

The Twenty-Second Sunday After Pentecost
October 28, 2012
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Mark 10:46-52

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.” “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

A little boy, the son of a pastor, had been outside playing in the dirt. When he came in his mom told him to go wash his hands. “*Why mom?*” the boy replied holding up his hands, “*My hands are clean.*” But his mother told him he should wash his hands because there were germs living in all that dirt and germs on the things on which he was playing. The boy walked toward the bathroom complaining: “*Germs and Jesus! Germs and Jesus! That’s all I ever hear around this house and I’ve never seen either one.*”

While there may be times we feel like that boy, there are a lot of things we believe without having seen. In fact, this is the very definition of faith. In Hebrews we read: “*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*” (1). Paul writes to the church in Corinth: “*We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen*” (2 Corinthians 4). Of course, we remember what Jesus said to a doubting disciple named Thomas: “*Because you have seen me you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed*” (John 20). This morning we have an awesome example of this very thing, an example of faith, an example of where we are able to go in all our troubles, an example which truly teaches us: **Believing Is Seeing!**

“*Then they came to Jericho.*” There were two cities of Jericho. One of the Old Testament which was destroyed by Joshua and despite attempts to rebuild it remained mostly in ruins at the time of Christ. Then there was a new Jericho which was one of the winter residences of King Herod. This is also the city about 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem in which Jesus went into the home of the tax collector named Zacchaeus. And it is now here that we read: “*As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*” This blind man did not need to see to know who was coming by – it was Jesus. He could tell by all the attention and the great commotion Jesus caused. So when this blind beggar named Bartimaeus hears Jesus going by he begins to shout. He asks for mercy. He wants Jesus to take pity on him. He pleads for Jesus to be compassionate toward him.

And the title which he uses to call Jesus has great significance. Listen again to his cry: ***“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*** In other words this man is saying he believes Jesus is the Messiah for the term ***“Son of David”*** was recognized by those who knew their Old Testament as being messianic. Talk about how believing is seeing! This blind man saw more than the Pharisees. He saw more than the teachers of the law. He saw more than all those with 20/20 vision who saw Jesus only as a prophet or teacher. He saw so much more than those who rejected Jesus. He saw, even though he physically could not see a thing, in Jesus’ words and works that this was the Christ, the ***“Son of David.”*** This is the only place in Mark’s entire Gospel where this title is used for Jesus.

Jesus, whose most important work as the Messiah drew near, did not stop Bartimaeus from calling this out. But others did. ***“Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet.”*** Any attempts to explain why many tried to stop this blind man from crying out would be pure speculation. Did they think his shouts were annoying? Did some not like what he was saying about Jesus? Did they think this blind beggar was unworthy of bothering the great prophet? We are not told. We are only told that their attempts to silence Bartimaeus did not work for ***“he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”***

Are not his cries for mercy a wonderful example for us? Isn’t his faith and persistence something we would do well to strive to pattern our prayer life after? Where do we turn when we suffer? What happens to our faith? Do we see as well as this blind man? What keeps us from crying out to Jesus? Is it pride, self-reliance, doubt, or unbelief? We know for sure and have seen clearly that Jesus is the Messiah and our Savior. He is the one Mediator through whom all our prayers are heard. What a friend we have in Jesus! Never forget this, dear friends! Call out to Him. Plead for His mercy. Ask the ***“Son of David”*** for His love, and forgiveness, and compassion. Trust that He sees your suffering, that He hears your cries, and that He will answer in a way that is always best for you.

Listen to Jesus here: ***“Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.” “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.”*** Can you even imagine this happening for you? I wonder how many times the blind man sat there in darkness asking: *“why God?”* I wonder how many days he went hungry or how many nights he suffered in the cold? I wonder how often he questioned what plan God had for his life. I wonder how often he felt pretty helpless and useless as nothing more than a blind man who had to beg for everything he had.

But none of these things kept this man from believing in God’s promise of a Messiah. God had already opened this man’s eyes in a far more important way. And believing Jesus is God’s anointed One it comes as no surprise that at Jesus’ invitation this man jumps to his feet, throws down his cloak, and comes to Jesus. Neither is it a surprise that when Jesus asks what this man wants from Him, he tells Jesus: ***“Rabbi, I want to see.”*** Immediately and miraculously Bartimaeus gets his answer. He placed His faith in exactly the right place, in exactly the right person and Jesus healed him. Jesus makes it very clear that He did the healing – that’s most likely why He asked Bartimaeus what he wanted before Jesus gave it to him. Imagine the joy of having your eyes opened. Think of the happiness of finally seeing that God really does have a plan for you. God used this

man and his blindness so that Jesus could show others that He truly is the Messiah – the One who even gives sight to the blind.

Can we even imagine this? The answer is yes because it already has been done for us. It happened in the miracle of baptism. It happened when we were called out of sin and the darkness of unbelief and taken off the path that leads to eternal darkness. It happened when you heard the good news that Jesus is your Savior and the Holy Spirit took off the blinders. It happened when you saw that in Jesus your sins are paid for, that God is your Father, and that heaven is your home. You get to see blessings of peace and prayer and power for living. You get to see Jesus is your Savior, your strength, and your stay. God has opened our eyes so that now for us believing is seeing. When we wonder what God is doing and what his plans are for us, when we pray and pray and pray and don't see an answer, remember Bartimaeus. God also has a plan for us – a plan which includes our eternal good.

And what was Bartimaeus' reaction to all this? After most certainly praising God he ***“followed Jesus along the road.”*** He could now see with his own eyes the one in whom he had believed - for Bartimaeus believing was seeing. And what would anyone see who followed Jesus down the road? Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. What you would see is Jesus finding a donkey to ride on as He made His entrance into the city. What anyone would see as they follow Jesus down that road is a cursed cross and then a triumphant tomb. Follow Jesus down this road and see not only that He is the Messiah, but what the Messiah came to do – climb a cross with our sins to save us. Jesus entered into darkness so that we could be brought into His wonderful light.

So it should almost go without saying that a God who loves us this much – will certainly care about us in our suffering. He hears our cries. He answers our prayers. He knows the plans He has for us. Even though we do not see Him, Jesus is just as real as germs. And as Peter writes: ***“Even though you do not see him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1).*** Yeah, who says *“seeing is believing”* because for Bartimaeus, for us as Christians, it is the other way around – believing is seeing! Amen.