

Pentecost 23B; Proper 25

October 28, 2018

Rev. Ken Wratten at St Luke's

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Hebrews 7:23-28 Christ lives forever to make intercession for those who approach God.

Mark 10:46-52 Jesus heals Bartimaeus, a blind beggar; 'My teacher, let me see again.'

When I was in my late twenties I attended a Cursillo weekend. It was an amazing weekend for me, because this was where, for the first time, I was invited into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ: something that I sadly never learned about in Sunday School. It opened my eyes to a new relationship with God that has changed my life.

A year later I was on a Cursillo weekend team, and I gave one of the talks on Christian living. After my talk, an older man (70?) came up to me and started to cry. It took him a while to settle himself enough to tell me that he didn't know how to thank me for what I had said. He had always attended church, but never understood what it meant to KNOW that Jesus is in his life. It was not just my talk, but it is the focus of those weekends to help people have new Spiritual Sight.

Earlier in Mark's Gospel we have read the story of the rich man who could not accept the invitation Jesus gave to follow him. He rejected having to give up his riches to follow Jesus. But in today's story, Bartimaeus immediately threw off his only possession - his cloak - to come to Jesus. That cloak was the only source of protection from the weather, something soft to sit on, and a useful way to collect the coins thrown his way. In his physical blindness, he would have a hard time finding that cloak again. But none of that mattered. He was being invited into Jesus' presence.

Jesus asked Bartimaeus the exact same question he had previously asked James and John (Mark 10:35), "What do you want me to do for you?" James and John wanted to be given first place among the other disciples. Bartimaeus only wanted to be able to see again. Even in his blindness, Bartimaeus had better sight than the members of Jesus' inner circle. He had the right priority, and bold commitment.

Bartimaeus was healed by Jesus, and followed Jesus "on the way". The theme of this section of Mark's Gospel is about Jesus giving all of us a new way of "seeing". And when we have received that Spiritual Sight, we take on 'the way' of Jesus to be our way. We become more sensitive to God's Spirit being with us and more aware of God being active in our day.

Our life is not just about marking time, keeping ourselves busy until we get to heaven. Christian life is about intentionally developing our spiritual sight, every day. The great example of that work is the story of the blind man Bartimaeus.

I see the blessings that comes out of our friendships with each other; friendships that is anchored in the faith in Jesus that we share with each other. I see the care

and compassion that we express by sending cards or flowers to people in our community who are ill. I see the generosity of time and talent that makes our preschool thrive; and the generosity that financed a pure water source for lots of residents of St Thomas in the Virgin Islands; and commitment to ensure that we have comfortable spaces in this building to worship, and to meet, and to do important community building work. (Food Bank Board meetings for the last two months.)

We have something special here; we have a shared relationship with each other and with our God that lets us practice boldness in our faith, and to be carried by each other when we get off track.

It takes Spiritual Sight to make the decision to take the time, spend the money, and build the plans to make these things happen. It is Spiritual Sight that makes what we are about here different from a public service club.

I celebrate the working of our faith community; a community that reminds each of us that we have been given authority to come and stand in front of God, to enter into His inner courts, the Holy of Holies. We are a community committed to keep sharpening our spiritual vision.

The theme for this year's pledge drive is "Transforming Generosity". It was Jesus' generosity that brought healing to Bartimaeus when others told the blind man to be quiet. And then it was Bartimaeus' turn to be generous; deciding to follow Jesus; to learn from Jesus; and to carry with him living proof of the transforming power of God.

Sharp Spiritual Vision transforms us, and our boldness of faith transforms others. Our pledges for 2019 allow this faith community to keep going as a strong model of witness to God's generosity, and giving thanks for the power of transformation.

Jesus has promised that he is here; and he deeply cares that we are here with him; and he is asking, "What do you want me to do for you?"

May every one of us seek in each day, and in each event of our day, to clearly see God, and to help others see God too. Amen.