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Mark 10:32-52: *The Way of Discipleship: Seeing*

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³² They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. ³³ “We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles,³⁴ who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

³⁶ “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³⁷ They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

³⁸ “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

³⁹ “We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

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.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

Time and again in this series from Mark’s Gospel...

We’ve seen the disciples struggle to understand what’s going on...

Struggle to see Jesus clearly.

Mark uses the middle chapters of his book to show who Jesus is...

And then, how that creates friction with who his disciples expect him to be.

So far in this series we’ve seen 2 passion predictions.

Jesus has said to his disciples:

“Look, the Son of Man is going to be betrayed.”

“He’s going to suffer, be killed, and then rise after three days.”

Then after each prediction, the disciples do something to show their lack of understanding...

They do something to show their ignorance.

After the first prediction of Jesus’ death, Peter rebukes Jesus (8:32).

Then after the second prediction of his death, the disciples get into an argument about who is the greatest disciple (9:33).

In our passage, not much changes.

Jesus again predicts his death...

This being the 3rd and final time...

And then true to the pattern two of the disciples do it again...

“Jesus, let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

“Jesus, when all of this pans out...”

“When all the dust settles and you’re left on top of the mountain...”

“King of the hill...”

“We want to be your number one and number two.”

James and John are essentially asking for positions of honor and power when Jesus takes his throne.

Again, the disciples show that they don't understand...

They're blind.

Not just these two (James and John)...

But all of the disciples lack the ability to see who Jesus is.

They just don't understand who he is and how he operates...

They don't understand what he's come to do...

He's come to give his life as a ransom for many.

From the disciples' perspective, Jesus is someone great:

Peter has already confessed him as the Messiah...

The one anointed by God;

They've seen him multiply bread and fish;

They've seen him cast out demons and heal the lame;

A handful of them saw Jesus transfigured on the mountaintop;

They expect that this man will do great things.

They expect that this man will be seated in a place of power and honor.

And they're hoping that this man will take *them* to glory...

This is the undefeated world heavyweight champion making his way to the ring...

Followed by his entourage.

They fight off the crowd that's trying to touch him...

“Make way for the champ!”

So when they hear some beggar calling out for Jesus...

They try to hush up this peon...

He has no business addressing the champ or his entourage.

He's not qualified to call out to Jesus.

“Many were sternly telling him to be quiet,” it says.

Remember this is the same group of disciples who last week thought that the rich guy was an ideal candidate to be one of Jesus' followers...

He obeyed the 10 Commandments and was blessed by God as evidenced by his wealth...

So why would Jesus want anything to do with this beggar who couldn't see?

The disciples were blind.

They had certain expectations of Jesus.

And these expectations limited their perception of who Jesus is and how he works.

We too are blinded by our expectations.

We expect God to operate the way the world operates...

We expect that God only uses the new, expensive, and shiny things of this world.

He only uses the smart, good-looking, and able-minded in successful ministries.

This is the way the world works...

If something doesn't work right, or loses its shine...just replace it.

Upgrade to the new model.

If someone's productivity slips at work, first give them a warning...

And if it happens again, trade them in for a new model...

A younger, more efficient worker.

This is the way the world works...

Why shouldn't God?

Or we expect that things should always go in our favor.

Relationships should always work out in the end.

Our business endeavors and our work should always be profitable.

Sure, we expect hardships to come...

But not *too* hard...Not *too* serious.

Things should eventually go in our favor.

When things seem to turn against us we throw our hands up and say, "Why God?"

"Why are you doing this to me?"

Or, like someone said in the midst of a friend's unexplainable illness:

“God, this is why people don't like you!”

We expect God to behave in certain ways.

We expect him to control the universe in ways that seem right and fair to us.

And so, good people shouldn't suffer.

Bad people shouldn't get away with things.

Our prayers should always be answered in the way we want them to be answered.

We have our own expectations of God.

We think we know how God should be behaving...

Or how God should be working his purposes out in the universe.

But what usually happens is that God stops us right in our tracks.

God surprises us.

This is what happens for the large crowd following Jesus.

The entourage, in our passage, is making their way to Jerusalem—

The final destination for the champ;

On their way to glory (so thought the disciples)—

When all of a sudden they come to a screeching halt.

“Jesus stopped,” it says.

“Jesus stood still.”

He hears the beggar.

And he blows away all of the disciples' expectations.

Up to this point in Mark's Gospel, finding a true disciple has been elusive.

Jesus' current followers fail time and again...

Always trying to pigeonhole Jesus and his mission...

Forcing their expectations on Jesus...

Unable to see clearly who this man is.

But now we have this blind beggar...calling out to Jesus:

“Son of David! Have mercy on me!”

Mark tells us that “Jesus of Nazareth” was passing by (10:47).

This was the everyday name used for Jesus.

Like saying, Michael from Michigan was driving down the street.

But this blind beggar knows that Jesus is more than just some normal, “everyday-kinda-guy”.

He calls out with a confession of faith, “Son of David! Have mercy on me!”

Bartimaeus calls out to Jesus with this title...

Showing that, unlike the disciples, he grasps who Jesus is.

This blind beggar, sitting on the side of the road—

Not a member of Jesus’ entourage—

He is the one who “gets” Jesus.

