

Blind Bartimaeus
Mark 10:46-52
24 October 2021

For 51 years Bob Edens was physically blind. He couldn't see a thing. His world was a black hall of sounds and smells. He felt his way through five decades of darkness. And then, a skilled surgeon performed a complicated operation and, for the first time, Bob Edens had sight. He found it overwhelming.

I never would have dreamed that yellow is so...yellow. I don't have the words. I am amazed by yellow. But red is my favorite color.

I just can't believe red. I can see the shape of the moon--and I like nothing better than seeing a jet plane flying across the sky leaving a vapor trail. And of course, sunrises and sunsets. And at night I look at the stars in the sky and the flashing light. You could never know how wonderful everything is.

Bob was indeed fortunate and calls to attention things that we take for granted, such as our eyesight.

Our scripture text Mark 10:46-52 is about Bartimaeus who was born blind, but was healed by Jesus.

I believe there are two types of blindness in the world. First there is physical blindness which Bartimaeus had suffered from and then there is spiritual where people cannot see the truth of the gospel.

May God help us see clearly and remove anything that may obscure our view of who Jesus is. Neil will read Mark 10:46-52

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. May God grant you understanding of his words.

Thanks be to God.

In today's day and age, with all of its medical advances, there is great hope for visually impaired. There are multiple of treatment options that range from corrective lenses, cataract and Lasik surgeries, medications and retinal gene therapies. When my dad was alive in his 90's, he was a beneficiary of this technology.

For Bartimaeus who lived in the oasis town of Jericho, his world was a starless night. Though Jericho was one of the nicest places in all of Israel, his world was one of dark shadows.

Bartimaeus' day began like every other day when he woke up and with walking stick to guide him; he made his way to the place he begged every day. He spread his cloak that he used to collect the coins people dropped for him and a cup with a coin in it that he used as a noise maker.

Bartimaeus' immediate world were sounds. People who talked, bartered over goods. He heard the animal noises as they pulled the carts. But with his keen sense of hearing, he knew something was in the air and was told that Jesus of Nazareth was about to pass by.

And like most people back then, Bartimaeus heard the incredible stories. And that was when he had begun to hope. Though he was visually impaired, he was spiritually astute and receptive.

Though I had been a church goer in my younger years, it took the reading of the Bible to open my eyes to who Jesus was. I think there are others in this congregation who can identify with that and when our spiritual blinders came off, we followed Christ and it has never been the same.

There is an individual in church history that perhaps you can identify with and that is the hymn writer John Newton. John was a ship captain who had transported slaves from Africa to the Americas. After he almost lost his life in a storm on the ocean, he had become a believer. He later wrote these words, "**Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.**"

For our faith to work. There is a process that must be in place. That is:

- To go from darkness to light.
- To move from a condition of lost to found.
- To change from a spiritually blind condition to spiritually found condition.

When Jesus instantly healed Bartimaeus, it was an awesome miracle. But when a person who is healed of spiritual blindness, it is just as miraculous. So let me encourage all of us as we pray for those family members and friends who might be sick that they might see the light.

This would be a good time to bring up the great hymn writer Fanny Crosby. I don't know if you know this, but when Fanny was six weeks old, she caught a cold and her eyes became inflamed. A man who posed as a doctor put hot towels soaked with powerful medicine over her eyes and the treatment caused permanent blindness.

As the years passed, her Christian grandmother who helped her to memorize large portions from the Bible. Fanny learned how to read Braille and as an adult she had become a teacher in the New York Institute for the Blind.

But it was around this time that she became concerned about her eternal destiny. In her quest to find the truth, she began to attend numerous churches.

One night she had a dream where she met a man on his death bed who asked her if she would meet him in heaven. In the dream she responded "Yes", but the next day she felt uneasy about the state of her soul.

Finally after five years at the age of 30, she was in a church when the congregation began to sing the hymn Alas and My Savior Did Die, and when they came to the fifth verse: ***"But drops of grief can ne'er repay, the debt of love I owe, Here Lord, I give myself away, Tis all that I can do"***.

Fanny left her pew and with cane in hand, she walked down the center aisle and knelt down at the altar and invited Christ into her heart. It was at that moment her spiritual blinders were removed

Though Fanny was visually impaired, she proved that you do not need physical eyesight to see the Lord. In response to her born again experience, she joined the Old John Street Methodist Church and wrote the hymn **Blessed Assurance**. Brian Blanchard will sing verses 1 and 3.

People who are born into this world are spiritually blind as a bat. That is until God providentially opens their eyes to see the truth; otherwise they will continue to be blind.

1 Corinthians 2:14 alludes to that. **The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolish and cannot understand because they are spiritually discerned.**

Janet's brother in law John had become blind after two simultaneous strokes. However his spiritual faith had come alive.

After thirteen years of blindness, he opened his eyes on his deathbed pointed upward with his hand. It was as if he saw angels who were ready to carry him home to heaven.

All of us were spiritually blind at one time or another, but again having Christ in our hearts, we are able to see like we have never seen before. I would encourage you to feed and cultivate your spiritual life. If you have not made a profession of faith, I would encourage you to do so.

Of all the people who Jesus healed, very few are mentioned by name and there are very few who took the next step and actively followed Jesus.

If a person is near or far sighted, they need corrective glasses. But if a person is spiritually blind, they need the miracle of light. And people who come into the world are spiritually blind as a bat. And until God providentially opens their eyes to see the truth, they will continue to be blind.

2 Corinthians 4:4² The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.