

**Scripture Lesson:** Mark 10:46-52

*Pew Bible N.T. pg. 44*

<sup>46</sup> They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup> When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>48</sup> Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>49</sup> 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." <sup>50</sup> So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup> 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." <sup>52</sup> Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Mark 10:46-52

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"Tim's Boy"

Rev. Amy Terhune

I'm going to make a confession to you. I've really been struggling with what to say this morning. My devotions this week centered on the end of Romans 12, which (among other things) lays out the marks of a true Christian, according to the heading in my bible: Let love be genuine, rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers, bless those who persecute you, rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep, live in harmony with others, don't be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; don't claim to be wiser than you are, don't retaliate, and if it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. All of which is lovely in the abstract, but so dang hard to do in real life. For some of us, this has been a good week – maybe things are looking up, maybe prayers have been answered, maybe you have some hope, and if that's true, I'm truly glad, and I get it. I can rejoice with those who rejoice.

But for some of us, this has not been a good week, and if that's you today, I want to take just a minute to speak to you. If you are grieving, if you're struggling, if you're having a hard time, it's because you care, and that's a very good thing. Sometimes, caring feels great. Sometimes, caring hurts, but don't stop caring. It's also worth remember that grief has stages. First, there's shock and denial. Then there's anger, and when we're angry, we want to tell off everybody, and just make others feel as lousy as we do. Indulge your fantasies for 15-20 minutes if you need to, and then move on. Don't act on it, and don't get stuck there – it'll eat you alive. And then there's sadness or despair. That's where we wish we didn't care – where we just wish we were numb. But we're not. Take your feelings to God. God knows all about them. God has felt them all. And God can use what we're feeling to help us understand what matters – if we're humble enough to lay it out there and learn. And finally, there's acceptance and resolve, when we synthesize what we've learned with why we care, and we stand for what we care about. While I don't know what the future holds, the pledge I made to God when I was ordained has not changed – to stand as Jesus did with the marginalized, the hurting, the broken, the poor, and stranger to the best of my abilities. I'm not afraid. But I understand why many are.

As a nation, we need to get beyond division – beyond the stark, red and blue that gets painted across every issue. We're told that we can only be this or that. And we demonize those who fall on the opposite side, so much so that we convince ourselves they don't care. It's not true. Real solutions are found by people who care, and who connect with others who care. And when our cares don't seem to

align, that's when we have to dig deeper, and not give up on each other. We need to drop our disdain for compromise. No solution is perfect. There are a few things on which we cannot compromise, but it can't be everything. I shudder for a nation that has so lost trust in each other and in caring, that we get ourselves stuck in a perpetual game of chicken.

If there's one thing we know from scripture, it's that Jesus cared. He cared for all kinds of people – rich young rulers and beggars by the roadside; foreigners from distant lands and shepherds in the fields; wealthy and powerful members of the establishment like Nicodemus and marginalized nameless widows who put two copper bits in the offering plate; Roman centurions and Syrophenician women and Samaritans and Greeks, and Jews. In his ranks were tax-collectors, fisherman, zealots, and women. He healed the blind, the lame, the leper, the mentally ill, the physically dead, and the spiritually bankrupt, and in each case, he took it as it came, responding not out of some preconceived agenda, but out of compassion and common humanity.

Which is where our scripture lands us this morning. In our lesson, we meet a blind man who sat on the sidelines and lived in the shadows, written off and ignored. He's condemned to sit, day after day, in the same spot, hoping someone will toss a coin in his cup. It's a useless, boring existence, and a meaningless one. We can hardly blame him for wanting more.

We don't know much about him. Was he born blind, or did it develop later in life? Is he a young man or an older fellow? Does he have friends, family, anyone to care for him? Details are scarce. What we do know is that this man was not going to let opportunity pass him by. He wasn't going to stand on ceremony. He wasn't going to 'stay in his place'. And he certainly wasn't going to be silenced. We have a lot to learn from him.

That being said, at first glance, the story of Blind Bartimaeus doesn't seem like much. It's a measly little six verses long, one healing story among many. A blind man's sight is restored and he follows Jesus. Story in a nutshell.

