

JEREMIAH 31: 7-9

PSALM 126

MARK 10:36-42

GRACE AND PEACE TO YOU FROM OUR GOD WHO GIVES US LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST.

SINCE SEPTEMBER 12TH OUR WORSHIP GATHERINGS HAVE BEEN EMBEDDED IN THE MIDDLE SECTION OF MARK... WE HAVE BEEN MOVING WEEK BY WEEK FROM THE EIGHTH CHAPTER TO THE TENTH.. SWEEPED ALONG BY MARK'S CRISP BUT INTENSE VERBS.... WHILE ENCOUNTERING STORIES THAT DISRUPT AND DISTURB, CONFOUND AND REVEAL

THESE PAST SIX WEEKS.. WE HAVE HEARD PETER'S CONFESSON BUT ALSO HIS REBUKE... WE HAVE BEEN CALLED TO TAKE UP OUR CROSS AND TO LOSE OUR LIVES TO SAVE THEM.. COMMANDED TO WELCOME AND SERVE THE LEAST OF THESE... THERE WERE THE VIVID METAPHORS OF MILLSTONES AND BODY PARTS.. AND THE GENTLE WELCOME OF CHILDREN.. BUT, WE HAVE ALSO HEARD TWO OF JESUS' THREE PASSION PREDICTIONS THAT POPULATE THIS MIDDLE SECTION.. PREDICTIONS OF BETRAYAL, TORTURE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION THAT SHADOW AND FALL ON ALL ELSE THAT WE HAVE HEARD...

AND YES, THERE HAVE BEEN HEALINGS AND TEACHINGS... BUT ALSO THE COMMAND TO GO, SELL ALL THAT YOU HAVE AND GIVE TO THE POOR AND FOLLOW....

AND YES... THERE HAS BEEN THE ACCLAMATION FROM A PLEADING FATHER .. *I BELIEVE, HELP MY UNBELIEF*... BUT THERE ARE ALSO THE ENDLESS EXAMPLES OF DISCIPLES WHO STILL DO NOT PERCEIVE, UNDERSTAND OR SEE WHO JESUS IS AND WHAT HE IS ABOUT.

WE MUST ALSO NOTE THAT THIS MIDDLE SECTION OF MARK'S GOSPEL IS BORDERED AT THE BEGINNING AND ENDING BY TWO HEALINGS OF MEN BORN BLIND. AND SO WE MIGHT SAY... THAT ST. MARK INTENDS THIS MIDDLE SECTION AS A TESTIMONY TO THE BLINDNESS OF THE DISCIPLES.. AND AS WELL.. MARK INTENDS THIS TO BE A WITNESS TO THE GRACE OF GOD REVEALED IN JESUS .. A WITNESS IN THE MIDST OF THOSE WHO DO NOT SEE.

TODAY THEN, MANY OF THE THREADS OF THESE 3 CHAPTERS ARE TWINNED TOGETHER IN THIS CONCLUDING STORY OF BARTIMAUS, THE CROWDS, AND JESUS...

COMING ON THE HEELS OF LAST WEEKS STORY ABOUT THE GENTILE LEADERS WHO LORD IT OVER OTHERS EXPECTING TO BE SERVED INSTEAD OF SERVING.. TODAY, WE ENCOUNTER A MAN WITH A COMBINED ARAMAIC GREEK NAME..

AND LEST WE THINK IT NOT IMPORTANT... NOTE THAT BARTIMAEUS IS THE ONLY PERSON HEALED BY JESUS WHO IS NAMED IN ALL OF MARK'S GOSPEL...

HE IS BAR (SON OF) TIMAEUS.. WHICH MEANS.. SON OF TIMAEUS..

