

Ann Murray
Proper 25
October 27, 2024
St. Michael's

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

When I was 15 I moved from Houston to Ponca City. It was a definite culture change. I met lots of new people. One person I met was Pam. Pam would call me on the telephone to invite me to go to the wrestling matches. You see I moved in January and that was the sport that was engaged in during the late winter months. The only wrestling I was familiar with was Professional Wrestling and I had no desire to go see that. So, every time Pam called and invited me, I declined. She kept calling and that Spring, Pam invited me to a birthday party for a mutual acquaintance and this time I answered her invitation with an overwhelming YES. Those few calls from a stranger made an incredible difference in my life. My answer to the final call led to us becoming pals, then friends, then best friends, for which I will always be grateful.

This morning in the Gospel reading we meet Jesus on the road. As he leaves Jericho, Jesus is surrounded by his disciples and a large crowd, he encounters Bartimaeus, a blind beggar who sits by the roadside. Bartimaeus represents many things. He is marginalized, unseen, and forgotten by society.

Yet, when he hears that Jesus is passing by, he does not let the opportunity slip away. With a bold and persistent voice, he cries out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" He was connecting Jesus with David and the hope that Jesus would return the Davidic dynasty. Bartimaeus did not have eyesight but had spiritual insight, recognizing Jesus as the Son of God. He had so much insight that he continues his call to Jesus even when told to be quiet by other bystanders.

And here's the turning point in the story: Jesus hears him. Jesus stops in the middle of the crowd and says, "Call him here." Notice that Jesus does not simply walk over to Bartimaeus. He involves the crowd in bringing Bartimaeus to him. It's a small but significant detail that reminds us of our role in bringing people to Jesus.

In that moment, Bartimaeus' life changes. The same crowd that once tried to silence him now delivers a new message: "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." Can you imagine how Bartimaeus felt? This man who had been begging by the roadside, marginalized and ignored, now hears that Jesus himself is calling him.

Think about that. Jesus stops his travels and responds to him—this shows the personal nature of God's call—to Bartimaeus and

to us. Jesus listens to the cries of the marginalized and suffering. The command made by Jesus to “call him” shows that Jesus is inviting Bartimaeus into a moment of transformation. Bartimaeus throws off his cloak, jumps up, and goes to Jesus. The cloak was likely all Bartimaeus had, yet he leaves it behind to go to Jesus. In faith, he casts aside his old life, his old identity, and his old ways, trusting that an encounter with Jesus will change everything.

This is the heart of the story: Jesus calls us, just as he called Bartimaeus. No matter where we are, no matter what our condition or circumstances, Jesus hears our cries and calls us to himself. In this story, we see that God's call is personal, intimate, and full of grace. Bartimaeus may have been a blind beggar, but in Jesus' eyes, he was seen, known, and loved.

And then comes the question: “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus, the Son of God, asks this simple but profound question. The same one he asked to James and John in last week's Gospel. Jesus doesn't assume Bartimaeus' needs. He invites him into a relationship where Bartimaeus can articulate his desire. And Bartimaeus responds, “My teacher, let me see again.”

This request goes beyond physical sight. Bartimaeus wants to see Jesus, to see the world as Jesus sees it, to be restored in

body and spirit. And Jesus, moved by Bartimaeus' faith, responds: "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately, Bartimaeus regains his sight **and follows Jesus on the way.**

In this story, we see that Jesus is the compassionate healer who meets us in our deepest places of need. Bartimaeus was not defined by his blindness, and neither are we defined by our sins, our wounds, or our limitations. Jesus invites us to throw off our old identities, to cry out for mercy, and to trust that he hears us, intercedes for us, and heals us.

What is striking about both the Hebrews passage and the story of Bartimaeus is the centrality of faith. In Hebrews, we see that Jesus' eternal priesthood allows him to "save those who approach God through him." In the Gospel, it is Bartimaeus' faith that opens the door to his healing. Faith, then, is not just a belief in God—it is an active reaching out, a trust that God is near and hears our cries.

And, as we reach out, God is calling for us. God desires us and wants us to be with God. Where and when have you heard God's call? Was it that still small voice in the wee hours of the morning that was asking you to do something you thought impossible? Was it that priest or deacon who suggested you take up some

activity, enter into a certain Bible study, or become involved in some outreach program? God's voice is everywhere and can come from anyone.

There was a tv show on many years ago entitled "Joan of Arcadia". Joan was a normal teenager who kept having encounters with God but she never knew who God might be speaking through. It could be the old janitor at school or the quirky ex-nun she had just met. It definitely kept her on her toes because any conversation she was having could have been with God. I think that is something we need to remember. God could be calling us through many different people to do so many awesome and incredible things in this world. We already know that God has called us to love God, love our neighbors, and change the world. God may now be getting down to specifics with us—letting us know the things we should be doing to ensure that God's kingdom does come—on earth as it is in heaven.

So, what does this story of Bartimaeus teach us about God's call? First, it reminds us that God's call is always present, even when we feel blind or lost. Like Bartimaeus, we are invited to cry out to God, to reach out in faith, trusting that Jesus hears us. Second, the story shows us that when Jesus calls, he calls us to new life.

Jesus doesn't leave us on the roadside; he invites us to follow him, to leave behind whatever has held us back, and to step into the fullness of life that God offers.

Finally, Bartimaeus teaches us the importance of persistence. We may face obstacles, whether external or internal, but God calls us to keep seeking, to keep crying out for mercy, trusting that Jesus will stop and say, "Call them here."

So today, as we gather in this sacred space, what is it that we need to cry out for? What healing do we seek? Perhaps it's not physical sight, but the ability to see ourselves or others in a new light. Perhaps it's the courage to cast off old habits, fears, or sins that have weighed us down. Perhaps it's the boldness to approach Jesus with the simple yet powerful words, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Whatever it is, know this: Jesus, our eternal High Priest and compassionate healer, stands ready to intercede for us, to heal us, and to walk with us on the way. Like Bartimaeus, we are invited to come before him in faith, to name our needs, and to trust that in him, we will find mercy, healing, and the strength to follow.

Ann Murray
Proper 25
October 27, 2024
St. Michael's

Jesus calls to us like my friend Pam called to me, He is always inviting us to something—probably not wrestling matches but you never know. May we keep our ears and minds open to hear God's call to us. May we, like Bartimaeus, see with new eyes and follow Jesus' call. For after all, Jesus is our High Priest who loves us, calls us, and saves us for all time. Amen.