Be not deceived. Mark has a knack for cramming a world meaning into very few words, so I want to just focus on a couple of phrases in this lesson that are loaded with meaning. It is my hope that in so doing, all of us hearing this story who have ever felt like we're being shunted to the sidelines, left in the shadows, written off or ignored, may find reason to take heart, because that's really what this lesson is all about.

Let's start with this poor fellow's name: Bartimaeus. On one level, it's not a name at all! 'Bar' simply means 'son'—as in, 'Son of Timaeus'. Who is that blind beggar over there? Oh, that's just Tim's boy. Can't remember his name. Doesn't much matter... That seems to be how Jericho regarded him. He's nameless. He's faceless. He is of no consequence.

But it's not quite that simple. The Son of Timaeus calls out to the "Son of David"—a kingly name, a messianic name, a powerful lineage. "Son of David" is a very loaded term. The disciples may be unsure about who Jesus is. The crowds may be confused. The Pharisees and the Sadducees may be arguing about it. But a blind man on the side of the road knows exactly who Jesus is. This is the Messiah, God's envoy, Divinity in the flesh. It is no coincidence that in the final verses of chapter 10, Bartimaeus calls out to the "Son of David" who is leaving Jericho and heading for Jerusalem, where this same Son of David will ride into the city on the back of a donkey to waving palm branches and shouts of 'Hosanna' as chapter 11 begins. Before another week is out, the "Son of David" will be crucified, buried, and risen to life again. This is a powerful testimony the blind man gives. You might say he's the only one who truly sees! And you can be sure that if the name "Son of David" is this weighty, then chances are very high that the name "Son of Timeaus" is weighty, too.

So let's ask this: what does 'Timaeus' mean? Well, the gospels are written in the Aramaic language. Closely related to Hebrew in many ways, Aramaic doesn't use vowels, so there's a certain

amount of guesswork in translating. The consonants could spell out the word 'teymah', meaning 'poverty', but not just physical or economic poverty. [from Robert M. Price, <http://vridar.wordpress.com/2011/02/08/blind-bartimaeus-some-meanings-of-the-story-surrounding-his-healing>.] It also alludes to moral poverty or 'defilement'. Remember that the people of Jesus' time saw disease and ailments such as blindness as punishment for sin. Thus, they look on the beggar and saw a 'Son of Defilement' or a 'Son of Poverty'. They saw one who is cursed.

But with those exact same consonants, the Aramaic could also translate, as most English translations favor, into the Greek name Timaeus, which means 'honor' or 'worthy' or 'valuable'. Personally, I'm of the opinion that it is ambiguous on purpose. Where the people saw a 'Son of Poverty', Jesus sensed the fire in this man's soul. Jesus looked on that same man and saw a 'Son of Honor' or 'Son of Worth'. And that is still true today. All of us are Bartimaeuses. Jesus looks at us and sees children of worth, precious to the heart of God.

The proof of that is found in another phrase worth noting. The text says "Jesus stood still." Rev. Erskine White, a great preacher from another era, put it this way when he wrote, "Jesus stopped. He changed His plans. He delayed His journey, and in the midst of all those cheering, adoring people, Jesus stopped for the sake of one blind beggar.

"He stops like that for us today. In this world, where we can so easily feel like a number and not a name, where we can wonder whether our own individual cry for help isn't drowned out by the collective clamor and deafening din around us, Jesus stops to tend our need. [2 ¶s from "Blind Beggars All" by Erskine White, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com).] To Jesus, all of us are Bartimaeuses—children of worth.

Another phrase with noting is this one: "throwing off his cloak..." The cloak was an essential item of dress in first century Palestine. A person might have two tunics, or two head scarves, or even two pairs of sandals, but they only had one cloak. It was a seamless, woven piece of cloth, usually with a hood, so it took skill to make and was expensive. It protected one from sun by day and from cold by night. It was shelter. It was safety. It was bedding. It could be any number of useful things. But Bartimaeus threw it off. Why? Because there was something he needed more than his cloak. There was something he needed more than comfort and security. He needed life.

