

Today I would like for you to close your eyes. Don't worry it won't be for long. How does it feel to sit in the dark? Imagine if you had to try to navigate back to your car with your eyes closed. Okay you can open them now. Imagine your life without sight; of course, there are many in our world who face this darkness every day. Some are born blind and others lose all or a portion of their sight due to illness or injury. What courageous people they are when they navigate busy streets or public places with the use of a cane or a guide dog as well as relying on their enhanced senses of hearing and smell and touch.

Now focus on the blind man in our gospel today. In his day and age, there was no Braille, no beeping crosswalks or specially trained animals. In his world there was darkness and loneliness and a sense of worthlessness. The only option for survival was begging: depending on the generosity of strangers who would pass them by. What better place to beg than the paths leading into or leading away from places of worship.

This is where we find ourselves today. In Mark's gospel Bartimaeus, a blind beggar is sitting along a well-traveled road outside of Jericho. This route was filled with pilgrims going to or coming from the Temple. This

blind man who was unable to see soon became invisible to the crowds that traveled on that dirty, dusty road; just another castaway of humanity that littered the ditch.

Bartimaeus may have been blind to the people who walked past him but he was not deaf to their conversations. He may have heard stories about this Jesus and how he healed people, cared for the forgotten, and gave sight back to the blind. A quiet unassuming beggar now yells at the top of his lungs as Jesus passes by, "Jesus Son of David have pity on me!" Even though the crowds tried to hush the beggar he would have none of that. He was interrupting the Master. He was desperate and even though he could not physically see Jesus; he was able to see with the eyes of faith. Jesus hushed the crowd and called Bartimaeus over to him. According to Mark's account the beggar jumped up and sprang in the direction of that lovely voice calling to him in the darkness. Now that is true faith, stepping forward with great trust to the one who is calling you.

Have you ever had an experience where you were called by God to come to him even though you could not readily see him. When Bartimaeus move to the voice of Jesus he regained his sight.

This blind beggar was given his eyesight because he had insight. Then he responded to his healing in an unusual way. He stayed close to the Master. If you had regained your sight in such a miraculous way wouldn't you want to run home and tell your family or head out to celebrate with friends? Instead of going away from Jesus Bartimaeus follows him "in the way" which is a phrase that Mark uses in his gospel to describe someone who follows Jesus on the path of discipleship. In what ways has God opened your eyes to the miracles that exist around you and did you have the insight to recognize them and believe.