

Take Heart, Rise, He is Calling You

A reflection by Carrie I. Davidson

Sunday, October 29, 2006

Let us pray – Lord may your spirit fill us, our hearts be true and our minds open. AMEN

Today's gospel passage resonates within me.

By this time in Jesus' life, his healing miracles and teachings were well known. But in this passage the healing and teachings are done by the least among the crowd....a blind beggar named Bartimaeus.

We are told details generally left out of scripture ---

Bart's name (most healed individuals are not named); Bart's father's name; and the exact location (on the outskirts of Jericho – incidentally that is approximately 15 miles from Jerusalem).

Although Bart could not see Jesus with his eyes, he could see Jesus with his heart and soul for whom he truly was...the Messiah. I believe Bart could see Jesus better than the 12 disciples even before he was healed of his physical blindness.

Can you image the emotions Bart must have been feeling as Jesus drew near...his excitement growing, growing, growing until he couldn't contain it any longer and burst out shouting "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

This explosion of faith catapulted our friend Bart from beggar and social outcast to rebel and teacher. He was one of the first to call Jesus the Son of David – this was a radical statement. He also challenged Jesus when he cried out, "Have mercy on me."

Jesus knew Bart's heart was pure and that Bart was not testing Him like the Pharisees or Scribes had done in the past. I believe Bart's test was really for the disciples and the crowd...to follow Jesus; to see Jesus; to recognize Jesus was the Messiah.

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Perhaps the crowd thought Bart's yelling was rude or too demanding or that Bart was somehow unworthy of Jesus' attention. This may explain the "shhh-ing" Bart received by the crowd.

Bart had a true and faithful heart. He knew Jesus was the way and the Light. He knew Jesus could and would cure his physical blindness; however it was Bart; not Jesus that may have healed the other disciples' metaphoric blindness.

Aren't we all blind at one time or another? You know the clichés, can't see the forest for the trees...tunnel vision...blind spots...can we be healed? Can I be healed?

In order to be healed, I would think first we would need to be aware of our 'blindness'....let's start with a review of 3 of the main characters in the passage (the other and primary character being Jesus).

The first characters in the passage are the "shhh-ers" from the crowd – I think of "shhh-ers" as similar to the bulbs we will be planting today. A bit tough around the edges...hardened...perhaps a bit ugly...resistant to change....as yet their potential unrevealed.

At times I see myself as a "shhh-er"; strangling my fellow traveler; blind to their ministry; all too willing to plow under their inspiration; dismiss their passion; and reject their calling.

Do we have other "shhh-ers" at TCC? Are you a "shhh-er" Can our garden of thanksgiving transform me? You? Can our blinders be removed so that we may blossom in Christ's Light?

As with the bulbs, "shhh-ers" are more than they first appear. "Shhh-ers" are able to grow in faith, in love and in harmony with others.

Fellow "shhh-ers" --- Take heart, rise, He is calling you.

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The second character in today's passage is the messenger that Jesus sent to bring Bart to Him – I think of this messenger as an angel. Someone always by your side regardless of whether or not you see them or feel their presence...giving you constant reassurance and love.

Reminding you to “take heart”...relax, reminding you to listen, reminding you of your uniqueness; reminding you that you are blessed and a loved creation of God; reminding you that God is still speaking and he is speaking to YOU.

At times I see myself as a messenger. I truly believe that no matter who you are or where you are in your faith journey, you are welcome here. I share this welcome. I reach out. I listen. I love.

I know we have other messengers here at TCC. I have been comforted and reassured by you. I have seen you freely give your love to others. You are patient and kind. You spread the Good News.

You are TCC's gardeners of peace. You see our “shhh-ers” potential; you soften their hardened shells; you unearth their goodness; allowing their hearts to open.

You are blessed with the eyes, heart and soul of Bart --- seeing the truth and the Light. You cultivate communication, cooperation, and consensus among all of our church family.

Fellow messengers --- Take heart, rise, He is calling you.

The final character I would like to discuss from today's passage is our friend Bart. I think of Bart as enveloping the very best qualities in a disciple. Oh yes, a disciple --- he was no ordinary healed individual.

As we learned in the lesson, Jesus gave him an 'out', “GO, your faith has made you well.” “GO” But we learn that rather than saying “hey thanks Jesus...see you later”, our friend Bart followed Jesus on the way...traveling full circle – from beggar to disciple.

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This begs the question: “On the way to where?” For a passage that gave so many details...it almost feels that the author forgot to finish the sentence and left us dangling.

I needed to understand. Well, some of you already know the answer, but I have to admit I had to ‘google’ a few things to prepare for today’s reflection...one example is that exact question. Turns out “on the way” is code for on the way to the Cross and Jesus’ death and resurrection.

At times I see myself as Bartimaeus; willing to say what needs to be said without hesitation; steadfast to my convictions; unyielding to the “shhh-ers”; knowing my heart and ministry is true.

But more often than not, I resist my faith and sit miserable in my blindness. Can I be enlightened? Can I be saved?

It is a journey for me. I must say, I do stumble along on my way and I admit, I have even turned away from the Light on more than one occasion.

My journey has been a bumpy one...one of joy and sorrow; gain and loss; high and low. I have made mistakes, caused heart-ache, and betrayed God. I have also earned respect, loved unconditionally, and witnessed miracles.

The point is – I am not perfect. I need God’s love and nurturing, I need my family’s love and nurturing and I need your love and nurturing to grow into the person God knows me to be.

I was completely blind not too long ago. Many things may have caused my blindness; my hardening to God’s love. I cannot pin-point the exact times I turned away; however I imagine it was several things that lead up to my ultimate betrayal.

Maybe it was when I was a young child and my house caught fire on Easter morning when my family and I were at church. A fire that totaled our home,

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killed our beloved dog, Brindle and cat, Whisk and was the last time I remember when we all were in church together.

Maybe it was when I was 'out-ed' in high school – becoming an instant outcast; isolated; ridiculed; left feeling abandoned and alone; on the brink of complete and utter despair. Very quickly I learned who may true friends were...the one's willing to stand up and affirm me.

Both those examples happened many, many years ago. Looking back now, I can clearly see all the messengers God sent me...but at the time, I was completely blind.

However, if I am totally honest with myself, the most likely reason of my betrayal and blindness was 100% my own doing --- self-inflicted unworthiness.

There were times I tried to 'get back on the band wagon' but nothing truly resonated with me until we came to TCC. At TCC, I see other Bart's just like me...some still blind, others beginning to see the Light, and still others clearly seeing Jesus and following him on the way.

Fellow Bart's --- Take heart, rise, He is calling you.

Today's gospel passage gives me hope. Hope of revival; hope of growth; hope of renewal; hope of a hearty harvest; hope of positive change; hope of enlightenment.

Our garden will be glorious. May we be joyous. May we be lifted up. May we have an open heart to hear his call. May we reap what we sow. May our garden of thanksgiving be filled with love and joy, hope and promise, healing and peace.

Let us open our eyes, cast off our blinders and let the healing love of Jesus fill our hearts.

My Brothers & Sisters in Christ Take heart, rise, He is calling you.