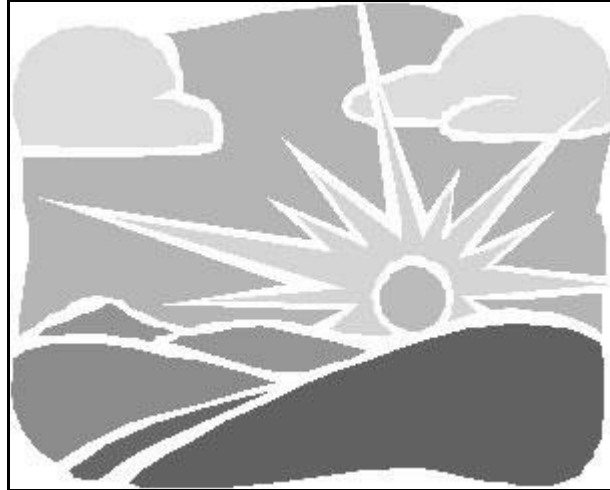


## REGAINING OUR SIGHT



**"I Believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen  
not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."  
C. S. Lewis**

***Scripture:***

**Psalm 34:1-8**

<sup>1</sup>I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. <sup>2</sup>My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. <sup>3</sup>O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

<sup>4</sup>I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. <sup>5</sup>Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed. <sup>6</sup>This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD, and was saved from every trouble. <sup>7</sup>The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. <sup>8</sup>O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.

**Mark 10: 46-52**

<sup>46</sup>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. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

<sup>48</sup>Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>49</sup>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." <sup>50</sup>So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup>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." <sup>52</sup>Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



## REGAINING OUR SIGHT

Mark begins this story by telling us that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. It is the season of Passover, and Jesus has just arrived at Jericho, which is fifteen miles northeast of Jerusalem. As he travels through town, crowds gather, most likely to welcome Jesus, because by now he has a reputation as a healer. But there are others waiting for a chance to criticize Jesus and find some reason to do away with him. So he is being watched very carefully at this point in his ministry.

## INTERESTING QUESTION

When he heard Bartimeus call out, Jesus stood still and let him make his way through the crowd to him, and said, “What do you want me to do for you?”

Interesting question isn't it? Jesus trusted Bartimeus to be able to decide what God should do for him. (This is the same question he asked James and John in the passage we had last Sunday, when they asked for the seats of honor by his side.)

So there is a connection between the request James and John made for self-centered honor and this request out of faith that Bartimeus is making for healing and to regain his sight. Big contrast! James and John were asking out of selfish ambition; Bartimeus is asking out of faith and a deep desire to follow Christ. So his request is granted. James and John's was not.

## BARTIMAEUS

Bartimeus means son of Timaeus. In Aramaic, the prefix “bar” means “son of.” Hence, Bartimeus, Son of Timaeus.

The name Timaeus means “highly prized.” So there is a hidden message in his name. The people are disrespecting and discounting the potential of a beggar who “in God's eyes” is the son of the highly prized. Remember, Jesus is still often called

the son of the “most high.” Similar distinction, isn't it?

Jesus didn't disrespect Bartimeus because he was disabled, (maybe due to some fault of his own). But we might assume that something bad happened to Bartimeus because Mark hints that Bartimeus may have had sight earlier in his life, when Bartimeus asks, “Let me see again.”

Yet before this, look at the people all around Bartimeus. They had tried to silence him. How dare they? The people treated poor blind Bartimeus as just a bother. Maybe this blind beggar had a reputation for being a disruption, but did he deserve their negative judgment?

Still, how is it that the people could be so cruel and cold. What was that like for Bartimeus? Imagine for a moment how it made him feel to have people try to stop him from calling for help!

The crowd's response to Bartimeus crying out for Jesus to have mercy on him is appalling isn't it. But in their eyes he must have seemed hopeless.

## THE CROWD'S RESPONSE

The people around Bartimeus were blind to his potential. They assumed he was a worthless beggar and that Jesus would have no use for him. How wrong they were!

