

The Twenty-Second Sunday After Pentecost – 2021

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52

I want to see! There stood God, incarnate. The Creator of heaven and earth, the Infinite Power of all life, the Giver, the Source, the Architect of the cosmos and of man's bones and rods; and Bartimaeus engaged Him. I want to see!

Blind, he was. A beggar, he was and he spoke to God and God spoke to him. "What do you want me to do for you?" It is a question unlike any other. Jesus poses the question sincerely, offering an open invitation to Bartimaeus. "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus knew what to ask for. He could have any treasure, any gift, any token of divine mercy and Bartimaeus knew what to ask for. "Rabbi, let me recover my sight" (Mark 10:51).

What are your eyes for? God could have created you in any way that He pleased. Is that not true? What did He have in mind when He created Adam and Eve? Surely, it would be good to know. There is a growing confusion about who we are, about gender and what gender means, and because of that confusion there is a mistaken idea that our creatureliness can mean anything that we want it to mean. Do you believe that? Do you believe that you can erase God's fingerprint on your person? Do you believe that man can interpret correctly who he is apart from his Creator? Our evolutionary priests believe that man's constitution is purely functional. What we are, according to these blind guides, is a product of cold and impersonal forces that have shaped us to exist in the environment where some great cosmic accident has placed us. That is certainly not the story the Bible presents. We see more.

God knew that Adam and Eve would sin, and yet He created them in His own image. Before Adam was formed from the dust of the earth, God the Father knew that He would send His Son, to be born of a virgin, to die horribly on a wretched cross. God knew all that He would do through His Son, in you, BEFORE He created anything. Does that knowledge move Him to create in a way that amplifies and reflects what He would do? Is there anything that means more to God than Christianity? What are the eyes for? To see, of course. And what does God want you to see?

Here is a verbal mosaic of Scripture that tells you what your eyes are all about. "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world" (John 1:9). And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Jesus said: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). "Blessed are your eyes, for they see" (Matthew 13:16). "Sir, we wish to see Jesus" (John 12:21). "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). "That which was from the beginning... which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon..., concerning the word of life – the life was made manifest, and we have seen it" (1 John 1:1-2). "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 the saints" (Ephesians 1:18).

God created us to see because He wants us to see His Son by faith. Sight in the Scriptures is often metaphorical for faith – plain and simple – you have eyes to teach you what it is to see what God wills you to see. Biblical blindness is catastrophic for it is akin to faithlessness. Bartimaeus wanted to see. “Son of David, have mercy on me!” The Lord Jesus *is* the Son of David. He comes to establish His eternal kingdom by sacrificing His royal body upon a tree. Bartimaeus cried out in faith. The Messianic King was passing by and this beggar wanted to see.

Imagine being faithless. Imagine living only for self, only for today, seeing others only for what they can give to you. Imagine loving only those who love you. Imagine forgiving only those who massage your ego, who toe your line. Imagine your soul being void of hope, void of charity, void of humility. Imagine seeing the cross and perceiving nothing of import there. Imagine the Invocation being spoken (the Divine Name of the Father and the + Son and the Holy Spirit) and you being callously indifferent. *That* is blindness; pervasive and profound and pernicious blindness. In our culture, the blind are presently leading the blind. Are you willing to follow a blind guide? What is worse, there are those who take extraordinary pride in being blind. And they demand that you adhere to their dictates. Will you pretend to be blind? That is what Christians are doing when they fail to confess Christ as Lord publicly. When we shrink from the mob, we reprise Peter’s threefold denial: “I do not know him” (Luke 22:57).

Here is how this episode with Bartimaeus concludes, pay close attention: “And Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ And the blind man said to him, ‘Rabbi, let me recover my sight.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Go you way; your faith has saved you.’ And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way” (Mark 10:51-52). Your faith has *saved* you, your faith has *saved* you, your faith has *saved* you! His sight was restored and then this no-longer-blind-beggar followed Jesus as He made His way. Where? Where was Jesus making His way? To Jerusalem, to the place of the skull, to a cross and a tomb and a Sabbath rest. Bartimaeus followed Him (that is not metaphorical). There Blind Bartimaeus saw all that God reveals to the eyes of the heart, all that God reveals to faith. What did this disciple see? Bartimaeus saw the Greatest become the least. He saw God the Son redeem humanity from sin and death. Bartimaeus saw unending glory as the Holy Savior rendered up His life to those who despise and reject Him. Love cascaded out of His crucified flesh. Blood and prayer forged a cohesive union of grace: Father, forgive them.

Do your eyes want to see heaven? Do you long to see the face of God’s Son, to look into His eyes and see His eyes looking into yours and perceive the love that resides in Him for you? Do your eyes see this altar and your heart knows that the Lord Himself serves you with His body and blood? You were once blind but now you see. You see what every believer has ever seen. Isaiah is one such believer. Isaiah saw the Lord of glory and he knew that he was a miserable wretch: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). Our sin; when we look upon the cross and see our Lord suffering, sometimes what we see is our sin and our hearts break. We avert our eyes. In shame over what we have done, we avert our eyes. But He comes to us. He brings the coal of His atoning love to our lips and absolves us. “Your guilt is taken away” (Isaiah 6:7). You see what every believer has ever seen.

Cleopas and his unnamed friend had eyes to see. Cleopas and his unnamed friend walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus on Easter (Luke 24). The Lord Christ joins them as they walk. The eyes of these two men were prevented from recognizing Jesus. Until He took the bread, until after Jesus had taught them in the way and then took the bread, until He broke the bread and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened. Then they saw in full. God gave us eyes in order that we might see what those two disciples saw – the crucified and risen Christ reaching out to give them the bread that He had blessed and broken. That is exactly what He does this morning. Faith sees it and rejoices. Blind Bartimaeus is our kin. He teaches us what to say when Christ is in our midst. Son of David, have mercy on us! “O God, the helper of all who call on You, have mercy on us and give us eyes of faith to see Your Son that we may follow Him on the way that leads to eternal life.” Our Father created us in such a way that He might answer that prayer. To be sure, that is His will.