The Faith of the Bartimaeus
Mark 10:46-52

Last week we learned about Jesus as seen from the eyes of the writer of Hebrews—that Jesus is our ultimate high priest. Well, today we return to the simple stories of the Gospel as we learn about the healing of this man named Bartimaeus, which by the way, is the last healing story in the Gospel of Mark. The majority of those who received healing in the New Testament are not mentioned by name, but here we find that Mark did not miss to name Bartimaeus—which essentially meant “the son of Timaeus.” Timaeus, actually means “honorable man.”

But why is it that Mark remembered Bartimaeus’ name? You need to understand that Mark wrote this approximately around forty years after Jesus’ death. The stories of Jesus and the important events in his life were initially passed on orally in the early church. Apparently the encounter with Bartimaeus was important and therefore his name endured among the first Christians. Why did the memory and name of this man endured? Well, Mark gives the answer:

52 “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.”

What is it with the faith of Bartimaeus? What is it that we can learn from this man’s faith this morning? Well I think it is this… First, we can learn that it is…

1. A Faith that Believes

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

When Bartimaeus learned and sensed that Jesus was in the area, probably by the buzz or excitement generated by Jesus among the people as he passed by, he immediately shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Yes he may be blind, but that doesn’t mean his speech was impaired. He decided to use his voice to shout a declaration of faith.

Friends under normal circumstances to shout something confidently, just like what Bartimaeus did, involves a process. Remember this was an spontaneous act on the part of Bartimaeus. This wasn’t planned. You just don’t shout something out of nowhere. Although, it’s not mentioned by Mark, we can all agree that there was a precedent to this incident. There is a back story to this.

Obviously, Bartimaeus already heard about this wonderful man Jesus. He already heard about his wonderful deeds. He already heard about the power of Jesus to heal. But here’s the twist. This was just limited information that he had. It was all second hand information. He was blind. So that means he doesn’t have the ability to see the events for himself. He can only hear about them from people who have seen or heard of the the events. The Visual aspect of information is very important, but as you can see, Bartimaeus didn’t have this to verify what he heard from others.

But here’s the thing, despite his limitations, and the second hand information he had. He took that information to heart… he processed that limited information and came up with his own conclusion—Jesus is the son of David. Or Jesus comes from the lineage of David. Wow! What a surprising and powerful statement from a blind beggar. Why? It’s an affirmation of the role of
Jesus as savior who would bring deliverance to his people. It’s basically like this—the king has returned! Church, this does not happen to Jesus everyday. Remember, nobody from the crowd even encouraged Bartimaeus.

This is precisely what faith is. It is choosing to believe despite our limitations. It is taking things to the next level. Yes you have this information with you…but what do you do with it? To some extent, we’re on the same boat with Bartimaeus, we haven’t seen Jesus. All we have is this book, that talks about his life. Yes, we have limitations, we don’t have perfect circumstances, our knowledge about God is limited, and yet we’ve made a decision to be here Sunday after Sunday.

Well, let me ask the wives who are present this morning. When your loving husband proposed to marry you, what did you say to him? Did you say, “Oh my, I barely know you. Yes I know we’ve been dating for three years, I think I need more time…I need forty more years to really get to know you more.” No! Obviously you said yes. Why? It’s because you felt something… Even though you have this limited information before you about this man… you take it to the next level… you plunge into faith and make that decision. You decide to see this man not only as a lover, but as someone you’re going to live with for the rest of your life. Bartimeaus made the leap to believe, but he doesn’t end there. And here’s an ironic aspect about his faith. It is..

2. A Faith that Sees

Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” This makes us wonder then, who was really blind? Here’s the irony in the story. Of all the people who were there, it was Bartimaeus who saw Jesus for who he really was.

How many senses do we have, by the way? We have five, actually. We have the sense of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. But you know what? Christians actually have an additional sense. There is a sense number 6. We have a sixth sense. No it’s not “I see dead people” like in that Bruce Willis movie. Sense number 6 is faith. John Wesley actually called faith as “spiritual sense.” He said that we possess this sense when we are born again. It begins like the eyesight of a newborn babe, but then it improves later as we grow in our faith journey.

