

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2021

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Taste and see how good God is.
All: Trust in the One who awakens joy in place of tears.
One: Happy are those who take refuge in a loving God.
All: The Lord has done great things for us,
One: O magnify the Lord with me,
All: Let us exalt God's name together!

*** OPENING HYMN "Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me" GtG 703**

One: Jesus, thy boundless love to me
no thought can reach, no tongue declare;
All: O knit my thankful heart to thee,
and reign without a rival there!
One: Thine wholly, thine alone, I'd live;
All: myself to thee entirely give.

One: O grant that nothing in my soul
may dwell,
All: but thy pure love alone;
One: O may thy love possess me whole,
All: my joy, my treasure, and my crown!
One: All coldness from my heart remove;
All: may every act, word, thought be love.

One: O Love, how gracious is thy way!
All: All fear before thy presence flies;
One: Care, anguish, sorrow melt away
where'er thy healing beams arise.
All: O Jesus, nothing may I see,
nothing desire, or seek, but thee.

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***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Merciful God,
you know us better than we know ourselves.
You see our need when we are blind to it.
In your compassion,
forgive us for our lack of faith
and the harm we do to others and to your earth.
Forgive us for turning away from your will,
for ignoring the cries of our neighbors,
for failing to listen to what is most nourishing even for ourselves.
Forgive us,
and give us the light of your wisdom and ways,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

One: The one who created us and maintains our every breath has reached out to us in love.
All: **The Lord hears our cries and our confession, and, calls us to receive mercy and be forgiven.**
One: Therefore, let us be reconciled to one another and walk humbly before God.

***THE PEACE**

One: The peace of Christ be with you.
All: **And also with you.**
(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Mark 10:46-52

MARK 10:46-52 (New Revised Standard Version+)

⁴⁶ They came to Jericho. As Jesus was leaving Jericho, together with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting beside the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was there, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; rise up, he is calling you." ⁵⁰ So throwing his cloak aside, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ Then Jesus asked 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 restored you.” Immediately he regained his sight, and he began to follow Jesus on the road.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON by Pastor Bill Vincent

Do we want to see?
Crucial question as we hear this story and discern it for ourselves.
Bartimaeus makes it clear for himself.
But the question is, Do *we* want to see?

I mean, let’s be honest. We may some sense that there are certain things about life that we may not want to see: certain aspects, certain violence, certain evil; certain unhappy things that we may not want to see about life, or even about ourselves.

So, do we want to see?

And do we want to see aright?

It turns out that the question Jesus asks Bartimaeus is the exact same question Jesus had asked James and John just a little bit before.

Jesus had shared with the disciples about what is coming as they approach Jerusalem. They still don’t get it, because James and John come to Jesus, and Jesus asks, “*What is it you want me to do for you?*” And James and John respond, “*Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory*” (Mark 10:36-37 NRSV). They are seeking glory. They are seeking the top spot, the first place. They do not see aright.

But when Jesus asks Bartimaeus, “*What do you want me to do for you?*” he responds, “Let me see.”

Do *we* want to see?

It is an important question for us to address, to focus on, to hear for ourselves, and to wrestle with.

Do we want to see?

And if we do, if we do truly want to see, if we do say, “Yes, Lord, that is truly what I want,” do we want to respond the way we need to respond?

You may have noted that as Jesus is walking along and Bartimaeus cries out and Jesus stops and says, “*Call him,*” there’s this interesting note that it says. It says, “*Bartimaeus tossed his cloak aside.*” You could almost miss it. Remember, Bartimaeus is blind; he’s sitting beside the road; and his cloak would have been spread out on the ground in front of him. He may have been sitting on part of it, but it was spread out in front of him, because that’s where people would toss alms and toss things his way, and he could collect them on his robe. This robe, this cloak of his was part of his way of life; it was part of his livelihood. And what does he do when Jesus

calls him? He tosses it aside. He tosses his livelihood, he tosses all about his life to the side, and runs to Jesus.

It actually may sound familiar. Because earlier in the gospel we read of Jesus calling to others who toss aside their nets and their livelihood and the way that they have known life, in order to follow him.

And Bartimaeus tosses aside his cloak, his livelihood, his life, all in order to respond to this one who calls to him.

Now, let's be clear: Bartimaeus doesn't see...really. Not truly. Not fully. He doesn't fully understand. Even when Jesus says, "Your sight has been restored," he doesn't fully understand.

He calls out, "*Jesus, Son of David.*" Yes, but not adequate.

And even as he follows on the way, there are those who point out that Bartimaeus, along with all the other disciples...the time will come when they will all fall away from Jesus; when the officials come for him and arrest him, and "*All of them deserted him and fled*" (Mark 14:50 NRSV)

So Bartimaeus may be on target, but not precisely. He doesn't have it true.

But he knows enough, he sees enough to follow.

And that's good. And maybe that's good enough.

You see, it may indeed be that this whole regaining of sight, for Bartimaeus, for us, is not a [-snap-] 'one and done', but it's a process.

In fact, even as we read the story, the way it's worded, Bartimaeus asks to "*see again*"; his sight is "*restored.*" Which suggests that he may have been able to see something beforehand.

Now, regarding Bartimaeus' story itself, we don't have a clue about that: whether he had been born with sight, then lost his sight. We don't know.

But as I think about this story, and think about Bartimaeus, and think about that sense of him as kind of a model and example for us and for discipleship, I can identify.

