

What Do You Want Me To Do For You?

Luke 18:35-43

July 25, 2010 - FBC, Midland

Vacation Bible School was quite a success this past week. We may not have had the highest attendance records of the century, but we had a wonderful time, learning new songs, and making crafts, and learning more about Jesus and our world. We had lots of helpers, and that made things go quite smoothly. I want to publicly say thank you to Aimee Seamster and Michelle Randall for their tireless efforts, and attention to details. And to Leona Seamster for coordinating the evening meals. There were lots of other helpers too, so I want to take a moment and just ask that everyone who had a part in VBS this year as a helper, teacher, cook, whatever, to please stand and be recognized. (applaud).

One of the things the VBS kids learned about each evening was a different biblical story. Last week, I chose to preach on the story of creation, which was their first day's lesson. And today, I want to lift up the story they learned about on Thursday, the story of Jesus healing a blind man, found in Luke 18:35-43. And

even though we just read the text a minute ago, I would like to read it again, as we have done with our adult study time each evening, to see what might surface in our imaginations for us to consider. How might God wish to speak to us in this passage? Perhaps if we read it a second time, we will hear something interesting; (read the passage).

One of the things about this passage that we don't see is the traditional manner of a Jewish rabbi, to teach as he walks along. We can safely infuse into this story the idea that Jesus is not just walking along in silence, but is in a "teaching mode", even as the crowds are walking with him. So there is a desire to hear what the master is saying, and people are trying to keep up with the pace, and listen as they go along. Any distractions are quickly silenced, so they can all hear the words of the rabbi, and even ask questions and dialogue with this Jesus of Nazareth, who has become so popular with the crowds.

Where is Jesus going? He is traveling to Jerusalem, for the celebration of the Passover. He is going through Jericho, one of the oldest cities of the world. There are many travelers, and there is a lot of excitement in the air. There are lots of common beggars along the roadside, for this is a good time to pick up some extra coins, with all the travelers. And so with the tramp of lots of feet going by, a

blind beggar hears the commotion, and asks what is going on. He is told that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

Well, this beggar is blind, but not deaf. He has heard lots of stories about this Jesus of Nazareth, and his power to heal. In his excitement, he begins to cry aloud, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!" Not just once, not just a half-hearted attempt, but a continuing cry, over and over, that other travelers found to be rather obnoxious. They wanted to hear Jesus' words. They didn't want to hear some blind beggar crying out. So they tried to silence him.

Some beggars you can just ignore, and they will quit bothering you. Others you have to address personally, and have a conversation with. This particular beggar was not going to miss his opportunity. The text tells us that he cried out all the more. The Greek words here are different. In the first crying out of the beggar, it is more of a loud cry for help. But in the second attempt, the word that is used is a much stronger word. It implies that he "clamored" for attention; that it was more of a "shriek" or a "scream" even. It is the same word that is used for the cry of a raven, or of inarticulate cries, from pain or fear. It is the same word that is used of the crowds when they shouted out for Christ to be crucified, and the same word to describe the cry of Christ Himself, upon the cross as He died.

This is a sound that cannot be ignored. All parents know when their children are just whining, and when they are really hurt. This is an example of a man who is not just going to let Jesus walk on by. He shrieks, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.”

We are next told that Jesus stops. The word that is used implies that He simply stood still. So the crowd follows His lead. All of a sudden, it’s like time stands still. And then Jesus commands that the man be brought to him. This next part is quite interesting (read v. 41).

It’s a curious question, isn’t it? This “what do you want me to do for you?” question, that Jesus asks the blind man. Upon first reading, most of us might be shaking our heads and saying, “well, isn’t it obvious? He’s blind. He wants to see”; yet Jesus doesn’t presume that the answer may be that simple. Let’s be honest here. There are some people who say they want to be healed, from whatever kind of infirmity they have, physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual, and yet, when an opportunity comes along, they shy away. Why is that? Sometimes, people can convince themselves that living with whatever ailments they may have, is better than the unknown. You see, if I’m healed and whole again, then that means that I have to get up and do something. I can’t use this infirmity as an excuse anymore. I

will be exposed, I will be held responsible. And I've kind of gotten used to being taken care of, and not having to do anything. Why, if I'm healed, then I might have to start thinking of helping others, and that's just too much work. Maybe I'll just stay the way I am. At least I know what to expect, and the unknown is just a little too scary for me.

However, we see no such hesitation in this man. Immediately he says, "Lord, I want to see!" The word he uses is *kurios*. It is the term for "Lord", which implies that this blind beggar is already aware that Jesus is more than just a passing teacher/rabbi. He is the Lord of the universe, and this man calls him that publicly. Jesus quite simply says, "Receive your sight. Your faith has made you whole."

Immediately, the text tells us, the man could see. And he followed him, and praised God, and the crowd saw it, and they praised God too.

There is something very moving and powerful about the healing stories of Jesus in the New Testament. This story is no different. It speaks to us on an emotional level, and gives us hope for our own infirmities, whatever they may be. This morning, instead of the traditional invitation, I would like to invite anyone who would like to, to come forward during the singing of our final hymn, and

simply kneel and pray here at the front of the sanctuary. You may pray for healing for yourself, in body, mind, or spirit, or you may pray for someone else that you are thinking of. We will take as much time as we need. Please feel free to come as we sing together.