

The Bartimeaus Effect

Travis Meier

Mark 10:46-52 (NRSV)

“They came to Jericho. As Jesus 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, 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.”

The story of Bartimaeus from the gospel of Mark is a common tale. In fact, I think we encounter this story all the time as we journey through this world. I think that you and I, above all else, are like Bartimaeus, sitting on the sidelines of truly living the lives we have been given.

I think that we live this story everyday. Know this. This story of Bartimaeus, this story of you and me, is a metaphor about how we encounter the world. The status quo, the powers, world in its fallen state, whatever you want to call it, has us believe that we can do nothing to change the way things are in the world. The world is what it is; hard, calculated, fixed. We are to play our part. Perhaps if we work hard enough we can make it through alright, remain in good standing.

If we play by its rules we are rewarded.

Wealth, statues, success.

These are the promises of the world.

But they are deceiving.

The truth is this. We are taught on the sidelines, watching the world go by, trapped by our own outstretched hands, waiting for crumbs to fall from the table. Sure, we get enough to get by on, but we are rarely fully alive. We rarely live into our true blessed, created-ness. Yes there are success stories, but they bound by the rules of the world. Break them and it’s back to the sidelines, waiting for scrapes from the table.

We live this story every day.

Until Jesus comes along. Jesus has a way of changing things. He has a way of turning our world upside down. Jesus came into this world and did not play by the world’s rules. He played by God’s rules. And with God’s rules in motion, everyone is a gift.

- Everyone is enough.
- Jesus came into this world and taught us how to truly live a life fully alive and empowered by God.
- Jesus taught us how to lift each other up and live in community.
- Jesus taught us how to share our bread.
- Jesus taught us how to forgive each other when we mess up.
- Jesus taught us what it means to live for one the other so that all may have abundant life.
- Jesus taught how to love.

Jesus taught us that God has one rule and that rule is well, not really a rule at all.

Because love is not a rule, it is a way of life. A way of life free from the game that the status quo tells us we need to play in order to matter. Life along the way with Jesus, life on the journey with Jesus, is about love. And love changes everything.

And the status quo, the powers, the world in its fallen state, became angry. This Jesus character was changing everything. Something had to be done. As so they did what they always do, the only thing that they know how to do. They dealt out death. They nailed God's fully alive, embodied promise of love to the cross.

The status quo, the powers, the world in its fallen state, thought it had Jesus on the ropes. Thought it had silenced the one who told the world what it was like to be fully alive. But they were wrong.

God always has the last word. And that last word is love.

So today, as we sit on the sidelines, not fully alive, the one who came into the world, to heal the world, is still walking by our outstretched hands. He comes, filled to overflowing with love, offering us healing and a new perspective on how to live fully alive in this world. He comes to us, regardless of who we are, and says that we are enough. He comes and loves us back to life. And this is an ongoing process.

I am sure that Bartimaeus stumbled along the way. Gaining a new perspective is like learning how to ride a bike. Sometimes you fall off. But when you are following Jesus, he never tells you to turn around because you are doing it the right way. He just loves you and tells you to keep going.

The Bartimaeus effect: gaining a new perspective through following Jesus Christ. Everyday we have the opportunity to get up and follow Jesus. We have the opportunity to be reoriented in the world and live a life grounded in love. And it's a daily calling.

So join me friends. Join me in following Jesus. This blog will contain my thoughts, sermons, and musings as I continue to follow Jesus as a pastor in Nashville, Tennessee. Who knows what we may encounter along the way.

The one thing I am sure of is that Jesus is the one out front, calling us to follow.