

# Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

## Begging For Vision

Mark 10:46-52

## Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 25)

### Analysis by Michael Hoy

46They 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. 47When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." 50So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51Then 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." 52Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

*[NOTE: For those who choose to focus on John 8 for Reformation Sunday, see my analysis in the Sabbatheology for the [Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost and Reformation Day](http://www.crossings.org), Series C, at "www.crossings.org." The Mark 10:46-52 text is the alternate text for this Sunday. It parallels and serves as the concluding framework for the healing of the man who was "twice-blind" (Walt Wangerin's phrase) in Mark 8:22-26. The readings in between*

*recount Jesus' three passion predictions en route to Jerusalem. This is the last story before Jesus enters that final moment.]*

---

## **DIAGNOSIS: Lacking Vision**

### **Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – Blind, and Begging**

No sight, and begging. Each of these by itself is a sign of a handicap. Bartimaeus has both. He might be regarded as one of the “nobodies,” sitting as he is “by the roadside,” where so many pass him by-including, perhaps, life. We may have pity on him. But can we see ourselves in him? Or do we live by our illusions that we are somehow better off because we have sight and don't have to beg? Maybe our vision isn't half as good as we think it is, and need the benefits of begging more than we realize.

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – Quieted**

Add to that list, no voice. Bartimaeus will not be quieted as he cries for mercy, but many are. Bartimaeus is an exception in a world where many are cast off the beaten path-and told to be quiet. And many of them, in turn, actually come to accept being cast aside into a world of silence. Quieted, they sink into despair. Those who quiet them are only trying to deal with their own fear; but even their supposed advantage of vision and voice cannot save them.

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – Son of the Unclean**

Bartimaeus is the “son of Timaeus,” but that may also mean (etymologically and theologically) that he is the “son of the unclean.” Bartimaeus is not alone; in truth, we all share that ancestral tie. “We are all beggars,” Luther once said. Add to that list that we are blind (or blinded), economically challenged, powerless, silenced by our fears, short an

inheritance because of our unclean state and, eventually, quieted by death-and it would seem that we have been completely cast aside.

## **PROGNOSIS: Faith's Vision**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** – *The Son of David is Calling You*

Jesus, the Son of David, does not turn away from unclean children, but welcomes them-calling them into his presence. He not only gives them an audience, he gives them the wholeness that they need. When Jesus calls Bartimaeus into his company, his action flies in the face of the silencing of others-even the silencing of God. But that is all part and parcel of the new covenant that comes with the "Son of David," by whose lineage we all get to be included. In fact, his covenant is so inclusive that Jesus the Son of David will take on all the silencing powers that would deprive us of status before God. He does this to make all who have been cut off, or called "sons of the unclean," into sons and daughters of his kingdom.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution)** – *Loud Faith*

Bartimaeus knows a good thing when he hears One, or even hears of One. And what he hears from this promising Lord is that he is welcomed to come forward. He is encouraged to "take heart," and the loudness of his own faith is evident as he throws off his cloak, (probably where some alms were being kept), and springs up to be with Jesus. Note that he is not told that he will be healed-only that he is welcome in the presence of Jesus. For him, for us all, no treasure compares to finding hope in this Messiah. But placing his faith, his trust, in Jesus brings him not only wholeness but sight.

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** – *Seeing, and Following*

Bartimaeus gets more than he asked for. To be sure, he gets his

sight. But his real vision comes in “following Jesus on the way.” And the same is true for us who have been seen by and who see Jesus. We are no longer inhibited by our handicaps; we have the freedom to spring up and follow Christ on the way, to share the rewarding presence of the promising Son of David for the sake of all who have been sidelined.