

Sunday, December 31, 2023

First Lesson: Proverbs 3: 5-6

Gospel Lesson: Mark 10: 35-40, 46-52

Sermon Series: Questions that Move Mountains: What do you want me to do for you?

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- We are concluding our 8 -week sermon series called “Questions that Move Mountains?” This is a sermon series that invites us to unpack the questions that Jesus either asked or inspired; with the hope that our repeating First Lesson of Focus ; Proverbs 3: 5-6 that says to *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.*In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths; will take root into our hearts.
- This week the question that we are unpacking is Jesus question to the disciples, “What do you want me to do for you?”

- Looking at the scriptural and traditional background from which our passage is coming from; the journey begins with James and John, two disciples of Jesus, seeking positions of honor in the coming kingdom.
- Many scholars would describe this pursuit as being more self-serving than God serving, for the disciples were on an ambitious pursuit of recognition and status.
- And the clue in which a person could come to this conclusion is simply by their request: **"Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask."**
- As a reader and studier of this text, this request is pretty audacious of these disciples even to dare declare, yet convicting at the very same time;
- For if I am honest, there have been times in my life that I wanted God to do exactly what I wanted God to do for ME.
- I would pray for outcomes that aligned in my favor,

- I would make requests of God that allowed my bottom line to be fulfilled;
- But Church family, can I proclaim to you this morning that God is seldom concerned with our bottom line or our personal agendas?
- You see often times, we may approach God with our personal agendas, hopes, and plans—but God may have something entirely different in mind.
- So while it's natural to have dreams and aspirations, we must acknowledge the limitations of our understanding.
- God, being omniscient, sees the bigger picture that we may not grasp.
- Therefore it is of my belief that **if our agenda** does not line up with God's agenda,
- **If our plan** does not line up with God's plan,
- If we are to think that self- glory trumps God's glory,

- Then God is not going to cosign on what we are trying to do!
- In fact it has been in my life experience where I have seen things in the name of God's kingdom get blocked altogether when the people lose sight of God's purpose;
- When the people lose sight of God's vision—
- This is, therefore, one of the first sobering lessons that James and John and those who identify with them would have to grasp.
- That in their request to God..."**Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you;**"
- In my biblical imagination Jesus was saying to the disciples...."**you see James and John let me stop you right there;**
- For what you are asking of me....
- No let me correct that....**what you are commanding from me** is not something I am here to do at all...

- For I've come to set the captives free;
  - I've come to heal the broken hearted;
  - I've come to recover sight to the blind'
  - I did not come to give you social capital;
  - I did not come to give you political power;
  - I did not even come to maintain and support your stats quos and agenda;
  - I've' come that they may have life and have it abundantly! (John 10:10)
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- You see Church family this was the essence of Jesus response to the disciples on that day;
  - I am referring to disciples who had their mission and vision seriously twisted and dare I even say corrupted;
  - For when Jesus responded to them in the text to their demand; **"Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"**

- Jesus was in effect probing the depths of their intentions and challenging the prevailing notion of leadership.
- Jesus was redirecting their focus from positions of power to a path of sacrificial service.
- For just like in our Christmas story that we just relived this past Christmas Eve, it highlighted that **Jesus was not born in a fancy place or some grand city.**
- On the contrary, Bethlehem was a humble town, a place where folks worked hard and lived simple lives.
- In the midst of the bustling town, in a humble stable, Jesus, the King of Kings, was born.
- Not in a palace or a luxurious mansion, but in a lowly manger, surrounded by the warmth of animals and the quiet night.
- The very embodiment of God's love, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a feeding trough.

- Now, why, you might ask, would the King of Glory choose such a humble entrance?
- It's because **our God is a God of the lowly,**
- **Our God is a God of the brokenhearted,**
- Our God is a God who understands the struggles of the common human being.
- Jesus, born in a manger, symbolizes that God's love is not confined to the high and mighty oh thank goodness for that, but it reaches down to the depths of our humanity.
- In that manger, my Church family, Jesus broke down the barriers between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless.
- He showed us that true greatness is found in humility, **that the Kingdom of God belongs to those with childlike faith.**
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- This is the lesson that transcends time that Jesus was trying to convey to his disciples on that day;

- It was a timely lesson for the leaders and seekers of influence who, like James and John, may too grapple with the true essence of servant leadership.
- **To further highlight then what a true servant leadership should reflect then, the scene from our text then shifts to Jericho, where Bartimaeus sits by the roadside, aware that something significant is happening.**
- When he learns that Jesus is passing by, he seizes the opportunity, crying out, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"
- The crowd, representative of societal norms and expectations, rebukes him, urging him to be silent.
- Yet, Bartimaeus persists, undeterred by the voices that seek to suppress his desperate plea for transformation.



