

**Sermon by Gail Lebert – October 27, 2024**

**PRAYER:**

*“Father God, In the name of Jesus, we pray to see clearly, to recognize who You are, and to give our hearts to You.*

*Remove all hindrances the enemy would use to distract us from Your truth. Open our eyes, Lord, that we might see Jesus.”*

As I opened my Bible to begin reading the lesson I am to preach on, a note reminded me that I preached on this very passage back in 2003. Yes, that’s 21 years ago. And, thanks to the magic of

technology, I had the sermon saved in my computer. Back then, my sermon referred the confirmation class that I was leading with Mother Nancy, the upcoming confirmation class visit to Diocesan House with then Bishop Drew Smith. It included details about the confirmation class project, the slate walkway in the memorial garden that is still there today. This look back reminded me that although things change in our lives, both as individuals and as a church, the lessons of the bible, of Jesus' love for his church and for his people are timeless.

Our gospel lesson today recounts Jesus as he walks towards Jerusalem, performing another miracle as the blind Bartimaeus receives his sight. The setting finds Bartimaeus on the well traveled road to Jerusalem.

The story includes several characters Jesus, Bartimaeus, and the crowd that tries to silence Bartimaeus, and then some who encourage him to get up and go to Jesus.

Jesus is walking to leave Jericho, The crowds continue to follow him.

Bartimaeus hears Jesus coming and from

the side of the road yells out to him. Even though the crowd tries to silence him, he cries out even louder a second time saying, “Son of David have mercy on me.” Jesus stops and tells the disciples to call him. Note here that Jesus asks the blind man to physically come to him. WE don’t often think of Jesus making it hard for someone, but in this case he did.

One can imagine that getting to Jesus is not an easy feat for a blind man, and we are told that he takes off his cloak and goes to Jesus. His cloak would have held all that he had, would have been his only

protection for the temperatures and the sun and the rain. Yet, Bartimaeus left the only security he had in the world and went towards Jesus as he was told to do . Our storyteller Mark tells us that some in the crowd encouraged him. They say to him. On your feet.. he's calling you.

Before I continue, I'd like to share a personal experience I have with Serving people who are blind. For the past 15 years I have been on the Board of Directors for

CRIS Radio, a non profit that began as a Radio reading service for those who were blind. Each day, volunteers take to the radio airwaves to read the local newspapers and magazines, The Economist, New York Times, Sports Illustrated., the Hartford Courant , including the sports and the coupons! Now, thanks to technology, there is an app that allows people to access this wonderful tool that helps people stay in touch with the world. The mission of CRIS

has changed over the years from serving just the blind, to servicing the population now described as print challenged. Think about the people who are not able to hold a book or newspaper due to physical impairments, or people who have dyslexia, intellectual or emotional challenges. CRISKids™ for Schools provides instant access to audio versions of award-winning children's magazines and classroom

print materials, **all featuring human narration.** My time CRIS Radio has

taught me that blindness is not black or white... It has given me an understanding of the broad nature of the needs of print challenged and blindness in general.

Now back to our lesson... So Bartimaeus moves toward Jesus and Jesus asks him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" Jesus does not assume his wishes, he does not impose a solution to



Bartimaeus' life, he asks him. Now, the story line suggests that Bartimaeus has a lot of needs. Most likely he is hungry and thirsty and needs a good shower. Perhaps he has lost his family and friends, perhaps he is cold. Yet Bartimaeus doesn't ask for his simple needs to be met. No... Bartimaeus asks for something BIG, something lifechanging, he asks for his sight back.

In picturing this story in scripture, I want to share with you a new tool that I discovered. It's an app called Bible art.

You can enter in a bible verse from either the old or new testament and it will show

you images that have been created to show the event you are reading about.

As the healing happens, Bartimaeus and Jesus are surrounded by lots of people. In my reading of the passage, I missed the importance of the crowds. In the images provided by Bible art, the crowd is shown as surrounding, crowding almost pushing in on Jesus and Bartimaeus. I think of healing, I think of it being a private quiet

personal thing. Yet this art describes a quite different environment.

Bartimaeus gives and then Jesus gives. Bart does not give up in calling out to Jesus even when shushed by the crowd. Bartimaeus shows his faith by coming to him, by calling him Teacher, Son of David,. He sheds his cloak, his security and moves to Jesus.

So, I asked myself if Jesus were standing in front of me what would be my response to his question... What do you want me to do for you? I came up with a few ideas.... I'd like to be more grateful for my life, for

the people around me. I'd like to let go of the unimportant things and have more of a focus on love. I'd like to help more people realize their gifts.

So in our own lives. Are we waiting for Jesus to heal us before we can truly follow him. Are we waiting to become less sinful, more educated in the Bible, too broken or trapped in bad habits? Do we think how could someone as "unhealed" as we are do something radical for Jesus? Well, we do not have to wait for healing to answer Jesus' call. Bartimaeus doesn't. AS I thought about my own life, and wondered what Jesus could give me, I

realized he

has already given me what I need. He has given his life to me. To show me his love, and his sacrifice just for me.

For Bartimaeus physical

blindness was his impediment to live a full life following Jesus.

But we are not quite done yet.

Rev. Canon Whitney Rice describes this gospel story as unique. Bartimaeus'

story is both a healing story and a call

story. It is his healing that enables his call

and it is his call that is the final ingredient

of his healing. "Jesus said to him, 'Go;

your faith has made you well.'

Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.”

Bartimaeus could have run off to celebrate his new sight. To see the smiles of his family and friends, to again see his own front door. But he didn't. He followed Jesus. Immediately.

Let me end with three things for our focus in the week ahead:

1. Let us live this week in the knowledge of Jesus's love.
2. Let us explore our own blind spots
3. Let us follow Jesus in loving others.

Like Bartimaeus let us get up and follow

him.