Bartimaeus, had this sense. He may be blind physically, but he wasn’t blind spiritually. His physical eyes may be closed but his spiritual eyes were very much open. He looked beyond the crowd, he looked beyond and focused on Jesus. He was blind, and yet he saw Jesus for who he really was. He drew a picture of Jesus in his mind as the messiah who is able to make him see again. Apparently, he “saw” something else that the others missed.

Bartimaeus had faith. He ignored the crowd and focused on Jesus. Faith is the ability to see beyond the distractions of life and focuses on who God is. Sometimes we focus too much on the bumps in life that we fail to realize that there is this nice and wide highway waiting for us a mile away. The bumps make us complaining, they make us become negative like the crowd that rebuked Bartimaeus. Worse they leave us discouraged and make us give up. Church, whatever you’re going through right now, I encourage you to be like Bartimaeus. Use your spiritual eyes, your spiritual sense and see beyond the bumps. Yes, Bartimaeus believed, and saw what others could not see, but he didn’t end there. We can also learn that he has…
3. A Faith that Shouts

Bartimaeus did not keep his conclusions to himself. He did not keep what he spiritually sensed for himself. He declared it before Jesus! But he did not just declare it as we would normally declare things. According to Mark, he shouted it. It is one thing to speak about something, but it is another thing to shout about something. When you shout, you are not just amplifying what you’re saying, it means you passionately believe you say. There is passion involved. When people argue about something, they normally raise their voices. Why? They are both passionate about what they’re saying. Similarly when we shout something, it means we stand by what we say. We have total confidence in what we say.

This reminds me of a scene in a Filipino movie—I guess it’s a scene I would imagine seeing in Asian movies and not in Hollywood movies. Well, it’s this scene of a young couple in a park or somewhere—where there are many people passing by. The young man professes his love to the young lady, he tells her how much he loves her. But perhaps she was just being silly and so she tells him, “Really? If you really love me, why don’t you shout it out?” So the young man, overcomes his fear and fulfills her wish despite the embarrassment. He knew that by shouting his feelings in public, he would be able to authenticate or verify his feelings for her. But a little caution here. I would like to appeal all the women, please don’t do this to your husbands or significant others when you go home today.

Church, Sunday after Sunday, we hear and learn about the Gospel. But Bartimaeus teaches us that it’s not enough to know, it’s not enough to see. We have to declare our faith. I’m not saying let’s all go today on Lincoln street and start shouting about our faith there. Aside from freaking people out, I think we will be missing the point.

Bartimaeus challenges us to declare our faith. To speak our faith. Yes we say actions our louder than words, yes that’s true, but words are important too. There is power in words. Words can help give clarity to what is going on the inside of our hearts. That’s precisely what we are doing during worship. When we read words from the bulletin, when we sing, we actually affirm our faith in God. There is power in declaration.

But here’s the catch. The words that we say and sing in worship have no value if we say them for the sake of going through the motions. We need to have passion—that same of passion that Bartimaeus that led him to shout a declaration of faith to Jesus. It is a passion arising from 1) believing in the gospel and 2) seeing beyond what others could not. And remember, it was this passion in Bartimaeus that led Jesus to hear him, to come to him and blessed him with healing.

"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you."

Church, do you want God to bless our worship? Do you want God to manifest his presence in our church? Let us then begin with our worship. Because we if choose to believe in the gospel and because if we see beyond what the world sees, let us then shout it out! Let us shout our faith through a worship that is passionate. Amen.
Gracious God, we thank you from challenging us today to rethink our faith in light of the story of that unassuming blind beggar Bartimaeus. We ask your forgiveness for the vagueness and lack of clarity of our faith in you. Help each one of us to have that Bartimaeus faith—a faith that chooses to believe despite our limitations or the imperfect circumstances, a faith that sees beyond the bumps of life, and a faith that shouts—that is passionate not only in deeds but is evidenced through our corporate worship. This is our prayer in Jesus name. Amen.