

Proper 25 B  
Mark 10:46-52  
October 27, 2024

“A Lasting Legacy”  
Rev. Dr. Brandon S. Perrine

*They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.*

~o~

A mother went to wake her son for church one Sunday morning. When she knocked on his door, he said, “I’m not going!” “Why not?” asked his mother. “I’ll give you two good reasons,” he said. “One, they don’t like me. Two, I don’t like them.” His mother replied, “I’ll give you two good reasons why YOU WILL go to church. One, you’re 47 years old. Two, you’re the pastor!”<sup>1</sup>

Whatever your reason for being here, I think we can all agree that there’s a lot going on in church today! We’re celebrating the Reformation. We’re

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Specht. “I Don’t Want to Go to Church Today!” Charlesspecht.com: <https://www.charlesspecht.com/a-funny-christian-joke-or-two/>.

celebrating Halloween. And we've got the healing of a blind man named Bartimaeus in our reading from Mark's gospel. Bartimaeus is special. Of the more than 30 healings recorded in the New Testament's four gospels, we hear the names of only two who were healed: Lazarus who was called forth from the tomb in John's Gospel, and Bartimaeus.

Bar-Timaeus: literally, the son of Timaeus. Scholars remind us that Timaeus is the title of one of Plato's best-known dialogues – a treatise on the formation of the universe, named for one of its main interlocutors, Timaeus. At one point in the dialogue, Timaeus states:

The sight in my opinion is the source of the greatest benefit to us, for had we never seen the stars and the sun and the heaven, none of the words which we have spoken about the universe would ever have been uttered . . . God invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heaven, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence . . . and that we, learning them and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God...<sup>2</sup>

Scholars note that, interestingly, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, the name of Plato's character who waxes poetic about the virtues of sight, is himself blind. He is unable to observe the stars, sun, and heaven that he might imitate, as Plato describes it, "the absolutely unerring courses of God." And yet, it is Bartimaeus who rightly observes Jesus from a distance and, despite the protestations of those around him, calls out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Bartimaeus is the first person in the oldest surviving gospel to refer to Jesus in this way. He was physically blind, but saw Jesus with an inner sight keener than all the disciples. Jesus called him and without hesitation he sprang up and went to him. And with complete faith, he asked that his sight be returned to him. When it was, he followed Jesus on the way. He was *the* model disciple. The story of

---

<sup>2</sup> Benjam Jowett, trans. "Plato's Timaeus," Mit.edu: <https://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html>.

Blind Bartimaeus is a powerful tale about inner sight, about faith, and a little bit of stubbornness – qualities that, if we're honest, resonate deeply with the spirit of the Reformation and our own Congregationalist roots.

We remember that in response to the Protestant Reformation, our Puritan forebears urged even greater reforms than those undertaken by the English church. Unsatisfied with the lack of progress, many Puritans separated themselves completely from the established church in order to more faithfully live out their convictions. One such group sailed from Plymouth, England in early September of 1620 with 102 passengers and about 30 crew aboard a modest ship called the Mayflower. It was in New England that these pilgrims established new churches in which the power was fully vested in the membership as a full and complete expression of the universal church of Jesus, free to interpret the scriptures, set rules for membership, and live out their faith as they saw fit. They became known as Congregationalists.

It is thanks to their inner sight, their faith, their reforming spirit, that *this* church exists today. And it's the *same* spirit that undergirded their fierce rejection of the institution of chattel slavery; that braced them for the battle over women's suffrage; that drove their support of Americans with disabilities and the Civil Rights Movement; and continues to propel *our* environmental justice initiatives, the pursuit of a radically inclusive society, and the building of a just world for all, no matter what.

Like Bartimaeus, our ancestors in faith lived by the bright light of an inner sight. When they heard the call, they sprang up and followed faithfully – not always perfectly, but faithfully. We are called to no less.

Where and in whom are we being challenged to observe the Holy in our community, in our neighborhood, and in our lives today? Will we spring up and into action with all that we are, even our stubbornness, to lives of faithful action? Will we follow the way of Jesus – of freedom, and service, and love?

As we face unknowns in our world, it can be helpful to remember our ancestors in faith: a blind man, son of Timaeus, who recognized Jesus and sprang up to meet him with nothing but his internal sight to go on; a group of Puritan reformers – driven from their homeland by their vision of a pious church, guided by freedom of conscience, where all voices mattered; an intrepid denomination that fought against inequality, guided by heaven’s vision of a just world for all. We are their legacy. Who and what will be ours?

And if you’re wondering how this sermon connects to the theme of Halloween (*put on Pilgrim hat*), I suggest dressing up as a Puritan!

Truly, we are their legacy. May ours be a lasting legacy of vision, of dedication, of love, of service, of making our community and our world more just for all. Amen.