

Journey of the Spirit: Healing or Shame
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Based on Mark 10:46 - 52

Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight

⁴⁶Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁸Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰Throwing 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.

The story of the healing of a blind man named Bartimaeus is not very exciting if it stands alone. It is much better when put into the context of the previous stories in the same chapter and I think this is the intention of the writer of Mark.

Mark uses the disciples sometimes to show us how not to be followers of the way of Jesus and this is what is happening today.

The way of Jesus is the way of life and love. While the world operates with an ethic of domination and control, Jesus teaches and lives the way of stewardship for each other. The passage assumes **there are two kinds of people in the world**; people who hoard power and people who share it.

The passage about divorce is about men abusing their power over women and doing so was wrong even if the religious laws said it was okay.

The next **passage about the children** is about adults abusing their power over children and doing so was wrong even if the religious laws said it was okay.

The **passage about the rich young man** is not an indictment against wealth and wealthy people it is about our possessions and ambitions exercising power over us and what we need to do in order to be truly free.

The disciples miss it. The ones who have heard the most do not really hear the good news. The ones who have seen the most of what Jesus has to offer do not see it. The insiders miss it, but an outsider got it.

The key to understanding this passage is in the blind man's name. In the ancient Semitic world, a "*Name*" expresses the personality or destiny of a person.

I ask you to consider that the name Bartimaeus has two meanings. In Aramaic it means "son of defilement (*tame*')." In the Greek his name version of his name he could be understood as "the son of honor". As a blind man he would be considered defiled and unclean and yet even in his state of physical blindness he sees more than the disciples and so he honors the way of life and love. The outsider so gets it, that he throws his cloak aside and he is ready to follow Jesus. Mark inserts this little phrase about Bartimaeus throwing his cloak aside as a way to convey that even as a blind man he is ready to let go of everything in order to follow the way.

The disciples, the insiders, sighted and undefiled, are more concerned about themselves being honored and so they argue who will sit on Jesus right and left side when he comes into power.

There are some people who get it and some who do not and it **sometimes it is surprising who gets it and who doesn't get it.** Sometimes the outsiders get it better than the insiders. This is true.

Are we the insider church people who lose sight of the way of life and love?

Are we the outsiders who live the way of life and love better than the church people? Sometimes we get it and often we take pride in being the so called "outsiders".

At the point we claim to be "outsiders who get it" do we lose our high ground as soon as we claim it?

At what point do we become what we despise?

There are two points here.

First: Shadow Rock was founded with a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. We pride ourselves on being outsiders who challenge authority and question everything. I hope we never change but we must be careful of our pride because we can become the very thing we desire to move away from.

Second: From my perspective we have a very diverse congregation. We have three campfires; atheists, theists, and non-theists. The intellectual content of what we believe is diverse and secondary. What matters is how we love and serve. We are diverse in intellectual content but we are united in our ethic to love our neighbor. When we love each other and our neighbor profoundly then we get it.