

Was Bartimaeus Sorry?

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Psalm 34

Mark 10: 46-52

October 25, 2009-UM

Will you join me in a moment of prayer?

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts and minds be acceptable in your sight O God, our strength and our redeemer, amen.

Do you remember when I started here a little over a year ago?

There were a variety of feelings that both you and I had... excitement... trepidation... expectation...

There was a newness and a freshness to everything.

It's like the marvellous time of dating in a new relationship.

There was excitement and anticipation, cooperation, and generosity.

I was going to bring in all kinds of new people... without changing anything...

And you were going to be eager for Bible Study and faith development and to all the new ideas I would bring.

And our financial concerns would disappear...

It was a time when both of us looked at the other through rose colour glasses.

And everything was wonderful... and we couldn't possibly imagine a time when it wouldn't be.

But... that stage in any relationship passes... and we started to see each other more clearly... in all of our individual and communal foibles and quirks...

We began to see each other as we truly are...

Being in ministry together is in some ways like being married, and part of me can't quite believe that I, a single woman in ministry, am using a marriage as a metaphor for being in ministry together.

In a marriage joys are enhanced when shared, sorrows halved, and energy expands.

That is the best part of being in a relationship.
There is also the drudgery of everyday life...

Small irritations... and the rose coloured glasses come off... and we see each other clearly...

And it can make us wonder, "What on earth am I doing here with this person that I have committed to?"

Or in the case of you and me, one or the other or both may say, “This is not what I expected out of this relationship.”

That too is part of being in a relationship.

But then what?

Do we scrap it?

Do we start looking to the next pastoral relationship?

Where for a while all that first year excitement and energy can happen all over again?

Or do we decide that we are committed to each other?

That the clearer, truer vision of each other is better than the illusion.

And that it is now, now that the first year is over, that the promise, passion and purpose of being in ministry together can really begin.

I am staying... United Memorial abounds with both challenges and blessings... and I am staying.

What does this have to do with our readings today you ask?

As I pondered them this week I wondered if Bartimaeus was sorry that he asked Jesus to see.

I wondered if now that his eyes were opened and he could see the dirt and the poverty and the cruelty if he would have rather been left blind.

Or did he embrace the new opportunities that were open to him because of his sight?

And that idea resonated with where we are now in our relationship.

But beyond the story of healing are at least two other stories in this passage.

One is a story of recognition, that Bartimaeus, who called out to Jesus, Son of David, knew who Jesus was.

He knew that Jesus was the one to set him free from his prison of blindness.

And the other story is that Jesus, despite the people trying to silence Bartimaeus, Jesus heard his voice and responded.

Do we recognize that Jesus it is to whom we must continually turn?

Do we trust that he will hear our cries?

Do we embrace what he offers us?

Jesus had such a great understanding of his purpose.

He let nothing, or very little, deter him from his purpose... which I have come to understand as proclaiming and professing God's love for all people and to call God's people back to what God intended for them.

He was probably not the most comfortable person to be around all the time.

For all we have stories of him taking children on his knee and welcoming outcasts, he also had harsh words for those who would prevent others from having a relationship with God.

He had a way of questioning and challenging practices that were long held...

And it seems apparent that the disciples were often confused and misunderstood him.

This Jesus, in a world that believed that illness and disease were caused by sin, this Jesus, heard the cries of Bartimaeus and healed him.

This Jesus shared hospitality with the outcasts.

This Jesus invited us to follow him.

This is the Jesus I follow.

I believe with all my heart and soul that God still has a plan for United Memorial.

I don't know what our future will look like, and I know that it won't be like it was fifty years ago, but I am confident that there is one.

Any time I feel discouraged, I remind myself to go back to scripture... and I encourage you to do the same.

In the many varied books that make up our holy scriptures are words that cover all of the human emotions that we have.

And in those books are words of inspiration... of comfort... of hope... and of challenge.

As all of us know, ministry is not a solo undertaking...

Even as I am the ordained minister here in UM, without your support and encouragement, I can do little...

And without my support and encouragement, you would probably not undertake some things...

But together... together with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit... we can do much more than we imagined...

Who knows what the Lord will have in store for us in our relationship together?

That part of the story is yet to be written.

As a Christian community of faith, we have something unique to offer to each other, this community and the world.

Acceptance in a world that says how much money you make is the most important thing...

Compassion in a world that is too often cold and heartless...

Hope in a world that can seem so bleak...

Comfort to the sick...

Food for the hungry...

Companionship to the lonely....

Was Bartimaeus sorry he regained his sight?

I don't think so.

Am I sorry I accepted the call to be your minister?

Not at all!

Let us move confidently into the future, recognizing that it is God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit who will lead us.

Let us have faith that our purpose in this time and place will unfold.

Let us embrace the sight we have been offered.

Thanks be to God for those challenges and blessings, amen.