NOW, EDUCATED GREEKS WOULD RECOGNIZE RIGHT AWAY THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NAME TIMAEUS ...AS IT IS THE TITLE OF THE GREAT PHILOSOPHER PLATO'S POPULAR REFLECTION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PERCEPTION OR SIGHT FOR UNDERSTANDING THE COSMOS ...WHERE PLATO NOTES THE MANY ABLE TO SEE THE "MERE" PHYSICAL WORLD ARE STILL BLIND TO ETERNAL TRUTHS... AND HERE IN MARK WE HAVE THIS ONE NAMED SON OF TIMAEUS WHO IS PHYSICALLY BLIND AND YET AS WE SHALL LEARN ... ALREADY...HE SEES WHO JESUS IS... HE SEES THE ETERNAL WISDOM.

IN OTHER WORDS... BARTIMAEUS ALREADY SEES BEFORE HIS PHYSICAL HEALING... HE IS ABLE TO PERCEIVE MORE CLEARLY THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THE GOSPEL UP TO THIS POINT.. JUST WHO JESUS IS... FOR WHEN BARTIMAEUS CRIES OUT **SON OF DAVID**.. WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND THAT HE KNOWS THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH... AND THAT JESUS HAS THE POWER TO GRANT HIM MERCY.. NO ONE ELSE IN MARK'S GOSPEL HAS PERCEIVED THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH WITH SO LITTLE DATA TO GO ON.

HE CRIES OUT... JESUS, SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME... BUT OF COURSE, THE CROWDS WOULD PREFER TO KEEP BARTIMAEUS QUIET THEY DO NOT WISH TO SEE OR HEAR FROM THIS BEGGER AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD... LIKE THE SO MANY WHO ARE AT THE SIDE OF SO MANY OF OUR ROADS WITH THEIR CARDBOARD SIGNS.. WANTING TO BE SEEN WHILE WE AVERT OF OUR GAZES AS WE DRIVE ON BY.. NOT WANTING TO KNOW THEIR NAMES OR STORIES...

LIKE US, THE CROWD WOULD RATHER THAT THOSE ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD ADOPT A PASSIVE POSTURE... BUT INSTEAD BARTIMAEUS SHOUTS OUT .. SON OF DAVID .. HAVE MERCY ON ME... AND THE MORE THEY TRY TO SILENCE HIM THE MORE HE CRIES OUT

LIKE THE DISCIPLES WHO EARLIER TRIED TO KEEP THE CHILDREN AWAY FROM JESUS .. THE CROWDS ARE UNABLE TO PERCEIVE OR UNDERSTAND WHO JESUS IS AND WHAT HE IS ABOUT.. AND SO THEY STERNLY TELL BARTIMAEUS TO BE SILENT.

THE CROWD REPRIMANDS BARTIMAEUS AND IN SO DOING WOULD LIMIT JESUS IN DISPENSING HIS COMPASSION AND GRACE..... BUT BARTIMAEUS SEES BETTER THAN THEY, AND SO HE YELLS “EVEN MORE LOUDLY” UNTIL HIS WORDS COME TO JESUS’ EARS.

IT IS THEN...THAT JESUS SAYS TO THE CROWDS “CALL HIM HERE”.. AND IN SO DOING HE WOULD REORIENT THE CROWD’S VISION SO THEY MIGHT NOW SEE BARTIMAEUS.. AND WITH THAT THEY NOW ENCOURAGE BARTIMAEUS TO COME FORWARD.. *PERHAPS WE MIGHT EVEN DARE SAY JESUS HEALS THE CROWD – OPENING THEIR EYES TO BARTIMEAUS ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.*

AND THEN HARKENING BACK TO THE RICH MAN OF TWO WEEKS AGO .. WHO COULD NOT LET GO OF HIS POSSESSIONS IN ORDER TO FOLLOW... BARTIMEAUS IN CONTRAST...IMMEDIATELY THROWS OFF HIS CLOAK.. LIKELY HIS ONLY POSSESSION.. A POSSESSION THAT KEEPS HIM WARM AT NIGHT AND PERHAPS SIGNALS THE ONLY STATUS HE HAS ... ONLY NOW HE LEAVES IT BEHIND AND LEAPS FORWARD.. SEEMING TO EXPECT TRANSFORMATION AND MERCY FROM THIS JESUS.. THE SON OF DAVID..

