

## WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE JESUS DO FOR YOU?



In this week's Gospel (Mark 10:46-52), Jesus asks the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51) **Imagine yourself in that same position** - the Son of David, the prophesied Messiah, the one true God of the universe, Immanuel, God in the flesh – **asks YOU**, "What can I do for you?" Would you be like King Solomon and ask for wisdom? Remember the disciples, James and John, were asked the same question by Jesus, "What do you want Me to do for you? (Mark 10:36) They asked for seats of power on Jesus' left and right in glory. So...what would you have Jesus do for you? This isn't the same as sitting on Santa's lap and him asking you what you want for Christmas. (If you are like me, you gave that up some time ago - at least since COVID started.) Ralphie, the boy in the movie, "Christmas Story," knew exactly what he wanted - a Red Ryder

BB gun. But as broken, sinful, blinded people, are we even capable of answering the question, "What would you have Jesus do for you?"

What if **we all asked Jesus** to do for us what Bartimaeus asked, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." (Mark 10:51)? I want to see. What would this restoration mean for our sight? With Reformation quickly approaching, I would propose that it would restore a sense of reality. The reality that led to Martin Luther's last words being, "We are beggars: that's the truth." That Luther and each one of us are nothing more than beggars crying out for mercy (to receive what we don't deserve) so that we can follow Jesus, only Jesus – is truth! This restored sight enables us to see the world around us in a whole new light. It also equips you to be prepared always to share the Good News of Christ with this same world. **Read this article** as encouragement to pray daily to Jesus, the One who seeks to serve you rather than be served, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight."

### **Use your eyes as if tomorrow you were stricken blind.**

It has been stated by many scientists that the sense of touch is the first to develop in the womb and probably the last to go. That's why holding the hand of a loved one on their death bed is so precious (and tragically missing for so many during COVID). There are many jokes about which sense is the first to go. (My wife is confident that my sense of hearing left me the moment I said, "I do." And I always respond that she lost her sense of humor at the very same moment.) But many polls reveal that the sense of sight is the most valued.

Helen Keller, so brave and inspiring to us in her deafness and blindness, once wrote a magazine article entitled: "Three days to see." In that article she outlined what things she would

like to see if she were granted just three days of sight. On the first day she said she wanted to see friends. Day two she would spend seeing nature. The third day she would spend in her home city of New York watching the busy city and the workday of the present. She concluded it with these words: "I who am blind can give one hint to those who see: Use your eyes as if tomorrow you were stricken blind." I believe she meant to see with a sense of urgency.

"Rabbi, let me recover my sight." Or, "Lord, help me to see the broken world around me as You see it." There is an old folk song written by Charles H. Scott, "Open My Eyes, That I May See." The words always convict my heart when I sing them: "Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me; Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp, and set me free. Silently now, I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see; Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine." **Lord, let my gift of sight be used for the urgency of seeing the world as You see it.** How would that impact our mission vision? I think profoundly, don't you?

### **The gift of sight isn't always for good.**

Our eyes are interesting organs. For most of us who can see, we comprehend our world much by what we see. Our sensory organs in effect make us living beings who experience our surroundings in certain ways that either please us or frighten us. The eyes in particular are the source of our longing. What we see, we want. In the Jewish tradition, the eyes are the first source of sin. They can betray us and lead us in wrong directions. They can create in us feelings of covetousness and envy. These can lead to disastrous consequences if not recognized and our gaze averted. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:22-23, "*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness.*"

The Scriptures are filled with examples. Think of the story of Cain, staring in anger and jealousy at his brother, or the story of Joseph's brothers glaring at the beautiful coat bestowed upon their youngest by their father, the story of Samson, whose eyes for Delilah blinded him from seeing the treachery around him, the story of David who gazed upon the beautiful Bathsheba which led to him doing evil in the eyes of the Lord, the story of Herod whose desire to "look" good caused him to commit a vile and deadly act toward a man he actually trusted and admired. Jesus admonishes all mankind with the truth that if our eye causes us to sin, it would be better to enter heaven with one eye plucked out than into condemnation with two eyes.

