

Mark 10: 46-52

**They came to Jericho.**

**As Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho,  
Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar,  
was sitting by the roadside.**

**When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say,  
“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”**

**Many sternly ordered him to be quiet,  
but he cried out even more loudly,**

**“Son of David, have mercy on me!”**

**Jesus stood still and said,**

**Call him here,**

**And they called the blind man, saying to him,**

**“Take heart! Get up!**

**He is calling you!”**

**So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.**

**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.**

**Jesus said to him,**

**Go....**

**your faith has made you well.**

**Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.**

## 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 2008  
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 Bartimaeus 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 they were left empty....**

**Today when Jesus asks Bartimaeus that question:**

**“What do you want me to do for you?”**

**Bartimaeus 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 Bartimaeus 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 several years....  
I have changed my prayer and  
now I more often pray for courage and wisdom and strength....  
not necessarily in that order....**

**and Wondrously, miraculously I would say,  
when I pray for these qualities...  
I find them especially, 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  
we always find them....**

**And so, I wonder,  
what the world would be like if all peoples prayed for  
wisdom, strength and courage...  
Would we be able to take down the watchtowers and the submachine guns.  
Would all the children have enough to eat and  
feel safe in their own beds at night?  
Would Palestinians be able to live next door to 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,  
would our beloved country come together as  
the one amazing diverse group of people that we are**

**with the common interest of freedom and justice for all?**

**Would we stop the bitterness and hatred and arguing and lying?  
would we end the meanness and violence?**

**You might think that is impossible...  
yet...all things are possible with God...**

**The Gospel of Jesus the Christ is not meant simply for our  
own private well being and peace of mind.  
It is meant to bring the Good News of Love to all of God's  
creation in real time...here and now.**

**I wonder, what would happen this very day,  
if we would all pray for and be open to wisdom, courage and strength....**

**Do you think, perhaps, the Reign of Heaven on Earth would be  
palpable and real?**

**Jesus did not 'wonder if'...  
he knew that all of this would happen...that it was happening...  
It is why he refused to back down or give up...**

**He gave his life so that we might know the Kingdom of God  
here and now...**

**And so now it is our turn.**

**What do you ask God for?**

**What do you pray for?**

**Do you know what you really want? Amen.**