HE COMES TO JESUS AND NOW JESUS ASKS HIM THE VERY SAME QUESTION THAT JESUS HAD ASKED JAMES AND JOHN JUST PRIOR TO OUR STORY.. *WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU...* .. AND INSTEAD OF PRIVILEGE AND RANK .. BARTIMAEUS SIMPLY SEEKS MERCY

REVEALING THAT WHEN IT COMES TO UNDERSTANDING JESUS AND WHAT HE HAS COME TO DO, THE DISCIPLES JAMES AND JOHN ARE MORE “BLIND” THAN BARTIMAEUS.

AND BARTIMAEUS .. ANSWERS... GOOD TEACHER LET ME SEE AGAIN... AND WITH THAT THE STORY IMMEDIATELY ENDS AS JESUS HEALS HIM AND BARTIMAEUS FOLLOWS JESUS... OR PERHAPS WE MIGHT EVEN SAY... HIS FOLLOWING ALREADY HAD BEGAN WHEN HE FIRST PERCEIVED AND CRIED OUT *JESUS – SON OF DAVID..* AND THAT NOW .. HE CONTINUES IN THIS FOLLOWING.

HE FOLLOWS... AS BARTIMAEUS.. RECOGNIZES THAT HIS HEALING IS NOT AS SOMETHING TO BE SELFISHLY ENJOYED BUT IS A CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP.. BEFORE JESUS ARRIVES HE IS ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD BUT NOW ... HE IS ON **“THE WAY”.. FOLLOWING**

BARTIMAEUS MOVES FROM THE INVISIBLE PERIPHERY OF SOCIETY TO THE WAY OF JESUS WHICH IS THE WAY OF FOLLOWING THAT HAS BEEN A CONSTANT THEME IN THIS MIDDLE SECTION OF MARK...

THE RICH MAN WANTED ETERNAL LIFE; JAMES AND JOHN WANTED GLORY...
BUT BARTIMAEUS ASKS FOR MERCY..

HIS CRY IS FOR HIMSELF BUT IT IS ALSO NOW FOR ALL THOSE WHO ARE LEFT ON
THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.. THE POWERLESS, THE UNSEEN, THOSE WITH NO WHERE
TO LAY THEIR HEADS...

BEFORE US IS THE WORD THAT COMES TO TURN AROUND OUR IMAGINATIONS,
OUR VISION AND OUR HEARING. REVEALING THE PATTERN AND SHAPE OF
WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW THIS JESUS... AND THAT TO SEE JESUS IS TO
FOLLOW

IN THIS MIDDLE SECTION OF MARK.. WE CALLED TO FAITHFULNESS WITH GOD
AND WITH EACH OTHER... WITH BELOVEDS, NEIGHBORS AND STRANGERS;
CALLED TO A PRODIGAL SHARING OF OUR POSSESSIONS; TO THE
REARRANGEMENT OF OUR POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL RELATIONS;
AND TO THE WILLINGNESS TO GIVE OUR WHOLE LIVES AWAY FOR THE SAKE OF
OTHERS.

WITH SUCH A WORD WE LIVE IN THE TENSION OF ITS WELCOMING EMBRACE OF
GRACE AND FORGIVENESS AND ITS CALL TO FOLLOW THAT SHATTERS THE
SHALLOW COMFORTS AND ILLUSIONS OF OUR CULTURE.

AND OF COURSE, WE MUST NOTICE WHAT COMES NEXT!! ... FOR IMMEDIATELY
AFTER HE ENCOUNTERS BARTIMEAUS JESUS ENDS UP ENTERING INTO
JERUSALEM WITH BARTIMAEUS FOLLOWING HIM.. .. IT IS AS IF.. BARTIMAEUS
NOW WILL PERCEIVE AND UNDERSTAND AND LIVE INTO THE CALL OF CHAPTER
8 TO TAKE UP ONE'S CROSS AND FOLLOW..