Our sight can often deceive us. I will never forget this story when it comes to things not being as they seem. A woman was flying from Seattle to San Francisco. Unexpectedly, the plane was diverted to Sacramento along the way. The flight attendant explained that there would be a delay, and if the passengers wanted to get off the aircraft the plane would re-board in 50 minutes. Everybody got off the plane except one lady who was blind. A man had noticed her as he walked by and could tell the lady was blind because her guide dog lay quietly underneath the seats in front of her throughout the entire flight. He could also tell she had flown this very

flight before because the pilot approached her, and calling her by name, said, "Kathy, we are in Sacramento for almost an hour. Would you like to get off and stretch your legs?" The blind lady, Kathy, said, "No thanks, but maybe Buddy would like to stretch his legs." All the people in the gate area came to a complete standstill when they looked up and saw the pilot, wearing dark sunglasses, walk off the plane with a guide dog for the blind! Needless to say, people were struck with fear and wanted to get another plane to San Francisco.

**Let us learn from Bartimaeus: hearing is believing and believing is seeing.**

"What do you want Me to do for you," Jesus asked Bartimaeus. This blind beggar said, "Rabbi, I want to see." Think about the guts it took to make that request. Bartimaeus wasn't asking for a ride, for food, for some gas money, or any monetary gift – he was actually asking for an impossible miracle. Blindness is a horrible affliction in any age, but it was especially so in first century Israel. There were no guide dogs, no talking traffic lights, no braille, no specialized schools or homes or services. Because no one would hire them for work – they were almost inevitably left to beg for their daily bread. To add insult to injury, the blind also lived under the social stigma that their blindness was God's punishment for some sin that either they or their ancestors had committed. (See John 9:1-2) These were the conditions under which Bartimaeus lived. He may have been blind, but he was under no illusion: he knew he was completely dependent on the mercy of others for his very existence.

But he was convinced that this was God's Son standing before him – the Son of David God had promised who would come specifically to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah, "*a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness*" (Isaiah 42:6-7). Jesus answered Bartimaeus' bold and impossible request with a miracle. He received his sight - a miracle for sure. But he received so much more: "*Go your way; your faith has healed you*" (Mark 10:52). We are told that Bartimaeus followed Jesus – and Jesus was headed to Jerusalem to save Bartimaeus and all those who believed in Him.

While our world is convinced that seeing is believing, Bartimaeus knew the truth: believing is seeing! Just think – at least some of those in that crowd in Jericho probably saw Jesus' miracles with their own eyes – and we know for certain that many of the Jewish leaders who crucified Jesus did – but they still did not believe that He was the Son of God, the promised Savior. Faith does not come from seeing, faith comes from hearing the message (Romans 10:17). We know this truth in the waters of Baptism, the absolution, the celebration of Holy Communion, the blessing and the encouragement found in the hearing of the Word. But we also know this truth in the sharing of God's Word with others.

## **Lord, restore our sight - and equip us to share Your mercy!**

Saving faith receives what only Jesus freely offers - His mercy and grace. With restored sight, what will we see? If you are like me, we might see that person who just cut in front of our car as a broken person in need of God's mercy and grace rather than our judgment. Restored sight would be to watch the news and, rather than getting angry over the world spiraling out of control, it would drive us to our knees in prayer to the God who is in complete control. Restored sight would be to clearly see that our very lives have been given to us by God to draw the world to Him and His salvation. Restored sight would be to shuffle our priorities to be in line with the will of God. I could go on and on - but restored sight is to see ourselves as beggars - completely dependent upon God - and to see the entire world in the same light. And we as beggars know where there is bread - daily Bread, the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ. There is no problem in this world that is too big and no person too small for Jesus - because He came to seek and to save what was lost. (See Luke 19:10) Jesus came to hear and help beggars - beggars like Bartimaeus...beggars like you and me, beggars in need of Jesus.

### **Restored sight is beggars with nothing to offer and everything to ask...**

Restored sight is beggars with nothing to offer and everything to ask along with believers who claim all the promises of His saving Word. **And you and I are both.** As those conceived in sin and guilty of condemnation with every thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and not done, we stand before the Son of David with empty, open hands ready to receive all that God has to give. As those forgiven, redeemed, reconciled, and restored, we go into all the world with hands full of God's mercy and grace to share. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Believers claim this Word but also freely share it - knowing the Holy Spirit accompanies the Word and makes the dead alive, the sinner saint and enemy of God His family. That restored sight gives us purpose and significance with every breath and every moment of our lives for the rest of eternity.

