

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intro

Our Gospel reading today brings to an end the section of Mark's Gospel we've heard these past few Sundays on what it means to follow Jesus.

This section began with the healing of a blind man, and now concludes with the healing of blind Bartimaeus.

The emphasis here has been on what it truly means to be a Disciple of Jesus.

Jesus repeatedly tells his Disciples and us, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and **servant of all.**"

So then a call to discipleship is a call to service and sacrifice, **not** prestige or power.

Throughout this journey, the Disciples have **REPEATEDLY MISUNDERSTOOD** what Jesus means when he tells them to **take up their cross and be servants of one another.**

They are the ones who are truly blind – and so to **CONTRAST** this point, we have the story of Blind Bartimaeus – to demonstrate what it means to be a follower of Jesus.



Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus

I. Bartimaeus

A. Bartimaeus, we are told, is a blind man who sits by the side of the road leading out of Jericho, where he could entreat the kindness of Pilgrims who happened to pass by on their way to the **PASSOVER** celebration in Jerusalem.

1. As Jesus passes on his way, Bartimaeus cries out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”
2. Now right away, there are two things to notice about Bartimaeus.
3. First, Bartimaeus is the only person healed in Mark’s Gospel who has a name.
4. So it may well be that Bartimaeus was someone known to the people in the church Mark was writing to.
5. The other interesting thing is what Bartimaeus calls Jesus – he calls him “Son of David.”
6. Now, “Son of David,” was a title for the Messiah – so here is this **BLIND MAN** who has better **insight** than Jesus own followers.

B. Bartimaeus was sitting by the side of the road, when he hears that Jesus is passing by and starts calling to him.

1. In fact, Bartimaeus is kicking up such a ruckus that the crowd around him tries to hush him up.
2. Can’t you just hear them, “Bartimaeus, be quiet, I can’t hear what Jesus is saying. Bartimaeus, shut up, you’re embarrassing us. Bartimaeus!!”
3. Finally, Jesus stops and calls him.
4. And in response, we read Bartimaeus **FLINGS OFF** his cloak and jumps to his feet and runs toward Jesus.
5. And when Jesus says, “What do you want me to do for you?”
- He tells him right away, “My teacher, let me see again.”
6. And, we are told, because of his **FAITH**, he instantly receives his sight and follows Jesus on the way.

II, Compare to Rich Young Ruler

A. It is interesting to compare the actions of Bartimaeus with those of the Rich Young Man who came to Jesus seeking Eternal Life.

1. The Rich Young Man was just that – a Rich Young Man; and Bartimaeus was a Blind man who had to resort to begging to eke out any kind of existence.

2. Both called Jesus “Teacher,” but the Rich Young Man seems to treat Jesus as just another wandering teacher who may hold the secret of life.

3. Whereas, when Bartimaeus refers to Jesus as “My teacher,” he is addressing the one he has already called “Son of David,” acknowledging him as the Messiah.

4. Now, when Bartimaeus was begging by the side of the road, he would have sat in such a way that his cloak would be over his lap and made a scooped out indentation where people could drop their coins as they passed by.

5. So, when Bartimaeus throws off his cloak and springs up to run to Jesus – those coins would have gone flying everywhere.

- Bartimaeus left his cloak – his only possession – and his coins – all he had – to respond to Jesus.

6. The Rich Young Man had plenty of wealth – in fact, we are told he had many possessions.

7. And yet, when told to “sell what you own and give the money to the poor” – he couldn’t do it – and just walked away grieving.

8. Truly, it is Bartimaeus who literally **left everything** to follow Jesus, while the Rich Young Man turned out to be owned by his possessions.

B. You know where this is going, don't you?

1. Which person are we?

- Are we like Bartimaeus who springs up and gives it all in following Jesus?

- Or are we like the Rich Young Man who is calculating every step of the way, and in the final analysis, couldn't give of his money to follow Jesus.

2. Jesus told the Disciples, "If anyone wants to follow me, let them DENY themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

3. And so, **denying ourselves** means that we have to give up something – it means sharing what we have so the work of God can go forward.

4. It means taking the TIME we would rather use for something we want to do and giving it to serve others.

5. It means using the MONEY we would rather spend on ourselves and using it to help others.

6. It means the TALENTs we would rather employ for our own advancement and instead used to help others along the way.

7. It means taking up the cross and following Jesus.

8. Not simply wearing a piece of jewelry around your neck – but **living** it in your heart.

9. It means taking the cross as a sign of service – of work done for others – and of giving for others.

10. We are called to do that – and more.

C. But, truth be told – we don't want to do it – we don't want to give anything away.

1. We want to PROTECT what is ours at all costs;

- we want to KEEP it for ourselves.

- "It's mine – you can't have it – I EARNED it."

2. Sounds like that Rich Young Man, doesn't it?

3. But Bartimaeus **THROWS OFF** his cloak – he sends his coins flying in every direction – he tosses away all he knows for a chance to be healed by Jesus – and then **FOLLOWS HIM** on the way.

III. Stewardship

A. Now, it's your turn to make this hard decision.

1. Will you be possessed by your possessions, or are you willing to take a drastic step and put them to work following Jesus and furthering the work of his church?



Diane M. Jardine Bruce

2. This **TUESDAY**, is our **STEWARDSHIP DINNER** with Bishop Bruce.

3. This will be an opportunity for us to be together – something we have missed this past year – if you haven't made a reservation let me know and we will see if we can get you in anyway.

4. It will also be a time to hear from Bishop Bruce, and the Stewardship Committee – before we wish Bishop Bruce farewell for her new ministry in Western Missouri;

- and at the end of the evening you will receive your **STEWARDSHIP PACKET** – we will also have them next Sunday if you can't be with us on Tuesday.

5. Now as tempting as it is to simply dig through – find the pledge card – fill in a number – and be done with it, I'd like you to slow down and think.

6. Slow down, read the information in the packet, and carefully think about and pray about your gift to God and St. Columba's.

B. Once again it is time for us to decide where and what our **PRIORITIES** are, and how we want to follow Jesus.

1. Is God our priority – or do we take Jesus for granted?

2. Do we focus our lives on following God and God’s call;
- or do we wander off following our own desires?

3. Are we here each week – either in person or on the livestream – so we can be in relationship with God and be open to God’s direction in our lives;
- or do we say “next week” or “another time” only to drift further and further away from God and the wonderful things God wants to do in us and through us?

4. Remember Jesus’ words to Bartimaeus, “*Go your way; your faith has made you well.*”

- What of our faith and where are we placing it?

C. This year, our Stewardship Theme is “**Every Good and Perfect Gift.**”

1. We know that God gives us all that we have – and has given us blessings and provided for us, over and over again.

2. But we have to **DECIDE** what we are going to **DO** with these blessings – and how much we are going to give back to God.

3. Are we going to **HOLD TIGHT** – like the Rich Young Man?
- Or are we going to **LET IT FLY** like Bartimaeus?

4. The choice is up to us – make it wisely – make it carefully – make it a response to the God who gives us all.

Let Us Pray

O God, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ earned his bread by the labors of his hands, and taught us that all things we possess are committed to us as a trust from you: Help us to be faithful in the exercise of our stewardship; that in earning we may be just and honorable and in spending we may seek first not our own indulgence but your glory and the good of others; through the same

Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. AMEN.

