

Take Heart Bart  
John Philip Newell Mark 10:46-52  
Alan Claassen October 25, 2015  
FCC Sonoma Stewardship Sunday

Blind Beggar Bartimaeus is one of my favorite Gospel stories.

First of all, it has a cool camp song that goes along with it. Sing along

Blind man stood by the way and cried, (3 times)  
Oh, oh oh, Show me the way, (3 times)  
The way to go ho-o-me

The way to go home. Show me the way to go home.

The eternal yearning of the human heart.

Show me the way to go home.

Show me a place where I belong

Blind Beggar Bartimaeus believes that mercy is passing by and calls out.

The crowd says, be quiet.

They have told you to be quiet  
since your crib,  
when your needs, your cry for the divine  
disturbed them.  
You too have learned the command,  
to silence your soul, to silence others.  
Stand still and listen:  
what is the voice within, crying out, silenced?

Rise; take heart.  
The Beloved is calling you,  
wants to hear your plea,  
to honor your word,  
to hear what has not been spoken,  
wants you to come,

to ask for what must be asked for  
and must be given.

Now, you have been called  
and you have been heard.  
Whom have we silenced?  
Whom are you called to call  
to reveal  
the miracle of God?  
Rise, take heart.  
The Beloved is calling you.

Stephen Garnaas-Holmes

The blind beggar calls out from the crowd, "Son of David have mercy on me."

The crowd says be quiet.

Bart cries out even louder. Jesus send your mercy my way.

Jesus hears Bartimaeus and stops.

Jesus stops along the way

How often he stops.  
Stands still.  
Waits. Listens. Does nothing.

Gives time  
in the tumult of our thought and fear,  
the racket of our obligations' traffic,  
to let a small, clear space expand,  
a depth open like a well in the noise,  
a listening reach like roots through earth,  
a stillness rise and stand against our haste.

He lets them pass,  
the anxious wind and waves,  
Jesus sees, he hears  
the voice drowned out  
yet never drowned.

Among beggars' voices

beneath the roar of frightened crowds,  
Jesus hears a cry  
and then become the voice of mercy,  
the still, small silence  
of loving-kindness,  
as vast as the air.

Stephen Garnaas-Holmes and Alan Claassen

Bart cries out even louder. “Jesus send your mercy my way.”

The blind beggar calls out from the crowd, “Son of David have mercy on me.”

Jesus calls Bartimaeus.

The crowd around Bartimaeus says, “Take heart, he is calling you.”

“Take heart, he is calling you.”

God did not cause Bartimaeus’ blindness, any more that God caused the Loma

Prieta earthquake. But in the way the earth is made, earthquakes happen.

Blindness happens.

And mercy happens. Loving kindness happens

“Jesus is “another wave of mercy,

the kind of mercy that God has been doing all through the Hebrew Bible....

waves and waves of loving kindness,

because God’s mercy is given continually in the world and has made all things new.”

The crowd says, “Take heart, Bart; he is calling you. Mercy is calling you.”

Bartimaeus is brought before Jesus who asks,

“What do you want me to do for you?”

Jesus asks?

Why does Jesus ask?

Because Jesus doesn't see a blind man, he sees a man with soul and dignity.

He sees a man who needs to say for himself what he needs,

because that is the first step to honoring and to healing.

Bartimaeus is responsible for asking for what he needs.

Jesus does not presume to know.

Jesus does not fix what he believes needs fixing, Jesus asks Bartimaeus to name it.

Sometimes what others think we need, is not what we actually need.

Jesus teaches us to ask.

Bartimaeus replies to Jesus, “Teacher, let me see again.”

And his sight is restored.

God, let me see again.

Lord, have mercy on me.

Bartimaeus was surrounded by friends who told him to be quiet.

But Bartimaeus knew his need, and he trusted that mercy was walking by him in the form of Jesus,

Bart called out, and received mercy.

The crowd says, “Take heart, Bart; he is calling you. Mercy is calling you.”

Bartimaeus got Jesus to stop.

And Jesus got Bartimaeus

to trust that his giving into Jesus would enable him to see the road that leads to healing.

Blind man no longer sitting by the side.

Eyes opened man is now on the road, following the way of loving-kindness, mercy, that knows when to stop, when to move, when to cry out, when to listen, how to honor the human dignity of every human being.

Let me ask you all something.

Have you been in a place like Bartimaeus?

Something that made you lose sight.

Something that made you lose sight of the way

Something that made you cry out, or whimper under breath,

O God, I could use a little mercy now.

And then, has someone, or some place, or a song, or an animal

given you a moment of eye to eye, heart to heart, soul to soul mercy?

And then in that moment of receiving loving-kindness, have you caught a glimpse,

brought you up to your own life

restored your sight, your connection with others.

Have you been moved by loving-kindness to become loving-kindness?

Because I think that is what this means to be a community a faith, a church.

“Those who received mercy are formed into a new community. That would be us, in the church, a community of people who have received mercy and now have the opportunity, the possibility, the call, to extend mercy to all of God’s creation in need.”

(Walter Breuggemann)

On this day we are given a moment to say yes,

we have received mercy and loving-kindness from this congregation.

Yes, it has also been a pain in the but sometimes,

infuriating, frustrating, clumsy, broken, in a word,....human.

And in spite of and because of that very clumsiness,

we have stumbled, by the grace of God, fallen forward,

into moments where someone has lifted our hearts,

our bodies, our hopes, our call to peacemakers, earth-keepers, caring friends.

On this day we are given a moment to say yes to all that ways

in which we follow Jesus through caring for this sanctuary and grounds,

caring for our friends within this church

and neighbors in our local and global community, and the earth itself.

This church on wheels is a hybrid vehicle, it runs on love and forgiveness.

It runs on nickels, dimes and dollars and home-baked cookie, and a shovel in hand.

It runs on faith and prayer.

We make the path by walking my friends, walking the path that leads us to a place where we belong.

Bart got Jesus to stop, Jesus go Bart to move again.

Let's be a church on wheels, and church on the move,  
Let the people say,

Amen