

Today's text comes from the gospel of Mark. This version of the story of Jesus is thought to be the first written as the language is simple and quite visual. The other gospels, Matthew and Luke, are thought to have borrow this gospel accounting as the basis for the ways in which they tell the story as many of the sub-narratives are nearly identical except for a few word choices. Chapters eight to ten of Mark are considered to be the core of the story. Today's selection is the end of that portion, as the next verse shows Jesus entering Jerusalem (the captial city) for the first time. Mark choses to frame this whole section – in which he details what following Jesus along his Way of life looks like – by two stories of the blind having their eyes opened (here and also in Mark 8:22-26) setting the scene both literally and metaphorically.

JERICO: this ancient city (its earliest buildings have been dated to 9.000 B.C.E.) is located 825 feet below sea level, near the northwest edge of the Dead Sea, roughly 12 miles east of Jerusalem. It's the first town that the Israelites entering in their exodus journey to the Promised Land. It marks the path and entrance into Judea, the area around Jerusalem, the political and social capital and center of religious life. Curiously Jesus doesn't seem to linger there. It's like he's just passing through. Bartimaeus appears desperate to reach him before he leaves the city.

Son of David, have mercy on me: this tile was a nationalist and militaristic one. It places Jesus in the line of descendance from the first, and greatest, Israelite monarch. Used twice in the passage, Is this title a nicety, meant to flatter, or does this blind man see who Jesus really is while others do not?

throwing off his cloak: People in this time would wear two tunics (*if they could afford it*). The inner tunic (*chiton*) was like a sort of underclothes. It was common for beggars to remove their outer tunic and lay it on the ground in front of them as the space and tool with which they could collect alms and donations. Bartimaeus discarding this out tunic, the tool for begging, could indicate his desire for a new life, his leaving being how he used to be in view of the state of independence to which he hopes Jesus will liberate him.

Get up: Clearly the man is on the ground and is told to stand up. The verb used here for that movement is *egeiro* (ἐγείρε) meaning "to rise up". Curiously this is also one of the two words used in the gospels for resurrection, to be raised from the dead. It's possible to hear that meaning underneath the literal meaning...this man who was as good as dead because of his lack of vision, now is called and raised up to new life in vision that only Jesus can give.

June 30, 2019

Mark 10:46-52

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

⁴⁶ They came to JERICO. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving JERICO, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, **Son of David, have mercy on me!**" ⁴⁸ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "**Son of David, have mercy on me!**" ⁴⁹ Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be brave! ~~Get up!~~ He is calling you." ⁵⁰ So **throwing off his cloak**, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ 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." ⁵² Jesus said to him, "**Go**; your faith has made you **well**." Immediately he regained his sight and *followed him on the way*.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What word, phrase or image grabs your attention?**
- **How might you need to cast off your cloak to come to Jesus?**
- **What do you want Jesus to do for you?**
- **How do the word of this story touch - our life as individuals and as the church here in Oakland – today?**

More notes on the text of Mark 10:46-52

(taken from Joel Marcus, *Mark: commentary from the Anchor Bible Series*)

Go: This expression occurs several times in Mark at the end of miracles. Usually it's a command to go home, to return to normal life, but here instead, Bartimeaus follows Jesus "in the way."

[Jesus] ⁴⁴ saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but **Go**, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." - Mark 1:44;

¹¹ [Jesus to the Paralytic] "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and **Go** to your home." - Mark 2:11;

¹⁹ But Jesus refused, and said to [the man from Gerasenes who has been possessed by a legion of demons], "**Go** home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you." - Mark 5:19

³⁴ [Jesus] said to [the woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years], "Daughter, your faith has made you well; **Go** in peace, and be healed of your disease." - Mark 5:34;

²⁹ Then he said to [the Syrophoenician Woman], "For saying that, you may **Go** —the demon has left your daughter." - Mark 7:29

well: The Greek in the phrase say literally "your faith has saved [*sozo*] you." We forget that the notion of salvation (the Greek word *sozo*) means salvation, deliverance, healing, being made whole, encompassing the physical, the emotional, the social and the spiritual. It has a sense of being "a whole person" a completed creation in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)

followed him on the way. in the gospel of Mark, this expression is used both literal (as in walking after him on the same path) as well as metaphorically (choosing to walk in the Way of Jesus, to become his disciple).

¹⁴ As Jesus was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "***Follow me.***" And he got up and followed him. - Mark 2:14 (*metaphorical meaning*)

⁷ Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee ***followed him;***" - Mark 3:7 (*literal*)

²⁴ So [Jesus] went with him. And a large crowd ***followed him*** and pressed in on him." - Mark 5:24 (*literal*)

³⁴ [Jesus] called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and ***follow me.***" - Mark 8:34 (*metaphorical meaning*)

²¹ Jesus, looking at [the young rich ruler], loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, ***follow me.***" - Mark 10:21 (*metaphorical meaning*)

²⁸ Peter began to say to [Jesus], "Look, we have left everything and ***followed you.***" - Mark 10:28 (*metaphorical meaning*)

⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who ***followed*** [Jesus as he entered the city of Jerusalem] were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! - Mark 11:9 (*literal*)

This text is one about vision and the restoration of sight. As the man cannot see we experience the text populated with verbs not about sight but about hearing.

Heard, shout, say, ordered, cry out, loudly, calling...

Jesus tells the man not only to ~~Get up~~ (to be raised to a new life) but also to be brave, to have courage. We can hear underneath this passage a reference to the prophetic words of Isaiah calling the people to courage, new life and hope in Isaiah 35:1-10 (which also specifically speaks of vision being given to those who cannot see.

¹The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you."

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸ A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.
⁹ No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
¹⁰ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.