

Shhh...Be Quiet!

Shepherd's Grace Church

October 28, 2012

**Mark 10:46-52**

<sup>46</sup>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. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"<sup>48</sup> Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>49</sup>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." <sup>50</sup>So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup>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." <sup>52</sup>Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way. (Also read Job 42: 1-7, 10-17)

*In Church on Sunday we asked the congregation to help with the first part of the sermon as the children helped me sing Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho. When we come to that part of the message, you will just have to imagine their presence.*

Have you ever known anyone who wanted to dominate every conversation. You know, that one person who, when in a crowded classroom or an important business meeting always wants to contribute, and their ideas are so far off track that you just want to cover your face and slide down in your chair and pretend you don't know them? Bartimaeus is that person. He has spent a lifetime being ignored. He is perceived as "less than" others who are around him and when he speaks, he speaks so loudly that he embarrasses others!

If you are old enough, perhaps you remember the '60's television show, *Welcome Back Koter*. In that show, Gabe Kaplan played Koter, Marcia Straussman played his wife, and John Travolta played Vinnie Barbarino, but there was a smaller role character named Arnold Horshack. Horshack was the person who always had an opinion! He had an answer to every question and he was so obnoxious in being recognized that it was impossible for the rest of the class to ignore him. When Koter asked a question, Horshack would raise his hand and in a very loud voice yell out, "Mr. Koter, Mr. Koter!" He would bounce up and down in his chair and sometimes stand and jump until he was recognized. The others in the class would slide down in their chairs out of embarrassment and pretend they didn't know him. His answers to the questions in class are usually so far off track as to be laughable.

Bartimaeus is the Horshack of his hometown. In Jericho, he is ignored and understood to be “less than.” He is a blind beggar who is so unremarkable that the only way Mark can identify him is by naming him twice. Bar in Hebrew means son. Bartimaeus means “Son of Timaeus.” Mark’s description of the man actually introduces him as “son of Timaeus, son of Timaeus.” This is notable because of all the Gospel writers, Mark is the one of fewest words. He does not waste time on unnecessary detail. His gospel is only a little more than half the length of Matthew or Luke. Therefore, we might ask the question, “Why would Mark uncharacteristically waste words on this seemingly insignificant character, this Horshack of his own hometown?”

Perhaps Mark has an extra bit of energy the day he writes this passage, perhaps he chooses to slip in a few words to get his word count up, *Or perhaps there is more to the message Mark has for us than we might at first glance understand!* Let’s dig a little deeper. Jesus came to Jericho, Bartimaeus’ hometown. Then as is characteristic of Mark, he leaves Jericho. There are no details given of his stay there, but Mark does not waste words or phrases, so we must ask ourselves, “Why did Mark mention Jericho?” Why did this master of understatement bring in this particular detail? What do we know about Jericho?

To answer we must think back to *Joshua 6*. Here we encounter the story of Jericho that has become the wonderful children’s Bible story. The Lord wants to give Jericho into the hands of the Hebrew people. He has sent spies in to detail the strengths of the city and He now tells Joshua how to capture it. The people are to march around the city for six days sounding horns. On the seventh day, they march around 7 times and shout! The walls come tumbling down. (Insert the image of the children singing here. Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho. Joshua fit the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down!)

That is the G rated version of our story. At this point we dismiss our children to children’s church so we can discuss the more adult version. You see, the spies who went into Jericho before the battle encountered some difficulty. They were in danger of being discovered and being killed. One of the women of Jericho came to their aid, however this woman, Rahab, was a woman of “less than desirable reputation.” Since the kids are out of the room we can call her what she is. Rahab is a prostitute. She is one of the “less thans” of Jericho, but she is more. If we look at the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew chapter one, we find these words, “<sup>5</sup>and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup>and Jesse the father of King David.” Rahab the prostitute is one of the ancestors of Jesus. This one who is thought of as “least,” has a position in the royal lineage!

Jesus comes to Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. Mark places him there for this story for a very specific reason. He does not just waste space or insignificantly mention a detail. He sets Jesus in this place, in this moment to reveal a crucial detail about Jesus. In the passage immediately before this one, the disciples are arguing about sitting at Jesus right and left in “his glory.” Jesus is traveling to his glory, but

He knows that glory will not come as expected. He will be crowned king, but his crown will be one of thorns, one of pain, one of seeming dishonor. Jesus will be treated as one who is “less than.” He comes to Jericho to remind us that God uses the “less than” to accomplish his purposes. Those who are last will become first.

In Jericho, Mark can make known to us the fullness of the identity of Jesus. He does this in a very subtle, but specific way. Remember, Mark’s gospel seemingly does not give a genealogy of Jesus, but the author brings Jesus to Jericho. Here, he uses one of the last, one of the least to speak to us, to the large crowds about who Jesus is. When Bartimaeus, who is sitting by the side of the road, learns that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by, he cries out in his best Horshack imitation, “Jesus, Son of David, Have mercy on me.” Bartimaeus, one of the “less than” identifies Jesus not with Nazareth and his roots as son of a carpenter, but as Jesus, Son of David, Son of a King!

