

October 25, 2015 Pulpit Exchange Sunday

Mark 10: 46-52; Job 42: 46-52

How many here are dog lovers? Big dogs? Little dogs? One dog? Two dogs? My wife and I have two dogs at home. Both are aging, Toy Poodles. However one is totally blind. Little Java can't see a thing. She can't negotiate going down stairs and keeps to the walls so as not to get banged into or stepped on. So, she happily spends most of her day dozing in the safety of our bed. She is content to be there as long as we don't start talking in a loud or animated tone. When we have company or an engaging conversation Java just has to be there and starts barking to tell us so. She won't stop until we stop what we are doing and get up and get her. Kind of like what is going on in our Gospel lesson.

Blind Bartimaeus was dozing in the ditch. Life has been passing him by for years. But he hears a big ruckus and soon learns that **Jesus** is coming. He wakes up to the possibility of not letting this opportunity pass him by. He might be blind but he certainly has heard about this **Jesus**, who is right now on his way up to the long hill to the Holy City, Jerusalem. He has heard about the growing crowds following **Jesus** as **Jesus** takes his message and movement to the religious centre of their universe. The big confrontation is literally ramping up right in front of him. He knows deep within just who **Jesus** must be. He knows that the authorities will either become **Jesus**' disciples or his executioners. He doesn't want to miss anything. The time to act is now.

So the howling and barking begins. *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* **Jesus** stops. He takes time out from his important agenda, he tells the excited crowd to call Bartimaeus over. They tell Bartimaeus. *“Get up and hurry over. You are holding up the parade.”* Bartimaeus springs up out of his ditch and gets to **Jesus** as fast as he can.

Now I find it interesting that as **Jesus** stops and makes time for this blind begger, he doesn't assume to know what Bartimaeus' request will be. Also, notice, as **Jesus** stops and makes time, the all-important parade up to Jerusalem has stopped for a no body. Just a short time before the triumphal entry into Jerusalem a blind begger holds up the procession.

The nervous tension is rising as **Jesus** asks, *“What can I do for you?”* Bartimaeus doesn't hesitate. He is clear. He wants to see so he can follow **Jesus** to Jerusalem and participate in the big event.

Now, **one** reason why I love this story is that on the biggest day of **Jesus**' ministry and mission, striding up the hill to Jerusalem, ready to present himself and his

program to the authorities there; on the biggest day so far, **Jesus** reaches out to a no body in the ditch. This story tells me that **Jesus** always has time for me.

Jesus always has time for us, time for our awakening, time for our eyes to be opened, time to help us become whole.

Jesus is always available, to enable our lives to follow in his footsteps!

What's more, what the Old Testament figure Job learned to see and understand the hard way, we can learn much more easily.

The **other** reason why I love this story is the power of faith. We know that faith opens us up to the spiritual reality in our midst. We know believing leads to truly seeing, and faithful seeing leads to healing or wholeness. **Jesus** responds,

“Your faith has made you well.” And faith has done just that for Bartimaeus.

His faith has taken him to that peaceful place where we just do the right thing and trust that things will work out one way or another. In Faith we trust **God** that we will recognize and accept a way through our struggles no matter what.

So, in spite of his physical condition and his social position Bartimaeus wants to be part of the parade up to Jerusalem. More than that, he discovers the faith to call out, to demand that he be part of it. He sees through the excitement to the core of what is really going on, who is going by. It is his believing that truly sees.

You see, faith is the opposite of resentment. It is the opposite of cynicism, and negativity. Without faith we sink into the blind world we most fear.

Faith is the opposite of resentment, cynicism and negativity all of which Bartimaeus could have easily languished in. But he doesn't.

The crazy thing about faith is that we have to take a chance. We have to call out or get up, or choose something or let go of something else. Faith includes risk as well as reward. Somehow we got to have some faith to try being faithful.

Faith by its very nature is always, finally, a self-fulfilling prophesy. Faith actually begins to create what is desired for **God**'s New Day.

Faith always creates an insightful world.

With faith, **WE** along with Bartimaeus keep trusting, hoping, believing, and calling forth light from the darkness. We join **God**'s parade. In the process we discover that *“our faith has made us well.”*

Application for Today

Jesus shows us that faith restored us and our world on the way to what **God** is up to. *All he is saying is give faith a chance. Amen.*

Hymn #358 vss 1,4,7 When Jesus the Healer