

Lord, Let Me See Again

Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ...

Before I begin, I do want to mention that I will say a few words directly to you Ryan (when I call you to stand before me – as we gather to confirm your faith)) but I do want to welcome the Wahlers family once again and tell you on behalf of the Family of Faith (that we are glad that you are here) and truly excited for Ryan... He is a blessing to our ministry (and we hope that you will consider our church home – your church home)... and so, blessings be upon you...

In our Gospel lesson this morning – it tells us the story of a blind beggar named Bartimaeus who sat by the roadside in the ancient city of Jericho... and when he hears the news (that Jesus is passing by) – the man cries out for mercy... it tells us that Jesus then stops – asks the man what he wants – and Bartimaeus yells out, “*Lord, let me see again*”...

You know, with all that our world has gone through in the past 2 years – with all of the troubles our nation finds itself in (and all of the trouble *nations around the world* find themselves in) – with natural disasters, with division among people, with the epidemic of greed, and with the increasing difficulty of *remaining hopeful* about what the future might look like – it made me wonder (if the beggar’s cry – might also be our cry... his prayer our prayer) when he yells out, “*Lord, let me see again!*”...

And I suspect that the problem we are confronted with at the moment (if we allow ourselves to get swallowed up in pessimism, fear, or disillusionment) is that we, too, can grow blind... blind to the things of God...

You know, at first, I started to think back to when our oldest daughter, Erin, was about 3 years old (when we would take a walk or spend some time in the park)... and what always fascinated me was how she could see things that I had stopped paying attention to somewhere along the way...

A small sparrow, for instance, would get her so excited... she would yell out, “Look Daddy – it’s a bird!... Isn’t it beautiful?”... or she would notice a butterfly and want to chase it... and then there were flowers, and kittens, and kites in the sky... and at every corner there was something new – something exciting – something to appreciate and to explore...

2

And every time that she pointed her finger at something new (it made me realize how blind I had become to the world around me) and not because I'm a bad person – and either are you - (but because, like everyone else, we get too busy to notice – or even to care)...

But that also makes me wonder if we can be too busy to notice other things in our lives as well... in fact, maybe we can get too busy to notice our blessings – or perhaps the things that we should be grateful for (*and forget about the birds* – but what about our children? – or that we're loved by God)...

and because, so often we're always longing for more (sometimes it can be difficult to appreciate what we do have) – so much so that we have a hard time believing that there's any reason to give God thanks... or to give back (as a response to what God has done for us)... I mean, how can you say that you're eyes are open to see God (when you're hands are always tightly clenched and you refuse to do God's work in the world?)...

Which is *what I would call* a spiritual blindness... or a spiritual malady... (unable to see all of the beautiful things that our Lord has gifted us with) because our eyes are not open...

In fact, I remember reading something that Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote... he said something like, *"If the stars in the sky were only to come out once a year - the whole world would stay up all night to see them... but because we've seen the stars so often we don't even bother to look at them anymore"*...

And I think in the same way we can also take our blessings for granted as well... we get so used to having what we want, when we want it – that we can grow blind to how blessed we really are... and what's worse – some of us can also grow to expect those blessings (rather than cherish and appreciate them)...

It's like the story told of two old friends who bumped into one another on the street after not seeing each other for many years... One of them looked upset, and was almost on the verge of tears... and so his friend says, "Why do you look so upset?... Has something happened to you?" ...

The sad friend says, "Well, let me tell you... three weeks ago, an uncle died and he left me forty thousand dollars" ...

"Wow, that's a lot of money" ... the friend responds

3

“And two weeks ago - a cousin that I never met - died – and he left me 85 thousand dollars (free and clear)” ...

“Really?... Sounds like you’re a blessed man!” the friend remarked...

“You don’t understand!” the man interrupted... “Last week my great-aunt passed away and I inherited almost a quarter of a million dollars” ...

Well, now the friend was really confused... “Then why do you look so sad?” the friend asked...

