

Meditation

Jericho, I have been told, is the oldest city on Earth that has been continuously inhabited. And I had the privilege to visit there in 2007 when I was on a women's retreat to Israel.

Interestingly, today, Jericho is a Palestinian city into which Israelis are forbidden to go. There is a checkpoint at which we had to stop to have our passports verified and have our bus searched for hidden ammunition or people intending to do harm.

At the check point there was a high watch tower and a soldier with a machine gun on a tripod just watching the coming and goings of the tourists...

Inside Jericho, we had lunch and I met Sammy, the camel. He and his owner were in the parking lot and I asked his owner if I could pet him...which he said yes...and then Sammy's owner asked if I wanted a ride....what an experience!

Later that afternoon, I took a walk by myself through the town, thinking about the millennia of history and the multitude of conflicts that those streets have known...

At one point my backpack broke open and all its contents spilled onto the dusty street... these two little boys helped me pick up all of my belongings...

They did not understand or speak English at all.

They saw a problem and they quickly jumped to help me.

Since I had a bit of candy with me, so I offered it to them with gratitude and they accepted...

candy is a universal language!.,

The reason I am mentioning all of this is because Jericho is a real city.

It is a place in the middle of a real desert.

Bartimeaus was a real man and perhaps an important one in the early Christian movement because rarely is one who has been healed mentioned by name...

**Jesus walked and talked, healed and loved
real people on real dusty roads in real cities...**

**In our reading today, Jesus asks Bartimeaus a question,
interestingly the same question that he asked James and John in last week's reading...**

“What do you want me to do for you?”

**Last week the brothers were seeking power, status and greatness
and left empty....**

Today when Jesus asks Bartimeaus that question:

“What do you want me to do for you?”

Bartimeaus responds:

“My teacher...let me see again”

and his request is fulfilled...

What difference! The question is the same...but the answers are vastly different

**As I pondered and prayed this reading this past week,
another reading from 2 Chronicles in the Hebrew Scriptures came to mind.**

**This one is a story about Solomon,
just before he became the King of Israel.**

**God came to Solomon in a dream and asked him
a variation of the question that same question.**

The question that James, John, and Bartimeaus all ask of Jesus....

Yahweh says to Solomon: “Ask for whatever you want me to give you”...

Now... Solomon asked Yahweh for wisdom and knowledge

so that he could lead God's people.
and Yahweh responds "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth,
possessions or honor, nor for the death of your enemies,
and since you have not asked for a long life
but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people
over whom I have made you king,
therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you."

Are you noticing a pattern here? I do...

So I began to ponder...

What do I ask for? What do I pray for?

What is my heart's deepest desire?

When I was young, I used to ask for stuff for me...

As I got older I began to ask for stuff for others...

I've asked jobs for my kids or their loved ones,

I've asked for rain and I've asked for sunshine

depending upon what I wanted to do,

In the past I've asked for lots of things ...

reasonable requests, I have always thought ...

and sometimes I got what I prayed for and sometimes I didn't.

But of late, over the past few years....I have changed my prayer and

now I more often pray for courage and wisdom and strength....

not necessarily in that order....

Wondrously,

when I pray for these qualities...

I find them when I didn't think I had them....

Miraculous, physical cures may or may not happen....

For me, that is an open possibility...

But when we pray for wisdom, strength, and courage

think about it....we always find them....

And so, as I have pondered and prayed all of these readings...

As I have reflected upon my own requests of the Holy One...

**I began to wonder what the world would be like if all peoples prayed for
wisdom, strength and courage...**

I wonder if we could take down the watchtowers and the submachine guns.

I wonder if the children would live in peace...

I wonder if the Palestinians could once again live next door to the Jews

and blacks next to whites

and Muslims next to Christians...

and rich next to poor

and gay next to straight...

If we all prayed for wisdom, courage and strength,

perhaps no one go to bed hungry,

justice would flow through the land

and peace would reign....

I wonder, what would happen this day,

in the real time of our real lives

in this real world...

if we would all pray for wisdom, courage and strength....

Do you think, perhaps, the Reign of Heaven on Earth would be

palpable and real...

mmmm.....Do you think???? amen.