When Jesus called out to Bartimaeus to come (Take heart, get up; Jesus is calling you.), he didn't waste any time. Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. That cloak was quite possibly Bartimaeus' only earthly possession. It was the roof over his head and the mattress under his back, it was his shade tree and his pantry. And yet, at Jesus' invitation, he threw it all aside to run to Jesus who he believed could give him everything he needed and more. He would let nothing keep him from Jesus.

This is where the rubber hits the road for the world in which we live. Unbelief is hindering them. They need Jesus and don't know it or refuse to believe it. The entire world is unworthy of God's mercy and grace. That's who we were before having our sight restored. We live and breathe God's truth - the truth of His mercy, His grace, His promise, His love. We are all in absolute need with nothing to offer and everything to ask.

The restoration of Bartimaeus' sight is the last healing miracle recorded in Mark's Gospel. Throughout Mark's Gospel he proclaims the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord over nature, that He gives sight to the blind. But he also proclaims Jesus as God's Messiah, as the One who brings light to those who sit in darkness - to beggars like you, me, and the world in which we live. We are told that, with restored sight, Bartimaeus followed Jesus. Jesus was headed to the Cross. Even though Bartimaeus no longer needed to beg for bread, he needed Jesus to suffer, die and rise for his sin (and ours). He still needed most what only Jesus gives.

**As believers in Jesus with restored sight, we are entrusted with the privilege of witness.**

Please join me in thanking God that Jesus has time and mercy in abundance for beggars like us. For 51 years Bob Edens was 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, he could see. 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," he exclaimed. "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."

Even greater than all these sights, with restored vision we get to see the world through the vision of Jesus who urgently seeks to save every soul. As sinful people, our vision still gets clouded. Even though they were following Jesus, the disciples were seekers of their own position and power. The disciples were often consumers of God's love rather than sharers of it. (Guilty as charged!) We can get caught up thinking that Christ exists to do something for us (like James and John) and forget that we are in the very place God put us to do something for others in Christ's name. Yes, we all fail to witness of Jesus as we are given opportunity. But thanks be to God for His rich mercy and grace that restores our sight and continues to send us out to the world as His witnesses.

We are the only group of people on earth (believers in Jesus) who are specifically charged with the responsibility of bringing others to Jesus. **Lord, restore my sight and equip me for witness.** Is there anything that our troubled world needs more than Jesus? Certainly not. The world needs a clear vision of Jesus so that it might recover its sight and its sanity.

The last sentence of chapter ten sums up all that has gone before. It says, simply, "*And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the way.*" (Mark 10:52) When the shepherds heard the Christmas message, they rose up and went to Bethlehem. When Peter, James, and John heard Jesus' call at the Sea of Galilee, they left their nets and went off to follow Him. When Bartimaeus heard Jesus' call, he rose up to follow Him "on the way." When we hear Jesus' call, we witness. **Lord, open our eyes that we may see!**

We are blessed with many “eye-opening” resources to equip us to witness of Jesus. The gift of LASSIE from the resource, *Every One His Witness* has helped me countless times to **listen, ask, seek, share, invite and encourage**. Rev. Mark Wood’s latest book has inspired me (as it will you) to be about the witness of Jesus and lay before God all that is hindering this urgent task.

What about you? Will you pray with me, “Lord, restore our sight to see the world as You see it.”? Will you pray for every opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus where you are (because we confess Romans 10:17)? As fellow beggars who have the Bread, will you join me in praying for a world in need of the Bread of Life and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit? This article has been prayed over asking the Holy Spirit to empower, inspire, and equip you for the task of witnessing of Jesus and His love.

What would you have Jesus do for you? Can anything be more important than for us to shed all that hinders us and follow Jesus where He leads - to seek and to save the lost. Your Evangelization Team is eager and waiting to hear from you. We want to help you in any way possible. To pray with you and for you. To mourn as broken people with you. And as fellow broken people, to reach out to a broken world with you - side by side. We encourage you to share with us at the email: [evangelizationteam@englishdistrict.org](mailto:evangelizationteam@englishdistrict.org) We are so blessed to share with a hurting, broken world the simple prayer: God, give us, blind beggars, your Living Bread for our journey home to You, witnessing all the way. Amen.

In Christ Alone,  
Pastor John Diener  
Galatians 2:20