“Because – this week – nothing!”

You know, I’ve always found that story to be sort of funny because it’s almost ridiculous in some ways (but I also think it paints a picture of what it looks like when we fail to see the things of God)... to have so much (and yet, too blind to see how blessed you really are) is *in, and of, itself* a ridiculous thought... and I think that it’s something that we can all struggle with from time to time...

But that’s why – in the midst of all of my own busyness this week (and all of my complaining) and in all the petty things that I often find myself being concerned about – I took some quiet time this week to use the blind beggar’s plea as my own prayer: and I just kept repeating “Lord, let me see again”... Let me see your goodness and your Grace and your love (in every area of my life that I feel weak right now... open the eyes of my heart Lord and let me see you... but most importantly, so that I can serve you and give back”)...

And as I went back to Scripture I read from Psalm 136:1... where it says, ***“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”***...

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 it says, ***“Give thanks in all circumstances”; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.***...

And in Matthew 5:8 - we read, ***“Blessed are the pure in heart – for they shall see God”*** ...

And Friends, when Jesus healed the blind beggar named Bartimaeus (the Bible seems to tell us that his own heart was pure) because if you notice in the story he didn’t care what people thought of him (even when everyone around him told him to shut up – which is what they will tell you if you find your voice for the Lord) – yet, he didn’t keep quiet when he sensed that Jesus was near – but most

importantly, he never stopped believing that his eyes could once again be opened”... (and that’s an important part of this story)...

And what does Jesus say?... he says, “*your faith has made you well*”... and it was that faith that let him see the world in a whole new way...

Which is why I want to close this morning with a true story about an Australian woman, named Hailey Bartholomew, who found her life to be (in her own words) “boring”... in an article she wrote she described herself as being lost and feeling as if she was stuck on a treadmill... and what seemed strange (even to her) was that she was married to a man that she loved and she had two beautiful children who held her heart (and yet, couldn’t appreciate any of it)...

and for the life of her she couldn’t understand why she didn’t appreciate her life more (because from the surface of things she seemed so blessed)... it was almost as if she was blind (and couldn’t see the good things anymore)...

To keep a long story short she ended up speaking to a Roman Catholic nun (who advised her to spend time each day reflecting on one thing that she was grateful for) which started a project that she called 365grateful... and as part of this project she ended up taking a photograph of something each day that she was thankful for (as a way to grow in her faith and appreciate her blessings more)... hoping that by doing this God might open her eyes to once again see the joy that had left her...

As the story is told, that project changed her life (or at least it changed the way she looked at her life)... in fact, at one point she says that she always believed her husband to be unromantic (but one day she took a picture of him preparing dinner – the thing she was most grateful for on that day)... and later on when she took a closer look at the picture (she noticed for the first time that the largest portion of pie was placed on her plate) – which made her realize that it was a small but profound way her husband cared for her...

On another day she found herself grateful for her children (and it was only when she was given an opportunity to look more closely at the pictures – and to really study it - that she saw so much love in their eyes for her) and she thought of how precious those moments together really were...

To keep a long story short – Hailey didn’t need to go to a therapist – she didn’t need anti-depressant medication... but what she needed to do was take a closer look at her life (and find reason to thank God for it all)... and when she did that

she found that her life was anything but boring (but filled with so much treasure and so much love)... and in time – she could begin to see it again...

Friends, all of us get busy – we all get bored from time to time (and that can happen to even the best of us) and sometimes – if we're not careful – it can also make us lose sight of the most beautiful things in our lives...

But what I am trying to say to you this morning is that happiness doesn't come to us in receiving something we don't have – but it comes when we can recognize and appreciate what we already do have... and the gift in doing that (is that the Lord lets us see again) ...

May the Lord bless us and keep us... May the Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious to us... and May the Lord continue to look upon us with favor – and give us peace...

In Jesus' name we pray...

Amen!