HE FOLLOWS JESUS INTO JERUSALEM WHERE PERHAPS HE WILL SEE OTHER
CLOAKS AND PALMS LAID DOWN BY CROWDS .. AND WHERE PERHAPS HE HEARS
THE ARGUMENTS WITH THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES AND EVEN THEN WILL
HEAR THE WORDS OF THIS JESUS WHO SEES THE WIDOW GIVING HER LAST AND
HER ALL AS AN OFFERING AT THE TEMPLE...

PERHAPS BARTIMAEUS WILL THEN UNDERSTAND THE BROKEN BREAD AND CUP
OF SUFFERING SHARED AT THE LAST SUPPER LEADING TO THE GARDEN AND
THE CROSS ... ALL SIGNS OF THE VERY GIVING OF THE LAST AND ALL OF JESUS..
THIS SON OF DAVID

AS HIS 3 PASSION PREDICTIONS TOLD US... IT HAD TO END THIS WAY... FOR JESUS CAME WITH A VISION THAT WOULD ALWAYS SEE THOSE ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.. HE CAME WITH A MESSAGE OF EMPTYING AND GIVING AWAY THAT OVERTURNS TOO MUCH OF OUR WORLD.. THIS JESUS NEEDED TO DIE... FOR SUCH VISION WAS TOO MUCH TO BEAR FOR PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS.. TOO MUCH FOR THE DISCIPLES.. AND PROBABLY TOO MUCH FOR YOU AND I

AND MAYBE EVEN AT THE END .. JESUS WAS TOO MUCH FOR BARTIMAEUS AS WELL...

EXCEPT THAT EVEN THEN LATER.. PERHAPS BARTIMAEUS ALSO HEARD THE WORDS.. HE IS RISEN.. *HE IS RISEN*.. FOR YOU AND FOR ALL... AN ECHO THEN OF THE WORDS OF TODAY'S PSALM.. *THOSE WHO SOWED WITH TEARS WILL REAP WITH SONGS OF JOY*.

THIS IS A WORD FOR US IN THESE AUTUMN DAYS OF LENGTHENING SHADOWS... THESE DAYS WHEN OUR OWN HOPES AND DREAMS ARE HAUNTED BY ANXIETY AND FEARS....AS THE VIRUS STILL STALKS OUR RELATIONSHIPS AND WORLD.. WITH DAYS AND NIGHTS WHERE SO MANY STILL ARE ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.. AND WHERE OUR TORN SOCIAL FABRIC SEEMS BEYOND REPAIR.. AND ALL THE WHILE ... THE GROANING OF CREATION WILL NOT BE SILENCED

IN THE MIDST OF THESE MANY THINGS... IN MARK, WE ENCOUNTER THE SAVIOR WHO GIVES UP ALL ... EVEN AS HE SAYS... ... I DO SEE YOU IN YOUR WEAL AND WOE... SO EMPTY YOURSELVES SO THAT YOU MIGHT RECEIVE...FOLLOW ME

TAKE HEART THEN FOR .. WE ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS JOURNEY. THE SPIRIT MAKES US ONE WITH BARTIMAEUS AND ALL WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US AND TODAY WITH **IRIS** AND **LINNEA** AND ALL THOSE WITH WHOM WE NOW GATHER.

HERE IS FONT AND TABLE, PULPIT AND THE GATHERED CONGREGATION. ALL SIGNAL GOD'S WELCOME AND THE CALL TO FOLLOW.

LET US now JOIN BARTIMAEUS.. IN THE WAY OF THE CRUCIFIED ONE.. ATTENDING TO ANY AND ALL IN NEED.. LIVING LIVES THAT SHOW IN EVERYTHING WE DO AND SAY THAT WE ARE DEPENDENT ON GOD FOR ALL WE HAVE

COME THEN TO THIS TABLE NOW WHERE LIFE IS GIVEN AWAY FOR YOU AND FOR ALL.. LET US GO FROM THIS PLACE AND GIVE IT AWAY TO ALL WE MEET ON THE ROAD AND ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD....FOR THERE IS AN ABUNDANCE FOR ALL..