



“Take Heart!”

Pastor Andy CastroLang
monthday, 2018

Scripture (NRSV):

Mark 10:46-52

⁴⁶ 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. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁹ 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.” ⁵⁰ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ 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.” ⁵² Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Sermon:

“Take heart”!

It is wonderful to hear this from someone’s lips...when you have indeed lost heart, become discouraged, been dismayed...and then, someone says, “take heart”.

It is so encouraging.

It is two words of hope, of possibility, where you saw none before!

I don’t know how long Bartimaeus was blind. I don’t know how many years, or decades, or months, he was forced to live as a beggar. No work, no hope of work. Maybe family that put

him up at night, maybe they set him at the side of the road each day and said, “get what you can.”

Or maybe not even that.

Somehow, Bartimaeus was hanging on, he was there outside of Jericho, sitting in the sun, listening hard as blindness makes one do. We know that once upon a time he could see, for he tells Jesus, “My teacher, let me see again”.

So Bartimaeus is listening hard to the crowds around him, begging as he must, and then, suddenly he changes from polite beggar (who ever heard of an impolite beggar that was successful at begging?) to loudmouth and public nuisance.

Such a risky thing to do!

Shouting like he did, he might alienate the people whose spare change was all that stood between him and hunger.

Shouting like he did, he might upset the powerful and the religiously important, after all he didn't shout for just anybody, he shouted for the “Son of David”. Now, the text tells us that he heard it was Jesus of Nazareth, but he gives him a hallowed and surprising title: “Son of David”.

What on earth does blind Bartimaeus know that the others don't?

David was God's chosen King, and a symbol of everything that was right in the world; justice and mercy, the unity of the nation, integrity of worship, wholeness of life and joy and peace.

Jesus is THAT son of David; Bartimaeus is sure of it. So he hollers louder and louder, even though it might alienate the people around him who usually threw him their spare change. And they do their darnedest to shut him up, too. “Sternly warn him” the text says. I think about stern warnings, and they carry a threat, or they remind me that the source of power is not in me, but in that other with the stern warning on their lips. Stern warnings intimidate. Usually. Not this time. Jesus hears Bartimaeus. Jesus stops in his own tracks, for that insistent voice. And he calls him to come.

And those folks who wanted to silence him, are now the messengers of Jesus who must affirm Bartimaeus and his voice.

Take heart, get up, he is calling you.

And Bartimaeus, in his eagerness, flings off his cloak and goes to Jesus.

Now, a beggar doesn't have much to begin with.

A cloak is not something to part with lightly.

Yet Bartimaeus throws off his cloak. Bartimaeus is ready for amazing things, not for things to stay the same, but for everything to change.

He lets go of even his cloak, in his eagerness to meet Jesus and be changed.

I think he was expecting a wonder.

And he got one.

He was able to see again. Everything changed. Especially because Jesus tells him, "it was in you, man"... Jesus tells him, "go, your faith has made you well".

- I just love it that the naysayers to blind Bartimaeus have to become the messengers of good news, 'take heart, he is calling you'. That is one thing.
- But there is another; Bartimaeus risks it all, in the presence of divine mercy. He hollers and he tosses aside his only possession, all to be able to ask for more. He risks by yelling and being beyond the bounds of propriety and safety,
- He lets loose of his precious cloak, perhaps the only thing he can cling to in a world of darkness,
- And he approaches the "mercy seat", made known in Jesus Son of David, Son of God...and asks for his deepest need and deepest yearning. Something precious he had once, and had lost. Sight. Hope. Heart. Community. Home. Something to believe in.

If you could approach Jesus of Nazareth, Son of David what would you ask for that you had lost?

Nothing will happen until you ask. Nothing can be said to you, until you take the risk of shouting out to be heard.

Nothing will be said until you are willing to cast off the cloak of your certainties in your life, and then, standing up and just asking for your heart's deepest desire, your most fundamental need.

I, too, want to see again.

I want to see my nation kind again, generous again, moved by compassion again.

I want to see this church filled with love and hope, a future and a vision.

I want to see our city growing without growing in greed. Growing with room for all, both rich and poor, housing for all, health care for all, good jobs for all.

I want our schools to be safe, and our synagogues to be safe.

I want our elected officials to have personal integrity.

- All the things I want, when placed within this little story, tell me I must risk: Shouting out about women's rights and civil rights, that we won't let trans citizens be erased, we won't stand silent as human lives are despised and degraded in our nation, at our borders, on our planet;
- I must risk standing up and throwing off my fond memories of a better time in the past, or equally true, my despairing mind that says there has never been a good time in the past or the present; this moment, this time needs me. Now.
- I must risk asking for what I believe I need. Not a million dollars, not five cars or a yacht! But what I need, body and soul.

And then, I just might hear, "it is in you". And this, "Go, your faith has made you well."

And you and I, well, we might just turn out to be healed, whole, ready and able!

I may come to realize, like Bartimaeus, that my voice has power; I may realize my freedom from fear, or other limitations.

Maybe I will realize the risks I take are life-giving sometimes, and they are worth taking.

Maybe I will finally realize it is ok to ask, and ask, and ask.

Maybe I will finally recognize that answers come, answers are given.

But only if we take heart, and get up, and ask.