**Bartimeus asks for mercy from Jesus.  
And yet Jesus still asks him,  
“What do you want me to do for you?”  
Jesus could see that  
Bartimeus had options.  
He could continue on as a beggar and  
get enough money to survive,  
or he could be healed of his blindness  
and begin again with a new life.  
So Jesus did not assume he knew  
which one Bartimeus would choose.  
He respected him enough  
to give him a chance to choose.**

Even though Bartimeaus was blind, he could see a new life for himself if Jesus healed him. And he did. And Bartimeus's new life was a life of following Jesus. And he threw off his old ways symbolized by his cloak to start a new liberated and healed life.

## **BLIND SPOTS**

What kinds of blind spots do we have in our eyes when it comes to having hope and a new life for the poor, for ourselves, or for this church?

We are often blind to the true potential in those who are downtrodden. We assume they are hopeless. How much do we really look at these people and take the time to ask what they think they might need to get back up on the right path? The following video showing an example to help us understand how it feels was shown to the congregation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhsGSYAdUs4>

The man in the video is like Bartimeaus. People don't really take the time to see him for the person he is. Most of those passing by just assume he is worthless and hopeless.

When we judge people by their outside we are discounting that we are all brothers and sisters, with DNA that is 99.99999% the same inside.

## **HOW CAN WE HELP?**

**God calls us to stop and look people in the eye and find out how we can help them. That is living the life of faith and hope and joy in Christ.**

Giving a resource list of where they can go for help is one way to acknowledge their humanity. Offering a bag of food, a shower, a listening ear and a prayer are other ways to acknowledge they are part of our human family.

Today you may decide you can share an extra bedroom you currently have that is empty to help a church member who is currently in need. Talk to me if you are interested in helping a church family member.

Individually and as a community God has a vision for us that is even bigger and better than we can hope for or imagine. As a church we can make a faithful and joyful impact on this community that activates vibrations of love out into the world.

## **STAYING COMFORTABLE OR BEING CREATIVE?**

But it is easier to stay comfortable in our misery of decline like many other Presbyterian churches are doing. Rather than being creative, and trying new programs, inviting new people into our lives and developing new projects, it is easier to just be doomsday about the church's future.

Many church congregations are blind to the importance of taking risks to grow the church by investing even more money into ministries to reach those in need near and far. And many are blind to the interconnections we have with one another and all the diversity of creation. Our interdependence and connection to all of humanity brings us joy and inspires our faith, and calls us to action as well.

## **DR. BRYANT KIRKLAND**

We are created to feel joy in faith and through our interconnections with all of creation. My mentor and friend, Dr. Bryant Kirkland, years ago preached on Psalm 16:11 that reads: Thou will show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy.

Dr. Kirkland believed there is action in faith and much more joy in religion than most people realize. He said the word faith is a verb, and we should be acting out our faith with participatory energy that will yield high dividends for us and for our church

community. It takes commitment, trust and devotion to follow Christ as our example of how to heal those around us.

Then he added that the same thing is true of the concept of joy. He says that some people wait to be supplied with joy while others see it as a verb and start giving it out. He said we can “joy” others, and we can enjoy God by following the path God desires for us which is to bring joy to the downtrodden and lift up the brokenhearted. As a result we experience joy in meaningful lasting ways. In John15:11 it says, “These things have I spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you and that your joy might be full.”

### **WE ALL NEED MERCY**

We are all Bartimaeus. We all need mercy. But our form of blindness is often hidden from public sight. We need Christ’s healing to regain our sight, to trust in him and stop judging others as less than worthy.

We are to throw off our old cloak of worry that causes clinging to material things. We must throw off the old things that hinder us from truly seeing the vision of a hopeful future God has for each of us and for our church, because once we can abandon the old isolative ways, we will be open to receive healing from God that strengthens us for a positive future.

Let us in even bigger ways, act out our faith and let joy shape our lives for serving and building up the kingdom here on earth. We will truly see what God has in store for this church in Santa Rosa if we see the world and all people through the eyes of Christ.

**Benediction: What would you say to Jesus if he was standing in front of you now asking, “What do you want me to do for you?” Take time this week to listen. You will hear his voice. Now how will you answer him? And may the grace of our Lord, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen**



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