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Title: Where the Blind Can See

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Text: [Mark 10:46-52](#)

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So I want to start our time together with some confessions. I believe honesty is the best policy and I try to be a transparent person so here we go. First off, I must confess that I have already preached on this passage... last week... at Mud Creek. But rest assured the Spirit moves in different ways each week, each moment, and while some of

what I have to say is the same and some of it is different, the Holy Spirit is creating with us a new space here today for us to learn anew, to hear something different, to see something different.

My second confession is that I didn't want to preach on this text at first. You see, in this passage, Jesus performs a miracle in which a man named Bartimaeus who is blind receives his sight. Stories that tend to line themselves with the idea that being a faithful and good person will lead us to have able bodies don't sit well with me. As if being blind is a bad thing, or having a differently-abled body is bad. That's hard for me, as I believe we all have a place in God's story, without limitation of our physical bodies. So I want to say upfront, how this text makes me a little uncomfortable. I want to name that tension I have, you may have it, too and you may not, but together we're going to step into this story and explore what God is saying to us.

Our text today is Mark 10:46-52 and it reads in the New Revised Standard Version this: *"They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has*

made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way."

Herein we seek Divine inspiration.

Pray with me...

Lord as we enter into this time of exploring the holy scriptures, be with us. Stir in our hearts space for wonder, curiosity, and authenticity. Bring your spirit so that our collective meditations may inspire us to speak and act in ways that are pleasing to you.

So who is Bartimaeus? Bartimaeus is poor, he is identified as a beggar. Scholar Luis Menéndez-Antuña points out in his commentary on this passage that in Bartimaeus' community his blindness has most likely made it so that he is unable to work and potentially leaves him outside of the family structure. While he is identified as the son of Timaeus, likely, he has not gone on to have his own family, to be the head of his household which was common and proper in his time. He is on the margins of his society.

But being on the margins doesn't mean he doesn't have wisdom and important things to offer us. Everyone has something to offer. While he cannot physically see, he sees in his heart who Jesus is and he knows. He knows Jesus as the Son of David, he knows Jesus is special. He has faith that Jesus can do something for him, that Jesus can help him see. Bartimaeus' inner seeing, his knowing of Jesus, is what keeps him strong in his conviction. He does not let the crowd silence him, he continues to call out to Jesus even after he is being quieted.

"Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'" He then goes to Jesus, leaving his worldly possession behind, his cloak, and tells Jesus what he needs. Bartimaeus says "let me see again". You notice, he has seen before and he is asking to see anew. It is also not a question, it is a statement.

And then Jesus responds:

- *He calls Bartimaeus to come to him.*
- *He **asks** Bartimaeus what it is that he needs.*
- *He then fulfills his need without any further discussion.*

He calls Bartimaeus to come to him, he doesn't just leave him. He *asks* Bartimaeus what it is that he needs, he doesn't assume what he needs. He then fulfills his need without any further discussion, he doesn't make

Bartimaeus prove why he deserves to have his need filled. His faith and his statement are enough.

And then Bartimaeus can see and he immediately follows in the footsteps of Jesus.

I don't think that Bartimaeus is the only one in this passage to gain new sight. While he is the only one labeled as a blind man, I don't think he is the only one having trouble seeing. I think in some ways he can see better and down to the heart of things than those around him. "48 Many sternly order him to be quiet..." I think the crowd gathered around Bartimaeus and Jesus saw things anew that day too. One minute they are telling Bartimaeus to be quiet and the next, they are watching as Jesus honors his faith.

Then to pan back out even further, but we as the readers gain a new sight of him through his faith and the work of Jesus. How we view Bartimaeus when the story begins changes by the time the story has ended. He starts as this beggar man on the side of the road. By the end of the story, Bartimaeus is a prime example of a faithful disciple. Stepping into faith and following Jesus. No longer just a blind beggar man, we see him again.

Throughout this passage, Jesus walks with us in our faith to see again. Not just to physically see but to deeply see, in our spirits, minds, and hearts. Scripts are flipped, perspectives are changed, and we see things, again, almost for the first time.



When I think of seeing things again, I think of the cinematic masterpiece, Frozen 2. If you haven't seen the movie, I highly recommend it for its thought-provoking plot-line (some of which I am about to give away, spoiler alert, so sorry) and the delightfully hilarious character of Olaf, the talking snowman who loves warm hugs.

During the movie, a mysterious voice takes Elsa and her sister, Anna, and their friends on a journey. During their journey, they find their eyes, hearts, and minds open anew. You see there is this story that they have been told since they were little about their people's past. They have been told that they cannot go into the Enchanted Forest because the Northuldra tribe started a fight with their people when they were signing a treaty. But there is part of this story that they aren't seeing.

To gain this new sight, Elsa must step into the unknown. She has to have faith this mysterious voice will lead her where she needs to go and the deep knowledge she has right. She listens to the voice and she follows and she sees. She finds out the story is different than what she was told and it changes everything. Not only does this new sight allow her to live more fully into herself, into who she was created to be, but also it opens up a world of possibilities for everyone around her. Faith and sight, just like Bartimaeus. Maybe just like us.

The scripture doesn't tell us about how Bartimaeus felt after he regained his sight, only that he followed Jesus afterward. There is a tradition in the Jewish faith called Midrash, which is a way of interpreting and imagining the ancient text. "Rabbinic narrative". It is a practice of wondering about the text. In the spirit of that tradition, I wonder if Bartimaeus was ever afraid. I wonder what it was like for him after the story has ended and he is stepping into sight again. If there might have been moments of hesitation or a learning curve for him with his new sight. Just like Elsa, I think gaining a new sight, a new perspective is like stepping into the unknown. To do that can be an act of courage sometimes. The unknown can feel big and scary. But in those moments when can hold onto faith, just like Bartimaeus, and maybe a whole world of possibilities will open up around us.

So, I ask you: like Bartimaeus, how do you need to see things again? In what ways do you need to regain your sight? What are you, as the phrase goes, turning a blind eye to? A new perspective, a new story. Maybe it is a group of people that you find to be so different from yourself that you can't even imagine a common ground. Maybe it is seeing yourself anew. What stories are you telling yourself that aren't true about you? Maybe you have no idea what it is that you need to see anew but the Spirit is nudging you to the prayer... "My teacher, let me see again"

But together we say like Bartimaeus, "Son of David, have mercy on me", and walk in faith that we will see things again. With our hearts, our minds, and our eyes. It will mean stepping into the unknown, and in the moment it feels too scary and it might seem too big, hold onto knowing there is something beautiful on the other side and God is right there with you. A new vision beyond what we have now. The potential to lean into this faith and see anew is not contingent on the ableness of your body. Your body is holy, whatever physical or cognitive ability level it may be at, and you are always invited to participate in God's work. There is a deeper seeing, in our hearts and our minds. A deep knowing of ourselves and each other as God's created. The Holy Spirit moves us all uniquely, if only we let it.

And when we can see again. When the newness of our sight is overwhelming us may we follow in the example of Jesus: loving our neighbors, calling to them, asking them what they need, and fulfilling those needs without hesitation.

Let us pray...

(Reference: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/ordinary-30-2/commentary-on-mark-1046-52-5>)