- **In his persistence, Bartimaeus embodies** the resilience required to overcome societal barriers and seize life-changing opportunities.
- His unwavering faith serves as a beacon for those navigating the challenges of pursuing dreams and breaking free from the limitations imposed by others.
- Jesus, attuned to Bartimaeus's cry, calls him forward.
- The blind beggar, casting aside his cloak – a **symbol of his former life** – approaches Jesus.
- Alas comes the question of our focus when Jesus asked him....**What do you want me to do for you?**
- And as I step further into this scene, I would imagine that Bartimaeus response shocked every one?
- For this was his opportunity to respond with his greatest wish and desire;

- **Jesus I want you** to make me rich.
- **Jesus I want you** to make me powerful.
- **Jesus I want you** to make me successful.
- **Jesus I want you** to make me healthy.
- **Jesus I want you** to make me desirable.
- **Jesus I want you** to make me popular...
- Of all the things that Bartimeus could ask Jesus on this day....Bartimeus chose a simple request that I would imagine brought a tremendous warmth to Jesus heart and a smile to his face.
- For Bartimeus simply asked in verse 51...**“My teacher, let me see again.”**
- Immediately at Bartimeus request, I as the researcher of this text wanted to know more about this man wanting to see again.
- When did Bartimeus go blind?
- Did it happen shortly after childbirth?
- Did it happen in a horrible accident?
- Did Bartimeus fall sick?

- So it was in my research that I learned that scholars believe that Bartimeus when blind at five years old.
- Like many, there was once upon a time where he enjoyed the gift of sight.
- Until one day he was affected by a progressive and relentless illness which at that time, scholars thought was very common and practically incurable.
- From there, the horizon grew darker and darker for Bartimaeus.
- He became blind and poor which often happened in those times.
- His name was Bar-Timaeus, in other words, “**son of Timaeus**”.
- He was one of the very few who were healed by Jesus and mentioned by name.
- The Gospel rarely reveals the identity of a person who received a miracle.

- But this time even the father's name, Timaeus, is mentioned as well as the place, Jericho.
- Because of his blindness Bartimaeus had to give up earning a living with his own hands and was forced to beg.
- He would spend the day sitting by the side of the road that from Jericho leads to Jerusalem.
- He had heard – maybe from his father Timaeus— about this Jesus of Nazareth who worked miracles, who restored sight to the blind as foretold by the prophets.
- But here is why I believe that Jesus was moved by Bartimeus request.
- For although Bartimeus became blind, his years spent as a blind man allowed Bartimaeus to develop very fine hearing.
- The noisy crowd that was approaching could not escape his attention.
- Something extraordinary was about to happen.

- **Jesus was passing by, the Son of David, the Messiah!**
- While those who accompanied the Master“ *ordered Bartimaeus to keep still, he shouted the louder”*, calling Him by a particular messianic title:” *Son of David, take pity on me!”*.
- This exclamation was full of faith! The invocation of a true disciple!
- For some who could physically see, may have decided not to pay Jesus any mind;
- But this man who actually had more reasons not to call out to Jesus, **did not let his lack of sight become a hindrance.**
- In fact, I would make the claim that Bartimeus spiritually sight was well intact.
- For in a world where it is so easy to lose sight of what is important;
- I find myself in a moment of vulnerability and humility like Bartimeus, where I need to proclaim

too to the Lord this morning on this last Sunday of 2023, that I too want to see again!

- **Help me oh Lord to see** what is important;
- **Help me oh Lord to see** what I am supposed to be focused on;
- **Lord help me to see** how to reclaim my joy again;
- **Help me to see** how to really live again;
- I don't know if I am speaking to anyone's situation this morning...**but I want to see** all that I am supposed to see in my life journey...I don't want to miss out!
- **I want to see** the hungry
  - **I want to see** the imprisoned..
- **I want to see** the thirsty....
- I want to see my neighbor and truly love them...
- This is what I desire my personal business to be about;
- This is where I desire my attention to be focused on;

- This is the race that I desire to stay committed to completing—
- No more distractions-
- No more excuses—
- No more fear——
- Teacher just help us to see again!
- Let us, like Bartimaeus, recognize our need for Christ, cry out to Him in faith, and allow Him to open our eyes to the beauty of His truth.
- May we be a community of believers whose spiritual sight is continually restored, shining the light of Christ in a world blinded by darkness.
- May the Holy Spirit empower us to see again, with eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author, and Perfecter of our faith.
- Let the Church say Amen.