For there are times in my life when I know that I have seen, and the road ahead is clear, and what I am called to do and what my life is to be about is clear, and I can strike out in confidence.

And then there are times when it's almost as if I lose sight of the road and lose my way; and my sight is murky; and the road I once thought I saw in front of me has vanished: vanished in a forest of all sorts of other options, vanished with the howling of so many other voices calling and seeking to direct me in other ways.

So maybe indeed it is true that I need to have my sight restored, I need to be able to see again; because, yes, I know of those times when I have lost my sight, and I need to have it restored.

And I do want to see. And I cry out, I yearn for help. And I – we – turn to the very source that we know can, and will, help us.

And maybe in a real way, it is in knowing that – knowing that source and knowing our blindness – that our sight is restored.

Brett Younger, of the McAfee School of Theology, reminds us that God really does want us to see: wants us to see **“with new depth and understanding.”** And he says,

See what God will show you. See the world more completely than you have seen it before. See your life for the incomprehensible mystery that it is. See your way to the holiness of it all. (Lectionary Homiletics, October 2015, p.36)

See.

For even when we struggle with that question of whether we want to see, or not, there is a sight there that is wondrous. We may see the pain, we may see the agony, we may see the tragedy first; but there is sight beyond that, and it is a sight of something beautiful and wondrous and gracious because it is the sight of God.

And that’s what we yearn for; that’s what we seek.

Silly me. I was drawn to a scene in a movie: an animated movie from actually a number of years ago. Some of you may be familiar with it: “Beauty and the Beast.” You know the story. The one who has been turned into a hideous beast because no love was found in him. And then there’s this woman who’s a beautiful person and beautiful woman. They end up together, and ‘Can they see?’ And in this wondrous scene in the Disney movie, “Beauty and the Beast”, there comes that time when the Beast himself, yes, does see, and knows of his love for the beauty, for Belle; and she sees and knows the beauty in him through her love. And in that, Beast is transformed; but I suggest to you, Belle is as well. They are both transformed. And there’s a newness, there’s a wonderful beauty. A beauty that is seen. Belle sees. The Beast sees.

Will we see, too?

‘Oh, now I see. Now I see life as it is. Now I see the dark side, but now I also see the beauty, even in the beast.’

Will we see? Will we open ourselves to regaining that sight?

And not simply for ourselves.

This is not simply a story about only me regaining my sight, and being able to see life and embrace it in that way.

But for us as a church. Not only this congregation, but beyond as well.

The Presbytery sends out a newsletter every week. They’ve invited different people throughout the Presbytery to share over the past year.

The person who shared this week – one of the pastors in the Presbytery – talked about the church and its need to see things differently. Now in her story as she was talking about maybe having to see the church and how it works differently and its mission and how it’s structured and how we approach things differently, she didn’t mention the Reformation. But I want to suggest that some would see the Protestant Reformation as a time when the Church regained its sight. When the Church, or people in the Church, or groups in the Church, recognized that maybe in some ways we had lost our way and lost our sight and needed to have it restored. And this pastor here in the Presbytery, and many others, would suggest the Church is at that point again.

Oh, this is not to suggest that life in the church is all bad. No.

But maybe, just maybe, in who we are and who this world is and how we have settled into doing things, suggests that maybe we need to ask and have that prayer, “Lord, restore our sight.” That maybe there are ways we need to approach life and our life together and approach the world and our ministry, in a different way. That we need to have our sight restored, so that we too, like Bartimaeus and so many others, can toss aside this old life and follow Jesus on the road.

Brett Younger shares in his message,

There is so much to see if we just see with hope and love. (LH-36)

“There is so much to see if we just see with hope and love.”

Just like the eyes that see us: eyes that call to us; eyes that transform us in seeing us and opening our eyes; eyes that invite us to follow on the road, not only to Jerusalem and a cross, but to resurrection and new life.

Do we want to see?

And will we respond with our whole selves when our sight is restored?

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

In life and in death we belong to God.

**Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,**

**and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**We trust in Jesus Christ,
fully human, fully God.**

**Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children,
healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.**

**Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.**

**God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.**

**With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

(from A Brief Statement of Faith, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

**Pastor: God of mercy...
People: ...hear our prayer.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER (Traditional)

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.**

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

God of goodness, you lavish your gifts on us. You have given us health; we dedicate our vigor to following Christ. You have given us strength; we offer our energy to serve neighbors in need. You have given us your Word; we commit a portion of our wealth as signs of our faithfulness. Bless our offerings with the healing that comes from your work and your work that comes from our hands. For the glory of your kingdom we pray. Amen.

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** “Sight and Hearing” [Tune #761]

**Sight and hearing Jesus offers
Those who seek and call today.
There is welcome for each beggar,
Searching for life’s better way.
We can all take heart, rejoicing,
Knowing we are called by name.
We are touched and healed so deeply
We can never be the same.**

**Faith that we received from others
Only can become our own
When we reach for understanding,
Offered us by God alone.
In our struggles to be faithful,
Through our days of toil and stress,
God is with us as a refuge,
Promising to hear and bless.**

**Let the humble sing their praises
With a radiant confidence,
Serving in the name of Jesus,
With no arrogant pretense.
Magnify God’s name together;
Taste and see that God is good.
Celebrating Christ’s perfection,
Live today as Jesus would.**

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

Pastor: ...And let the gathered people of God say...
People: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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