

When the Son of Nobody meets the Son of God,
 Oct 26, 03, am and pm REVISED FOR JUNE 27, 2010

SCRIPTURE INTRO

Mark 10:46-52

- To understand any scripture we need to look at the context.
- Jesus has been teaching the disciples that to be a follower of Jesus they need to let go of the ways of the world, but they remain focused on power, on worldly success. so he teaches an object lesson- he puts a child in their midst, and he says, "this is how you are to be", but they don't get it..They don't see.
- The he uses himself as an object lesson: He tells them he, the one they follow, is going to die a horrible shameful death, and this is the way God will bring life to the world. They don't believe it. They don't see.
- Today is his final teaching on the subject- and he uses prophetic action. He heals a blind man. -He shows them that for anyone to become a true follower of Jesus, their eyes need to be opened- miraculously.
- The blind man is a beggar- His name, "Bar Timaeus" means- "son of nobody" he is a man of no worth- But when Jesus heals his sight, he becomes a disciple of Jesus. He becomes somebody of the highest worth.
- We know he becomes a disciple because we're told he follows Jesus on the way- and "on the way" "in the way" is a kind of early Christian code that referred to the new movement - of following Jesus.
- Let us listen for the word of God as it comes to us in Mark 10: 46 – 52,
- and let us consider who we identify with in the story: Bart on the side of the road, begging and blind? the crowds rushing by with a high purpose? Jesus being called on for help? Where do we find ourselves in the story?

SERMON:

There was a man who was discharged from a mental institution after many years of treatment. Finally he was cured. But he wasn't in the least bit happy.

The hospital director said, "You've worked hard; you've responded so well to treatment; you're ready for the world- why are you not happy?"

He said, "When I came here, I was Napoleon Bonaparte. Now - I'm nobody"

No one wants to be a nobody.

When I was a teenager, and my parents asked me what I wanted to do when I left school, I didn't have any concrete idea, but I would say, "well, I want to do something useful".

What I meant, I think, is that I wanted to do something important, something that would make a difference. I wanted to be somebody. We all want to be somebody, don't we, to be needed, to have a place where we fit in, where we belong, where we're of use.

In the movie, *Cider House Rules*, based on John Irving's book, Dr L'Arche runs an orphanage and adoption center. The orphanage is for unwanted children, babies whose mothers have abandoned them.

Whenever a couple visit the orphanage, some of the children spruce themselves up, they smile in their most charming manner, -fearful, brave little smiles, and their eyes plead, "choose me, choose me". Desperately hoping that someone will see their value and want to take them home.

Meanwhile, they wait. Their lives are on "hold". Real life is passing them by. Like Bartimaeus on the side of the road. Son of Nobody. Worthless.

To some of us, this has a familiar ring. The anguish of being without worth, without use, without purpose. A sense that life, real life, is somehow happening somewhere else, passing us by.

Statistics indicate that quite a large number of us feel that way, at least a quarter of Canadian society suffers from clinical depression. Some of this, of course, may be a result of inheriting a gene, or having suffered some trauma - death, divorce, job loss, violence, an illness...

But such a large percentage surely points also to problems in our culture: we're taught to always seek more, so that we feel that we can never HAVE enough, never DO enough, and so never BE enough.

A modern Bartimaeus is probably not a blind beggar sitting on the side on the road.

A modern Bartimaeus IS blind, but he's running- running in every direction, frantically trying to fill his life with things and activities, striving for success, striving for approval from others.

His life is full, but he never feels fulfilled. He's busy, but he's bored. He has lots of stuff, but inwardly he's bankrupt. Empty in the center. And blind- Not able to see where the path to peace lies, the path to joy.

The modern Bartimaeus, in one night of TV can become aware of a whole world's worth of suffering, hunger and oppression. And he just feels SMALL. He can't see what to do that will make any difference.

Blind and bankrupt, Bartimaeus waits- for something to happen. It's not hard for many of us to identify with Bart.

On the other hand, there are some of us, when we hear the story, who see ourselves rather in the procession of people, walking with Jesus on the way. We do have a sense of purpose and significance. We're on the way to building a better world.

