bible tells us that the crowd told Bartimaeus to get up and Bartimaeus jumps up, throws off his cloak, springs to his feet and comes to Jesus. Okay – well if you are blind and have any chance of being healed by someone who you have heard may actually have the credentials to heal you - you get up. When Bartimaeus reaches Jesus, Jesus asks him, “What do you want me



Let Me See Again (Mark 10:46-52)

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost
October 24, 2021

Ascension Lutheran Church
Pastor Chris

to do for you?" And Bartimaeus responds, "Let me see again." And Jesus replies, "Go; your faith has made you well."

It is so easy for Bartimaeus. It is so easy for Jesus. Presented with the same question by Jesus, I wonder if we would be so readily able to answer his question. "What do you want me to do for you?" You can almost add your name to the end of the question? What do you want me to do for you Susan? What do you want me to do for you Carol? What do you want me to do for you Adam? Funny enough, I think most of us would have an answer for Jesus – but I am also convinced that most of us would think asking anything for ourselves would be too selfish. No doubt, some would begin with the most selfless items. World peace. An end to hunger. Wipe out poverty. End all wars forever. Restore creation. Some of us might have a little more agenda – get rid of Congress and start over – rid the world of social media – wipe out Kale and never let it be cooked again - make exercise easier. And some of us would consider asking for things we know are more personal but still not that selfish – heal my mom's cancer, find my neighbor a job, heal my sibling of their addiction. And after all of that – we might, finally, find ourselves honest enough to tell Jesus what we really want. To be content. To enjoy this life. To let go of my anger. To be able to forgive or to be forgiven. To be loved. To not feel so alone. To feel better. It is worth noting, Bartimaeus has the opportunity to ask Jesus for anything. And Bartimaeus asks for exactly what he wants – "let me see again." So why is it that we can so often convince ourselves, that in our relationship with God, we should ask for the things we think God wants us to ask for instead of the things we truly need? That may not be exactly the case for all of us – but certainly for some of us it is true.

A couple of weeks ago, our junior high students were asked to answer the following question...what gets in the way of your commitment to God? Their answers included: life, homework (maybe), sports, confusion, school, people (more often than not), and not knowing where to begin. To follow-up we asked then students to answer this question: what are the most important commitments in your life? They answered: baseball, soccer, basketball, tennis, running, football, school, family, social life, grades, and family. And the final question: what would your life look like if you lived more committed to God? And their answers: I would pray more, go to church more, read the Bible more, take care of myself better, and the one that stood out to me the most, "I would be happier." Believe it or not, that tends to be true. I know the church, and the people in the church, do not always live up to the standard of Jesus. Yet, where else can you go to hear a word of hope for your future, a word of love for who you are right now, a word of promise that God will never leave you or abandon you?

The story of the healing of Bartimaeus may not be that exciting to you – but here is what I hold on to. Bartimaeus is the only person healed by Jesus who carries his name with him into eternity. Everyone else, who Jesus heals, is healed nameless- maybe offering us the opportunity to see ourselves in the healing. But today, I hold on to Bartimaeus who simply tells Jesus what he wants, "let me see again." Maybe the rest of us should ask Jesus for the same thing – after these long months of pandemic powerlessness. Jesus, let us see again. Let us see the light – let us see the love – let us see the fire of faithful and stubborn hope – let us see the love that illuminates every broken thing it finds.

People of God - Blessed are you who bear the light in unbearable times, who testify to its endurance amid the unendurable, who bear witness to its persistence when everything seems in shadow and grief. Blessed are you in whom the light lives, in whom the brightness blazes – your heart a chapel, an altar where in the deepest night can be seen the fire that shines forth in you in unaccountable faith, in stubborn hope, in love that illuminates every broken thing it finds. Jesus – let me see again. Say, it with me. Jesus, let me see again. Amen and Amen and Amen.