

Sermon- Mark 10:46-52

Faith.....a gift to use

The address for today is based on the gospel reading we heard read earlier from Mark chapter 10. Here are a few key verses for my address:

“ When Bartimaeus heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ Jesus asked him. The blind man said, ‘Rabbi, I want to see.’ ‘Go,’ said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.”

Lord, Sanctify us in your word, your word is truth. Amen

[B]GIFTS! How often do you receive a gift? And when I say **[Exp]** “Receive a gift”, I mean an actual gift. A present or blessing from someone where you have done absolutely nothing to merit receiving it. I clarify this meaning of gift for a very good reason. Many people today think of an alternative meaning of the word GIFT which is significantly different to the definition I just gave. In fact, it ends up meaning the opposite of a free gift. **[P]** Here are a few practical examples of this alternative meaning. You help out your next door neighbour one morning and change a flat tyre on their car, and a few days later they bring over a box of chocolates as a thank-you gift. Or you put in hours of work for a volunteer organisation, and at the end of year function, they buy you a present, a gift in recognition for the work you have put in. These two examples highlight that you have done something, contributed some kind of work in order to receive a gift in return. This kind of gift is basically a form of payment. So what about the other meaning of gift? Where you receive a gift when you have contributed absolutely nothing to merit receiving it? For instance, My brother once bought me a pair of chino pants as a gift.... Completely out of the blue, no birthday, no thank-you for something I helped him with, just a pure gift. Unearned. A genuinely free gift.

[B]Today’s text highlights a free gift, a gift which is received from God, which is given, not on merit, or having to earn it in any way. That gift is the gift of faith. And Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, had received this gift of faith, a gift which all us here also have received. **[T]**And how do we know Bartimaeus had received this gift of Faith?

‘And when Bartimaeus heard it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say **Jesus, Son of David Have mercy on me’**

Have Mercy on me. Now that sounds a lot like our Sunday liturgy, when we also cry out in **faith** to our triune God.... Lord have Mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have Mercy.

[P]Brothers and Sisters, we do not know the extent of Bartimaeus’ faith or trust in God. But what we do know is he had received this gift of faith, faith which can only be gifted from God. And he was using it, putting it into practice. Using the faith gifted to him by God to call out to Jesus. **[B]**At the very least, Bartimaeus had some sort of

trust that Jesus could help him, that Jesus had something to offer him. There are issues and complexities surrounding Bartimaeus and his faith which we may not understand, like how much faith did he have, BUT it is not about the amount of faith he had, it is whom that faith is directed towards. It was directed to Jesus, **[S]** not the Pharisees, not the crowds following Jesus, it was directed to Jesus. So how do the crowds respond to Bartimaeus's faith being directed to Jesus?

[B]The text tells us a large crowd is following Jesus. We can only assume that they have some degree of faith in Jesus (or at least a level of interest or curiosity about Jesus) **because** they are following him. Nothing else is said about the great crowd in relation to faith. So if we assume the large crowd had faith, a faith which they too have received from God as a gift, it appears that they were not willing to share this gift of faith with others. In fact, the crowds presumed to judge who they think is worthy of faith. They tried to silence Bartimaeus. Why? Because in those times, if you were blind or had a disability, it was believed you inherited these due to your parent's sin. You were unclean. The crowd didn't seem to think Bartimaeus was worthy of attention from Jesus, wasn't worthy to have faith. **[P]**If I go back to my chino example and the pair of chinos I got from my brother, The crowds are like me if I didn't want my brother to buy other people a pair of chinos as a gift. It's like "I am happy to get the gift... but as long as no one else does." The crowd had received the gift of faith, now they want to hand pick who else can receive the gift! **[T]** Am I like the crowd? Are you like the crowd? Maybe we are all like the crowd? Making a judgement on who is worthy of faith and ultimately grace.

[B]Friends, despite our downfalls and sins, God continues to graciously preserve the gift of faith that he has given to us. Bartimaeus received the physical healing gift of sight. We all need a gift of spiritual healing, healing from our spiritual blindness. And Jesus provides us this spiritual healing on the cross. When Jesus was put to death, it conquered the death we deserve. It paid the price for our sins, to redeem us all, to save us all, to forgive us all. That is the spiritual healing we received through faith. Faith is the undeserved gift which opens to us all the others spiritual gifts we receive. We are justified by grace, through faith on account of Christ or as it is written in Ephesians chapter 2.

'For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is a gift of God, not a result of works'

We all experience this wonderful gift of grace which through faith is received in the waters of baptism. In baptism God washes us all clean because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

[P]Brothers and sisters, there is one more point I would like to make. If we take one final look at the chino gift example from earlier, what use would the chinos I received be if I never wore them, if I never experienced the comfiness, the benefits of them. **[T]** Bartimaeus used his gift of faith, the gift he received from God which allowed him access to healing. His healing was both physical and spiritual. Using our gift of faith allows us access to our spiritual healing, just as Bartimaeus' faith in Jesus allowed him to receive both physical and spiritual healing. **[P]** Spiritual healing, forgiveness, holiness, worthiness, righteousness....are all accessed when we **use** the gift of faith given to us.

[B]In closing, I began by exploring the different perceptions and definitions of gifts. May you all go out and use the gift of faith which you have received, which you have contributed absolutely nothing towards meriting, to receiving ... use it just as Bartimaeus did. Bartimaeus did not let the crowd prevent him from using his gift of faith. May we do the same as Bartimaeus, allowing the gift of faith which God has gifted all God's people to be used in receiving the grace of God which gifts us eternal life. Go and follow Jesus on his way, just like Bartimaeus did. **AMEN**

Let us Pray. Lord thank-you for the gift of faith which you have given to your people. May we all go out and use this gift of faith as an example of your great mercy, love and grace. AMEN