

8.06.23 – Pentecost 10

“Jesus and Healing”

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Exodus 22:25-27 (NIV)

²⁵ “If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not treat it like a business deal; charge no interest. ²⁶ If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset, ²⁷ because that cloak is the only covering your neighbor has. What else can they sleep in? When they cry out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

Leader: These are Important Words of God! All: Thanks be to God!

Mark 10:26-27, 46-52 (NIV)

²⁶ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight

⁴⁶ Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So, they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” ⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

⁵² “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Leader: These Words of Strong Faith Are of God! All: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

Dear Jesus, we praise you for your healing hands and spirit. Last Sunday, as we recalled how you healed and blessed this faithful servant, our personal and corporate gratitude and vulnerability were top of mind. You have stretched us physically, emotionally, and spiritually in these unusual summer circumstances; we may not feel glad about it, but we know that we have grown, and spiritual growth always bears fruit. Let us continue our discipleship journeys together with healing stories of your power, grace, and mercy. May your voice be the one heard today as you speak through mine. Amen.

Well, hello again! I worked 2/3 of the week, and I survived! I will gain strength each week both physically and mentally, so I ask for your

patience and continued prayers. As I said last Sunday, I am repaired, healthy overall, exercising a lot, eating healthier foods, and feel good, praise the Lord; but my stamina is not yet back to normal. And that's okay, I have been assured. God's will be done, and I will trust and obey as we sang last week! Oh, and thank you for all the birthday wishes! That extra turn around the sun means a lot more to me this year!

Mark 10:26-27 was an important lesson Jesus needed to teach his disciples. The earlier context of the chapter was about the rich young ruler who wanted to be saved and receive eternal life but did not want to sacrifice his rich lifestyle, even to save his parents and siblings. These two verses are important for us too, especially if we try to bargain with God about healing our illnesses, impairments, or addictions. Jesus emphasized in his teachings that with man, many things are impossible, but with God (that includes sacrifice, *i.e.*, *the cross*) all things (*especially eternal life*) ARE possible. Let's see how that affected one such healing story, that of Blind Bartimaeus.

Jesus is on the last leg of his final trip to Jerusalem from Jericho. Passover is coming soon, so there are thousands of pilgrims along the road. It is noisy beyond our imagination, yet Jesus hears Bartimaeus call out to him. It was common to see beggars along the roads of Palestine, but they were still considered a public nuisance. A blind man or anyone with a disability was not considered a full Israelite citizen. Today, we have science to help us find biomedical reasons and some cures for diseases or conditions that exist. In antiquity, however, sickness was related to one's state of being both culturally and socially; its significance brought judgment onto the vulnerable. It was thought that the individual

or someone in his or her family had committed unpardonable sin if they were sick and beyond normal healing. Ancient Judaism thought that God was the only source of health and illness, and that one's obedience to God's Law and commands was imperative to remain healthy. In their understanding, God would have issued a mandated punishment for individual or communal sins. Blindness was considered such a punishment even though we know better today.

Somehow, Bartimaeus had heard of this man of Nazareth, and had begun to believe in his teachings. He had come to faith and proved it by calling Jesus the Son of David. This was the first time in public that Jesus is called the Son of David; in the Bible, Matthew Chapter 1, Matthew describes Jesus' lineage as the descendent of King David, a man after God's own heart. The Son of David is a Messianic title, one that acknowledges that Jesus is the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy. This passage sets the tone for the future Triumphal Entry we call Palm Sunday. Jesus hears this title from the crowd and must meet the man who knows him and his purpose.

Someone else tells the blind man he is being called and summoned by Jesus. Jesus encourages him in verse 49 by saying "cheer up! Rise-get on your feet!" Bartimaeus does get up with courage and hope, throwing off his cloak in verse 50. You may ask why that is important; I had never noticed that part of the story, so the photo on the bulletin cover clearly shows the shirtless Bartimaeus before the Messiah. Some say that because he used his coat to help him collect the coins in his lap, if he could see Jesus and be healed, his faith required no more begging or coat to collect.

Some commentators see the removal of his coat as repentance of any family sin, a turning away from it, and turning toward Jesus.

The interpretation that made the most sense to me was from Exodus 22, our first reading and Deuteronomy 24:12-13 ^{NLT}. Bartimaeus removed his coat, as if to say, “with Jesus, I no longer need it.” He has called me, and I will go as I am, without sin or possessions. I will be covered by the healing mercy of Jesus! The word, “Mercy,” refers to a willingness to pay one’s debts of obligation. Israel’s law forbade charging interest on a loan, so if one lent a cloak to someone else, that person must return it by sundown to keep the owner warm at night and not accrue what we would call late charges!

Some say the cloak symbolized what the Son of David owes the House of Israel; if so, then the foreshadowed Crucifixion pays that debt to humanity as well as Israel through Jesus’ sacrifice. In Biblical times, borrowing a garment in pledge was like giving one’s life, a type of collateral or substitution. Even in New Testament terms, isn’t that what he pledged to us, and we pledge to him when we give our lives to Jesus? Obedience and trust beyond financial gain or interest.

Because his blind condition ostracized Bartimaeus from general society, Jesus’ healing of his sight through faith was also a social or societal healing. Bartimaeus became one of Jesus’ disciples. His faith was strong and was the opposite of the rich young ruler who refused to follow in poverty. The two stories are back-to-back for a stark contrast of character and possessions. Healing was available to both men but only Bartimaeus accepted Christ’s divine healing. Isn’t that true sometimes

today? For all types of healing people often refuse or deny themselves medical or supernatural intervention.

Remember that the disciples witnessed the whole miracle and response. No specific teaching was needed. For us, you witnessed my repair and recovery; it speaks for itself that I am blessed. You may have an illness or infirmity that does not heal or cannot be cured; that is our human condition. Last week, we read Psalm 103, praising God's mercy, forgiveness of sin, healing of sickness, deliverance from death, and the many benefits of love, compassion, provision, rest, and renewal. The writer, David, found hope in the Lord's relationship with him and his people. Our faith is not transactional; we do not trade health for some ritual to God. Our faith is transformational. We ask God for salvation, and he gave it on the cross. That salvation brings more than health; it brings eternal life! Let us not forget that special gift as we study other healings in Scripture this month.

Please pray for your church staff, your leadership, and yourselves, for we are all called "servants who do his will." Salvation comes to the humble, the needy, and the undeserving. Yet we are also called to be good stewards of our health and possessions. Blind Bartimaeus knew the divinity of this man called Jesus. Do you? It is an honor and pleasure to be back teaching and preaching among you. Amen. ||

Will you pray with me? Merciful God, we thank you for our health and fellowship in this place and beyond these walls. We thank you for the supernatural healing that is available through salvation and eternal life. Lord, we thank you and praise your healing power. Keep those we know

and love safe, strong, healthy, and highly motivated to continue serving others in Kingdom work. In your name, we pray, **Amen.**