Marty Lyons was a defensive tackle for the New York Jets in the 70s and 80, and later worked for 22 years as a broadcaster for the Jets, retiring last year. In December 2011, former New York Jets Defensive Tackle Marty Lyons was honored by the Heisman Trust as the recipient of the sixth annual Heisman Humanitarian Award for his work with his Foundation. The Marty Lyons Foundation seeks to aid and care for terminally ill children. He retired from football in 1987, following a controversial play that injured Hall-of-Famer Dwight Stephenson of the Miami Dolphins, and a near-fatal car accident that left his wife Kelly laid up for months. "It seems that when his wife Kelly was driving their son Rocky home after visiting his grandparents, their 4-wheel drive pickup hit a dip in the road, swerved from side to side, turned on its side, and then rolled over a guardrail into a 20-foot ditch.

"Kelly had instinctively thrown her body across that of her son, which probably saved his life. In the process, though, both of her shoulder bones, her collar bone, her cheek bones, and nose were broken. Rocky, the five-year-old son, saw that his mother could not help herself. But somehow, he was able to push her through the truck's rear window and help her up the embankment. Every time his mother would fall down and want to stop, five-year-old Rocky would say, "Momma, you've got to remember the train."

"Rocky was referring, of course, to the train in the popular children's book, *The Little Engine That Could*, which kept saying over and over, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can, I think I can." [3 ¶s adapted from *New York Daily News*, November 7, 1987, p. 30; as used in "Lesson From A Blind Man" by King Duncan, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com). My own research in lead-up.]

In many ways, Bartimaeus was like that little boy. He kept the eyes of his heart on a vision of life beyond the ditch he was in. He refused to let his own pain defeat him. And Jesus affirmed that drive. In a wild, loud, tumultuous crowd, he heard a man in need. He heard. He stopped. He summoned him. One final phrase. Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Now that may not immediately sound familiar, because we didn't read the lesson right before this one in Mark 10, where James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come forward to him and say, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And Jesus says, 'What do you want me to do for you?' And they say, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' And Jesus gets completely exasperated. 'You do not know what you are asking!' he tells them. (Mark 10:35-38)

Now we have a blind man—one who, unlike the disciples, has not been following all over the countryside. He hasn't seen Jesus transfigured at the mountain top, or 5000 people fed on a hillside, or a storm obey commands, or a little girl returned to life, or a demon-possessed boy set free. He hasn't seen anything in a long, long time. But he's heard the rumors. Somehow, the story has made it beyond his ears into his mind and his heart. And when Jesus arrives, he finds his voice. To which, Jesus responds. "What do you want me to do for you?" "Holy One, let me see." He's not interested in fame or power or glory. What he asks for is what he needs to take the next step. Nothing more. Nothing less. Holy One, let me see. This, this Jesus can do. Because Bartimaeus already sees—he already sees through the eyes of faith.

"I believe something happened to Bartimaeus that day, don't you? I believe the scales not only fell away from his eyes; I believe they fell away from his heart. For not only did his healing represent a victory over a physical problem, but his healing said to Bartimaeus, "You really matter. You're a person of worth. God hears you. God cares about you." [adapted from "Lesson From A Blind Man" by King Duncan, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com).] And God doesn't want you to sit on the side of the road forever either. God wants what you want: full, meaningful, abundant life.

"Some years ago in a small village in the Midwest, a little twelve-year old girl named Terri was babysitting her little brother. Terri walked outside to check the mail. As she turned back from the mailbox, she couldn't believe her eyes. The house was on fire. So very quickly the little house was enveloped in flames.

"Terri ran as fast as she could into the flaming house only to find her baby brother trapped by a burning rafter which had fallen and pinned him to the floor. Hurriedly, Terri worked to free her brother. She had trouble getting him loose as the flames were dancing around their heads. Finally, she freed him. She picked him up and quickly took him outside and revived him just as the roof of the house caved in.

"By this time, firefighters were on the scene and the neighbors had gathered outside the smoldering remains of the house. All were tremendously impressed with the courage of the twelve-year old girl. They congratulated her for her heroic efforts and said, "Terri, you are so very brave. Weren't you scared? What were you thinking about when you ran into the burning house?" I love Terri's answer. She said, "I wasn't thinking about anything. I just heard my little brother crying." [3 ¶s from James W. Moore, Collected Sermons, ChristianGlobe Networks, Inc., illustrations for Mark 10:46-52 on [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com).]

Now I don't know what the neighbors or the firefighters or the journalists thought about that, but I believe I know what Jesus thought about that. I think he smiled and nodded his head and said, "Yes, Terri, I understand exactly what you mean." Amen.