

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Joshua's Redemption

Sermon Reflection Notes

The sermon "Upside Down – 'Joshua's Redemption' " is the third and final sermon in a series that calls our attention to the reality that God's Kingdom is unpredictable, subversive, upside down and inside out to what we might hope for or expect. This text is a part of a transition from Jesus' teaching about what it means to be a disciple to what it means to go to Jerusalem where a confrontation with religious authorities is about to happen. In this story, Jesus came into Jericho. We remember that Joshua (Joshua, Chapter 6) led the children of Israel into the promised land by way of Jericho; the priests marched around the city walls with shouts and blowing ram's horns, the walls fell, and the Israelites took the city and annihilated the Canaanites—none could remain. We don't tell the ending of that story often. Pastor Ron pointed out that the name Jesus, in Greek, is the same name as Joshua in Hebrew. But now, rather than conquering a native people with force and violence, Jesus came into Jericho with mercy, with love, and with eyes and a heart that can see the outsider. This new Joshua called forth beggars from the side of the road, and in his mercy the beggar became a disciple, a follower of Jesus.

It is interesting, this text with a 'beggar' as a central figure. We can relate. We see people regularly who are panhandling, unhoused, alone, outside the bounds of society. The beggar in the Gospel has a name, Bartimaeus, unlike in other stories we've heard in this series. There were unnamed children, an unnamed rich man. But this time, the person most would ignore, would refuse to see, is named. Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus. Someone's child. Someone's family. Bartimaeus would not be quieted by the crowd as he shouted for mercy. When Jesus heard Bartimaeus, he did not reprimand him or make him feel out of place. Simply, Jesus saw Bartimaeus and asked what he wanted Jesus to do. Jesus saw him, and he listened to him. He offered him mercy. And then Jesus healed Bartimaeus from blindness. He could see! He could see the face of Jesus. When Jesus told him to go on with his life, with his sight, Bartimaeus instead followed Jesus.

Jesus, with mercy, with love, with compassion for Bartimaeus' blind eyes – Jesus brought order out of the chaos of Bartimaeus' life. Bartimaeus was no longer an outsider.

This story, as well as the other stories of this series, invites us into a new order, a new kingdom. It is a kingdom where weapons of war, hate, divisiveness, lies, and fear do **not** bring peace and hope. After he healed Bartimaeus, Jesus told him he could go...go wherever his eyes wanted to take him. We have that option too. We can go wherever we want. God calls us to choose, like Bartimaeus, to see the face of Jesus, to drink in his mercy, and to follow him into the Upside-Down kingdom where we find life, in all its abundance, waiting for *all* of us.

Scripture

Mark 10: 35-45 (NRSVUE)

⁴⁶ 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. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ 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." ⁵⁰ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ 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." ⁵² Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the "through line" from the Old Testament text, Joshua 6, to the gospel story of Mark 10:46-52?
2. Bartimaeus called out to Jesus for mercy. What is mercy exactly?
3. Why did the people around Bartimaeus try to keep him quiet? What do we do to keep the outsider quiet?
4. Who is 'Bartimaeus,' sitting beside the road, calling out to us for mercy? Can you think of anything in the news this week where outsiders are expected and pushed to keep quiet?
5. Pastor Ron said near the beginning of the sermon that "almost every time [he] encounters someone begging or panhandling, [he] thinks to himself, 'Being a Christian is a pain in the rear end.'" Why is it so hard for us to open our eyes and see the needs of others, to open our ears and hear their cries?
6. At the end of the sermon, Pastor Ron pointed out to us that, like Bartimaeus, we can go wherever our eyes want to take us. But if we really see the face of Jesus, and choose to follow him, we may also see that our 'Jerichos' don't have to be conquered with violence and force. Where are places that would be transformed through mercy, transformed through seeing the world in the 'Upside Down' vision of God?

Closing Prayer

O Lord, open our eyes that we may see the needs of others; open our ears that we may hear their cries; open our hearts so that they need not be without relief; let us not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong, not afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich. Show us where love and hope and faith are needed and use us to bring

them to those places. And so, open our eyes and our ears that we may this coming day be able to do some work of peace for you. Amen.

*United Methodist Hymnal No. 456
Alan Paton author*

"Go where you want. But I'm following Jesus."