



Sermon for the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, October 27, 2024

Let Me See Again

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene The Rev. Glenda Empsall, Deacon

https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp25_RCL.html

Job 42:1-6, 10-17, Psalm 34:1-8, (19-22), Hebrews 7:23-28, Mark 10:46-52

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

I told friend of mine that Empsall and I both enjoy playing the New York Times' game Wordle, and although we are a tiny bit competitive, we don't keep score! She asked, "Have you tried Connections?" Connections is another NYT word game. You are given a 4X4 grid. Each square contains a word and the idea is to create four groups of four words each. Each group of 4 words share something in common. For example, the words Bass, Flounder, Salmon, and Trout are all types of fish. Ant, Drill, Island, and Opal are all words that could follow the word fire. Fire ant, fire drill, Fire Island and fire opal.

Each puzzle has only one solution and it IS tricky because some words could fit into multiple categories. Instead of being fish, b-a-s-s could be a low voice, flounder could mean to struggle. To be successful, it helps to have an eclectic range of experiences. For instance, I don't do well if the 4-word relationship is something like "hip-hop bands." I like to look at each word on the grid and think of as many possible meanings as I can. Then, it helps me to set the game aside for a while. Although I am no longer actively trying to solve the puzzle, my subconscious brain is working!

It's the same with preaching. I have pondered the Gospel for this Sunday for quite some time, and preached on these verses before. This time, I am focused on that word, "blind." What does "blind" mean? Unable to see because of an injury, disease or congenital condition is one definition. Blind may also mean lacking perception, awareness or discernment; unable to recognize someone for who they are, or a quality of someone. Blind to danger. Blind to her concerns. For a very long time, the disciples have been blind to Jesus' true identity. They haven't understood Jesus' mission or their part in it. Sometimes we are blind to our own blind spot.

The reading in Mark's gospel today is about the second time that Jesus has healed a blind man. The first time was in Bethsaida and it was much more 'hands on.'¹

"Some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged him to touch him. Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. He put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him. Jesus asked him, 'Can you see anything?' The man looked up and said, 'I see people, but they look like walking trees.' Jesus laid hands on his eyes again. Then he looked intently and saw everything clearly." The blind man is not named. We know that he was brought to Jesus by people who must have cared about him and who believed that Jesus could heal him. We know he regained his sight in stages. At first his perception was

¹ Mark 8:22-26. Also the man born blind, John 9:6-8.

foggy, but after a second “treatment” from Jesus, he could see with clarity. Amazing Grace! Jesus sent him home, saying, “Tell no one.” Jesus is not trying to build a clientele, and the stories about Jesus as a healer are spreading.

Jesus finished his work in Galilee and set a course for Jerusalem. Along the way, Jesus repeatedly told his disciples that this journey would end with his execution and, three days later, his resurrection.² They were confused and fearful. They could not see the big picture. They were blind to Jesus’ vision and mission; to encourage and cultivate God’s kingdom of love, equity, dignity, and peace. To bring healing for the whole world.

Today’s story of a blind beggar on the roadside is Jesus’ last miracle before his crucifixion. Bartimaeus “heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth” and shouted, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” To call Jesus “Son of David” was to acknowledge Jesus as the royal Messiah, a dangerous thing to do. Although he is physically blind, Bartimaeus “saw” who Jesus was more clearly than any of those in the crowd. Many in the crowd sternly ordered Bartimaeus to be quiet, but in his great desire to be healed Bartimaeus shouted all the louder. Jesus stopped and said, “Call him here.” Suddenly the disparaging crowd began to encourage Bartimaeus. Suddenly they “saw” the beggar by the side of the road and in need. “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” Bartimaeus leapt up, threw off his cloak and ran to Jesus.

Notice that Jesus did not assume what this beggar without a cloak wanted from him. Jesus asked Bartimaeus the same question he posed to James and John, “What do you want me to do for you?” Unlike the Sons of Thunder, Bartimaeus did not ask for a position of power in Jesus’ kingdom. Bartimaeus responded, “Let me see again.” Again! Bartimaeus had not always been blind! Jesus answered, as he so often had, “Go, your faith has made you well.”³ Bartimaeus’ sight was immediately restored, but he did not leave. Bartimaeus was healed and he answered an unspoken call to follow Jesus. He followed Jesus ‘on the way.’

How would you respond to Jesus’ question, “What do you want me to do for you?”

It’s always good to pray for whatever you want, but we can do more. Jesus shows us what we are to do by example. World peace? Love your neighbors and your enemies. Make your feelings known to the powers that be. End hunger? Raise awareness and make donations through St. Luke’s or your local food bank. Want conversation with someone who disagrees with you to be civil and productive? Remember your baptismal vows, learn about the Dignity Index.⁴

We are the eyes, hands and feet of Jesus in the world. Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

² Mk8:31, Mk9:31

³ Lepers, Lk17:19; Paralytic, Mk2:1-12, Lk5:17-26; Syrophenician woman’s daughter/Canaanite woman’s daughter Mk7:24-30, Mt15:21-28; Bleeding woman, Mk5:26-33, Lk9:45-47; Centurion Mt15:28

⁴ <https://www.dignity.us/>

Let us go forth in the name of Christ!