The blind man is the one who “sees” Jesus.

He recognizes Jesus as someone special...

He addresses Jesus as someone with a royal lineage.

As someone who has the power to save and heal.

He sees Jesus as no one else in Mark’s Gospel has seen him.

And it’s clear that even before Bartimaeus sees with his eyes...

God has already opened his heart.

God has given Bartimaeus the eyes of true faith.

In the Belgic Confession—

(One of our Reformed documents that helps us to summarize our beliefs)

It talks about “true faith” (Article 22)...

A true faith that holds onto Jesus Christ.

A faith that embraces Jesus...

Embraces all he is and all that he’s done.

It’s a faith that doesn’t need to look for anything or anyone else...

It understands that Jesus is all that's needed...

Expectations are surrendered.

It understands that Jesus makes us whole...

He restores our life.

He heals the brokenness.

All hope is found in him.

God has given Bartimaeus this true faith.

He's opened the eyes of this blind beggar's heart to see Jesus...

To see Jesus as he really is...

And to cast his cares and his hopes on him.

God kindles a fire in this man's heart that causes him to cry out in the midst of opposition.

When the entourage is telling him to keep quiet...

He cries out louder.

"Son of David!"

Then when Jesus calls him over, the man throws his cloak aside.

It would probably serve a blind man well to keep his belongings close by (Matt Skinner).

Not only would he have problems finding it, but I'm sure he didn't own a lot to begin with.

God kindles a true faith in this man's heart that says, "Life is about to change."

"No longer will I need my cloak to sit on as I beg, looking for handouts."

"I'm about to encounter Jesus of Nazareth...Jesus, Son of David!"

"My life is about to change!"

"Whatever I had before, it's nothing compared to what Jesus will give me."

Unlike the man in our story last week—

The rich man who was unwilling to let go of his possessions—

Bartimaeus throws to the side all of his belongings...

And he comes to Jesus with open hands...

He comes to Jesus with his need.

And unlike James and John...

Who ask for positions of power...

Who want to be seated next to Jesus in places of glory and honor...

(Jesus asks Bartimaeus and James and John the same question: "What do you want me to do for you?")

Bartimaeus says, "I want to see."

Oh, Bartimaeus...you do see.

God has given you true faith.

And God has given us true faith.

God has opened our eyes to see Jesus...

To see him as our Savior...

To embrace him, and him alone.

And to know that nothing else is needed apart from him.

With this gift of true faith, we're free let go of our expectations.

We have in Christ everything we need.

We're now wrapped tight in the big arms of our loving God, because we have Christ.

And as we see who Christ is, we come to know more and more the Father's love.

Along with Bartimaeus we're able to cast it all aside and follow Jesus on the way.

We're invited to walk with him as his disciples...

Surrendering our expectations of how God should act...

And trusting in his provisions on this journey of life.

This has been a tough week for a lot of us...

But especially for Pastor Rich, Patsy, Jessica and the rest of their family.

Tuesday night they found out that their oldest daughter was in the hospital hanging on to life after internal bleeding caused significant pressure on her brain.

They're now in Thailand with Rachel praying that she will regain consciousness.

And many of us have been joining them in praying for her and the whole family.

On Wednesday night we had a prayer gathering here.

It was good to be together, asking for God's favor and feeling his peace.

At the end of the gathering Pastor Rich, Patsy, and Jess came up front and said a few words.

Patsy told a story from her childhood...

There was phrase that she remembered hearing...

About the sparrows falling to the ground and God caring about every one of them.

She grew up on a farm and was used to seeing these dead birds laying on the ground...

Patsy said that she hated this saying growing up...

"God, surely you don't care. Look at these dead birds."

But now in the midst of this struggle she gets it.

In the middle of this dark valley she knows God's love.

God has kindled a true faith in her heart to believe that God loves her through Christ Jesus...

Showing her the ultimate act of love.

And because of this, God has freed her from her expectations.

God has shown her his ultimate love in the sacrifice of Christ...

And now He has moved her to trust him for *all* things...

Including this...

Placing the life of her oldest daughter in His loving hands.

Of course Pastor Rich and Patsy are praying for healing.

We're all praying for the God of miracles to do another one.

We're praying that God would spare Rachel's life and the baby in her womb.

But God has moved in his children...both Rich and Patsy...

To surrender the outcome...

To trust that God has provided everything they need in Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus Son of David, Jesus the Messiah...

Just as God provided Christ for this redemption, so too will God provide now.

They both stood up here on Wednesday night and said that if God took their daughter...

They knew where she would be.

They would be crushed to lose her...

But they trust that this God who knows every sparrow that falls...

Is the same God who knows Rachel, and loves Rachel.

God moved in them to surrender their expectations...

And pray the same prayer that Jesus prayed in the garden:

“Not my will, but yours be done.”

This struggle may not be our own...

But we all have our own struggles.

We're all coming to God with our expectations of how God *should* be working...

It's hard not to...in a world that feels so out of control.

But God has given us a true faith.

By his Holy Spirit he has kindled in our hearts a true faith that embraces Jesus Christ...

He's given us eyes to see that all we need is in this one man...

That all of our cares and concerns are held in his hands...

And that we're able to lay it all at his feet and faithfully trust and follow him.