

Mark 10:46 Then they reached Jericho, and as Jesus and his disciples left town, a large crowd followed him. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) was sitting beside the road. 47 When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 "Be quiet!" many of the people yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 When Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, "Tell him to come here." So, they called the blind man. "Cheer up," they said. "Come on, he's calling you!" 50 Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus. 51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked. "My Rabbi," the blind man said, "I want to see!" 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go, for your faith has healed you." Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus down the road.

How do you know if you are saved? Romans 10 has the answer: ⁸ *In fact, it says, "The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart." And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: ⁹ If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. ¹¹ As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced."* In Mark 16, Jesus says, ¹⁶ *Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned.* You'll notice that Jesus says, "anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned." He doesn't say "and is not baptized." In other words, faith or belief in our Lord Jesus Christ is what saves. The Lord looks on the heart and what actions flow out from it. Dietrich Bonhoeffer talks about 'cheap grace' which is when we say we believe but our lives do not show it. Costly grace is when our faith is expressed in loving care. It is Costly, Bonhoeffer says, because Jesus suffered and died on the cross. Our Gospel today is about faith, the faith of a blind man who seeks healing. We don't know anything about the man's background or how long he has been blind. It could have been from birth. To see again is really two miracles: one is regular eyesight, for example, seeing one's wife or child for the first time. The second is the miracle of faith and that means seeing with your heart. Paul says to the Ephesian church, (1:18) *"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people..."*

There is another important aspect we pick up from the Gospel and that is the blind man's persistence. Some pray and give up when they don't get an immediate answer or even the

answer they want. God always responds to prayer, but He responds in three ways: yes, no, or wait. No's are hard to take. Waits are difficult, but we love the immediate answers to prayer. It all boils down to trusting in God. That is what Bartimaeus, our blind man, did.

A couple of weeks ago, we read in the Gospel about the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and what must he do to receive eternal life. Jesus said, "One thing you lack..." How is the ruler different from the blind man? Is it not when Bartimaeus fully believed that Jesus could heal him and that in fact, Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of David?! When he calls Jesus, "Son of David," that is a messianic title. Jesus didn't ask him to keep it quiet. The time for secrecy is passed. Bartimaeus demonstrates his faith in several ways: by his title for Jesus, by his persistence, and by his request for healing.

The Message paraphrase of our text says: 46-48 They spent some time in Jericho. As Jesus was leaving town, trailed by his disciples and a parade of people, a blind beggar by the name of Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus, was sitting alongside the road. When he heard that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by, he began to cry out, 'Son of David, Jesus! Mercy, have mercy on me!' Many tried to hush him up, but he yelled all the louder, 'Son of David! Mercy, have mercy on me!' 49-50 Jesus stopped in his tracks. 'Call him over.' They did so, saying, 'It's your lucky day! Get up! He's calling you to come!' Throwing off his coat, he was on his feet at once and came to Jesus. 51 Jesus said, 'What can I do for you?' The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." 52 'On your way,' said Jesus. 'Your faith has saved and healed you.' In that very instant he recovered his sight and followed Jesus down the road." **What can we learn from this to help us in our walk of faith?**

First you can ask in what area of your life would you like Jesus to open your eyes so you could see more clearly? You might say that you're doing fine. But remember Jesus' caution after He healed the man blind from birth, recorded in John chapter 9. Jesus seeks him out after the Jewish court has given him a hard time not wanting to believe it was Jesus who healed him. It reads: "35 *When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"* 36 *The man answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him."* 37 *"You have seen him," Jesus said, "and he is speaking to you!"* 38 *"Yes, Lord, I believe!" the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.* 39 *Then Jesus told him, "I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see[e] that they are blind."* 40 *Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, "Are you saying we're blind?"* 41 *"If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty," Jesus replied. "But you remain*

guilty because you claim you can see.” When hearing that question about blindness in your own life, you must try to put pride aside and be honest with yourself. If you are a follower of Jesus, you want to hear Jesus – in His Word, in your heart and mind, and in the words of others who are friends or in a song.

Secondly, what we can take from this Gospel is if Jesus asked you, “What do you want me to do for you?” What would you say? That’s a tough question as well. When you look at your prayer life and your relationship to our loving Lord, you know that He wants the best for you. Whatever you answer, it is worth writing down and putting it your Bible so you can pull it out every-once in a while and reflect on it. For *ourselves, our time and our possessions* as we say in the offertory prayer includes ourselves and that is health not only of our bodies but also our eyes and what we see and our ears and what we hear.

The world around us today is so full of darkness. Jesus said (John 8:12, *“I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”* In the letter to the Hebrews, the author challenges us to fix our eyes on Jesus. (Heb.12:2) Jesus says in Matthew’s Gospel (24: 4 Jesus told them, *“Don’t let anyone mislead you, 5 for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah.’ They will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won’t follow immediately. 7 Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. 8 But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come. 9 “Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. 10 And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. 11 And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. 12 Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.... 27 For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. 28 Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near. 29 “Immediately after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. (See Isa 13:10; 34:4; Joel 2:10) 30 And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the*

clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven. 32 “Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. 33 In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door.” “When you see all these things,” He said. That means we need to see and where we have blindness to repent of it – all with God’s help. We can go to Him in prayer and ask Him to show us our blind spots and ask Him to heal them.

Matt Mayer wrote in a song called Alive Again, these words: I woke up in darkness surrounded by silence. Oh where, where have I gone? I woke to reality losing its grip on me. Oh where, where have I gone? 'Cause I can see the light before I see the sunrise.
Chorus: You called and You shouted, Broke through my deafness. Now I'm breathing in and breathing out. I'm alive again. You shattered my darkness, washed away my blindness, now I'm breathing in and breathing out. I'm alive again.

We go back to St. Paul saying, *“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you...”* Let that be our prayer, that the Lord would not only help us see with our eyes but also with our hearts and may we share that hope with others. The more you know Jesus, the more you will want to give your life to him, like the hymn prayer we sang last Sunday, “Take my life, and let it be consecrated.” Please bow your head and pray that. 1. Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love. Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.

2. Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King. Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from thee. Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold. Take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.

3. Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine. Take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne. Take my love, my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure-store. Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee, in Jesus’ Name. Amen.