

October 24, 2021

**“A New Pair of Glasses”  
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake**

**Mark 10:46-52**

*They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher,[a] let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.*

**Sermon “A New Pair of Glasses”**

Did you know that there are eight different stories in the Gospels of Jesus healing blindness. There are prophecies in the Hebrew texts, like in Isaiah predicting that the Messiah would be able to heal the blind, but no one in the Hebrew scriptures actually does it. There were certainly many miracle stories but it wasn't until we got to the Gospels that we started seeing this as a recurrent theme and Jesus is the only one who heals the blind.

So my point is that this healing of our blindness is a very important theme to our particular faith. As a metaphor Jesus heals our blindness and restores our sight. Often in these stories what comes next is that the person who is healed has a transformation, not just in their sight but in their life and they begin to follow Jesus.

Do any of you who wear glasses, remember getting your first pair? I do, it was about 1973. As an aside, when the optician asked me what frames I wanted, I kid you not, I told him I wanted a pair just like Billie Jean King! When the glasses arrived I put them on and I was gobsmacked at all the detail and color. I was delighted that I could see that the trees actually had leaves. That night I stood crying in complete awe of all the stars. It's not the same as a blind person receiving their sight back, but I felt like I was living in a whole new world!

I had that same feeling when I came back to church and actually heard for the first time that God loved me, little old broken me who had racked up so many mistakes. My healing began and I started to see the world in a whole new way.

That is what happens when we look through the eyes of Jesus, when our limited and often self-centered sight is enhanced and made sharp by seeing the world with his compassion and with his love. Our sight is restored and we see those in need of healing. We look through his eyes and we see what in ourselves needs healing as well.

Having our vision cleared, seeing the world through the eyes of Jesus is not easy. I mean, some people can just come to church for a moment of feeling good, enjoying the music, seeing friends. There's nothing wrong with splashing around in the shallow end with Jesus as your good buddy. But that isn't going to heal our spiritual vision, that isn't going to deepen our faith or our connection to God. I have come to know that most of you the safe, shallow end just gives you access to the deep end. Where you have the guts to see with the eyes of Jesus, see the world through the eyes of love. And you see the suffering, you see the hungry. Our hearts soften and sometimes break because we hear the voice in the crowd crying out for healing.

Following Jesus also makes us go deep in ourselves and see what we are blind to and throw it off like that cloak and declare "no more, I will not tolerate my own prejudice against a single one of God's children, I will not try to silence the voices who cry out for justice. I will not turn a blind eye toward the hungry, the homeless, the mentally ill. I will see clearly their suffering and the systems that perpetuate suffering for what they are. I will not tell anyone to be quiet, or that they aren't worthy. I will be an agent of love in the world no matter what I have been taught to believe in the past because God has touched my eyes. I was once blind but now I see. We have been given a new pair of glasses with which to see the world.

But don't forget the crowd tries to keep Bartimaeus from getting what he needs. In our communities and our nation who is getting held back from getting the healing that they need? Who have we ignored? Who have we told to be quiet? Now keep in mind Bartimaeus was not passive in this story, he called out to Jesus for help and when he was told to be quiet he cried out even louder. Much to the annoyance and discomfort of Jesus's followers.

I can't tell you how many times I have heard people say that they wish the people of color crying out for justice would just be quiet, so their cry for justice just gets louder and more insistent. I have lost count of the times I have heard "Gays are fine but they should just keep that to themselves" so the LGBTQ community marched and spoke out louder and began to hold hands in public.

I can't tell you how many times as a woman others have tried to silence me, talk over the top of me, or interrupt me to explain something to me with great condescension that I already knew. As you would guess, I just got louder.

I have heard people of faith and no faith cry out for services for those with mental illness, housing for the homeless, for people who are differently abled, who struggle with addiction and they are continually told to be quiet, and still they get louder. People crying out for justice, people demanding healing of our nation and systems are not going away or being silenced, we need to look to Jesus, who tells us to see them and ask "What do you need from me?"

In our society when people make us uncomfortable, challenge us, society's first response is always to want them to be quiet, to go away, not rock the boat.

I heard the other day that part of human nature is to hate change while at the same time complain about how things are. But not Jesus, Jesus hears the blind man, Jesus transforms his life with

healing and welcomes him into his life as a follower. Our first response to people pushing us to change doesn't have to be our last.

If we feel that feeling of discomfort, wishing they would just go away, be quiet, then we can put on our new glasses and try to see them through Jesus's eyes and then respond without judgment but in love asking them, "How can I help?"

They aren't rose colored glasses because we can see the suffering and injustice but we can also see the good in the world in greater detail as well. We can see with clarity where God is working, we can find the good in each other even when we are all so flawed and fearful. We can look past the hate, the nastiness, and defensiveness that others put out there and tell them that they too are worthy and ask them to speak from their heart, in their own words, and tell us how we can help.

When we look through the eyes of Jesus we can also look at the world with his vision of how the world should be. Where all of us have been heard, and healed, our sight restored, transformed, made free, welcomed, fed and loved. May it be so. AMEN

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