This one who is regarded by the crowd as “the least” of voice has used a mighty voice to proclaim the “Kingship of Jesus, the Messiah!” He has introduced Jesus, the one who is on the road to Jerusalem to give his life as a ransom for many, as the one sent by God! The one who is promised to restore God’s people; the one who will save us. In chapter 11, as a result of this knowledge, the people will shout hosanna’s and sing, “blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” By identifying Jesus, here in a place of one of his “least” powerful ancestors, and through one of the “least” of the town’s citizens, Mark has identified for us the correct way to recognize Jesus as messiah.

In this moment, Jesus makes no effort to correct or silence Bartimaeus as he did Peter back in chapter 8. In that moment, in that place, there was an incorrect understanding of the role of the messiah. Now, the role is made clear. Jesus, on his way to Jerusalem, on his way to the completion of his mission, has been identified by one of the least as having come from one of the least.

Before we can turn the page on Jesus ministry and move to Palm Sunday and a triumphal procession into Jerusalem, it is vital that we understand this point. Mark wants to make it absolutely clear to us. Jesus is King. He is Messiah! But he is not the messiah of worldly power. He comes from the least, he is recognized by the least, and he is savior of all, even the least! He is savior even of us!

The crowd would be embarrassed by Bartimaeus. They would say Shh!...Be quiet! Bartimaeus, however persists. His voice will not be silenced. He feels the ridicule, the rejection, the alienation and abandonment of the crowd. In the moment of his persistence, Bartimaeus becomes a disciple. He is willing to shout out the message God sent His son to share. “Have mercy!” The crowd would think of him as a Horshack, as someone who is off track and unworthy, but God thinks of him as one who rightly proclaims the need that all of us have.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that all of us are sinners and that none of us are worthy. Our salvation is by God's grace and God's grace alone. We are not worthy, and all we can do is ask for mercy! We ask not for human mercy for that is of no lasting value, but we ask for the Mercy of God. We ask through Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ. It is only from Him that salvation can come and by no other name. When Bartimaeus asks in Jesus name, Jesus stops. He calls Bartimaeus over and the crowd is amazed. This one who is "least" is being summoned. This one who embarrasses us is being recognized!

In today's world, we might do well to listen carefully to this part of the passage. How often does the world reject the professions of faith of Christians? When we offer prayer at unpopular times, when we offer a word of encouragement to unpopular people, when we speak a message of peace in a war-torn world, does the world not say Shhh!...Be quiet! When we speak out against abuse in the home, when we speak out against oppression in our communities does the world not say Shhh!...Be quiet? Are we willing to persevere as Bartimaeus? Are we willing to have others be embarrassed by us so we can plead for God's mercy for a broken and beaten world?

When Jesus calls us, even before we are healed and made whole, are we willing to throw off our cloak of apathy and shame and spring to our feet and come to Jesus? The requirement of discipleship is difficult. First we must correctly perceive who Jesus is. We must recognize that He is not a worldly king who will give us riches or power. He is instead, our savior, our redeemer, the one who will restore us to right relationship with God by taking on our sin so that we might once again stand in God's presence and praise Him! He does not judge us by our intelligence or our wealth but by our willingness to accept Him as our Lord and Savior.

Then, we must be willing to come to Jesus. We must answer his question, "what do you want me to do for you?" Our answer must be that we want to be restored. Requests for worldly wants will not be granted but our every need will be met. Our desire must be the wholeness that comes from shalom, from a peace where nothing is missing and nothing is broken. Bartimaeus was not blind from birth. He was born whole and complete, even as we are. He lost his vision. We too have lost our ability to see God as our sovereign and Holy God! We must ask to be restored to those who are created in the Image of God so God can once again look into our world and say, "It is Good!" In this goodness is the wholeness we seek.

We must have faith that God alone can accomplish this restoration in us. This restoration that we seek cannot be accomplished by our own actions, but only by God's grace. We must trust Him to do the work that is necessary for our salvation. Being a disciple means trusting implicitly and always in God's desire to bring us to good! This man who sat by the side of the road understands this! As we sit in our pews, in our homes, in the comfort of all that God gives us, are we willing to understand this?

Finally, there is one more thing we must do! We must follow Jesus “on the way!” We must “take up our cross and follow him!” The journey will not be easy, but now, thanks to the efforts of one of the “least” we can be confident in whom we are following. We can now know He is the promised one, the one sent to save, heal and restore. With confidence, we can step onto the path that leads to Jerusalem, to rejection, to criticism, to crucifixion and to death. We can step onto this path not because it leads to death but because it also leads to resurrection, to new life and to a promise more complete with the riches of God’s great love for us than any we can ever imagine.

Today, we learn much about Jesus. We learn who he is! We learn his mission! We learn his desire to do for us what we ask when we understand what we are asking. We also learn much about us. We are the broken, the beaten, the battered. We are the abused, the alienated, the abandoned. We are the ones sitting by the side of the road. Do not allow the crowd to silence our voice! Let us call out together, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” and when Jesus stops, let us spring up and come to Him. Let us never allow the crowd to say to us, Shhh! Be Quiet! Today, let us follow him, on the way!

Amen!

**Next Week: Scripture: Mark 12: 28-34. Message: *You Are Not Far!*** This week, we move into Jerusalem. We will spend about 4 weeks here exploring the sights and sounds. As we explore, we see a different side of Jesus. Here, the teacher takes on even greater authority and His mission becomes even more focused. What is His focus? What is His mission? How are we to respond? Come and worship! Come and see!