This seems to be a good place to be. So we might ask "how do those on the side of the road, get into the procession of life? That is LIFE with a capital 'L'".

When we've lost our sense of purpose, usefulness, how do we find it again, how do we see our way again. When we've lost our sense of worth, how do we rediscover it? How might we bring others into finding purpose and meaning?

Dr L'Arche's advice to his favorite orphan, Homer, is to make himself of use. To be useful. It seems to be a bit of a catch 22- what if we can't see where or how we can make a difference?

What Dr L'Arche means in Homer's case is that he should join Dr L'Arche in running the orphanage. Maybe take over from him one day as the director. Homer doesn't want to do this. He wants to experience life, beyond the confines of the orphanage.

He feels that life is surely somewhere else. So he leaves Dr L'Arche and the orphanage to go and be of use as a farm labourer.

It's good worldly advice that Dr L'Arche gives- to make yourself of use. It feels good to be useful and needed. But where we run into trouble is when we allow others to judge our usefulness.

When we take our sense of worth from what others think of us. -It leaves us very vulnerable: A harsh word, a slight of some kind, and we're off down a slippery slope.... Taking our worth from the judgments of others is dangerous.

In today's gospel, Bartimaeus, desperate for worth, cries out to Jesus, and what do those crowds around Jesus do? Those good people who are walking on the way with Jesus?

They say, shush- go away, blind beggar, the master isn't interested in you- He's on his way to establishing the kingdom of God- there's something really important on his agenda today- and it's not you- now don't bother him with your cries and your troubles.

To the crowds, Bartimaeus is nothing. Nobody. What if he were to take his sense of worth from them?

Fortunately in that moment, he doesn't. Fortunately he listens to the voice deep within him and he cries out even louder, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

And Jesus stops. And the whole procession stops. The whole mission is held up. For whom has the kingdom been put on hold? It must be for someone important.

Jesus speaks softly to the people around him- "Call him here", he says. Jesus could have called him himself, but he doesn't. He gives this direction to others. NOW they see what they are to do. -

There are words of comfort and encouragement- “take heart, the master is calling you,” There are hands reaching out, touching him, guiding him to Jesus.

It’s not just the blind man’s eyes that are opened, the crowd and the disciples see what they had not seen before- Amidst the bundle of rags on the side of the road, there is a person of infinite worth.

It’s a chastening thought for all of us- that it’s possible to be so focused on OUR idea of Jesus Kingdom, that we may be blind to what Jesus sees, blind to Jesus way, his way of lifting up the little person. His way of loving and drawing in all those whom the world condemns and rejects

The good news is that in this procession, in this journey that we’re on together, the one who is in the midst of us is not just anybody. He is the Somebody in whose image we are all made.

And he has the power to open our eyes. All of us. Whoever we are , however we may have lost our sense of direction, we can come to Jesus.

And put our quest to him, “Lord, let me see again. Let me see again my own worth. Let me see purpose and meaning in my life. Let me see the worth of my brothers and sisters. Let me see as you see, let me see the way to life.”

When we open ourselves to the Light of the world that is in our midst, when we ask to be shown the way; our eyes will be opened and we will be shown- a different way, a way where we do not draw our worth from the opinions of others,

But we draw our worth simply through being on this journey with Jesus Christ. Our usefulness does not lie in the particular gifts we bring; or anything special that we may do, but simply in our willingness to serve.

We may never know exactly how God may be using us. We don’t need to know, only to trust - that in offering ourselves we become part of God’s great plan.

In The Cider House Rules, Homer does come back to run the orphanage in the end. He comes back to be of use THERE, because that is the place where he has been loved- unconditionally, - and so that is the place where he wants to be of use.

So it is with those who choose to follow Jesus: We want to be of use to the one who loved and accepted us, while we were still bankrupt and blind.

It is in this journey with Jesus that we find the peace of belonging. It is here that we’re valued, wanted, needed, useful. For everyone who journeys with Jesus is a somebody.

To God be all the praise, the honour and the glory. Amen.

