

***Christ To The World -  
Hope Giver***

**Mark 10:46-52**

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*As Jesus is to the Church, so the Church is to be to the world.*

This one sentence summarizes everything that we as a church are about.

It is the core of our existence.

Miss this - and we miss the whole deal.

Nail it - and nothing else matters.

*As Jesus is to the Church, so the Church is to be to the world.*

We're trying to keep this sentence in our mind as we work our way through a summer study in the Gospel of Mark.

Let's summarize where we've been so far.

We began four weeks ago witnessing the baptism of Jesus in Mark 1. After the warmth and affirmation of that event we saw him **immediately** driven into the wilderness.

Because the life and ministry of Jesus was not about celebration and warm fuzzies and good times.

He came to earth to engage life with all its struggles and pains and inadequacies and evils and wrong --- all the stuff that wilderness has come to symbolize in Scripture. He came to engage them, not to run away from them.

And that is our call, too.

In the second week we watched Jesus teach with authority, and take authority over a demon. We learned that authority is found, and our confidence as a Church to get out there and serve, comes through our surrender to Jesus Christ.

In the third week we travelled to Mark 3. And we watched Jesus broaden the boundaries of family. That was a tough sell to a Jewish audience that placed high value on the biological family unit. And it remains a tough sell today where sometimes we overestimate, perhaps even idolize the biological family unit.

As we go into the world, we remember that there is a spiritual tie that is closer than any blood tie. It's a tie that binds us to people we might never otherwise imagine ourselves being connected to. And we reach out to them. We call them "brother" and "sister." We value them. We make space for them in our lives.

And it is together with them that we head into the world to serve as the Body of Christ; being to the world what Jesus is to the Church.

Then, just before I abandoned you for vacation we meditated on Mark 8, the very centre of the Gospel and a question that is right at the heart of the Christian faith.

We were reminded that Christian living is completely backwards of values that are so often raised up as crucial in our culture. And we heard the three part call of Jesus to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him; to:

- put our own gain, and comfort, and well-being on the back burner
- publicly and clearly identify with Jesus
- put our words into concrete action

living out that phrase -

*As Jesus is to the Church,  
so the Church is to be to the world.*

On to today's reading -

**MARK 10:46-52, p.47 (NT)**

*As Jesus is to the Church, so the Church is to be to the world.*

What's going on?

On the face of it, we're encountering a scene that would have happened over and over again.

The crowds milling.

A beggar calling.

Some wishing he would go away.

He hoping for a few coins to be tossed his way.

Beneath it there's more.

The heat is getting turned up in Mark's account of Jesus' life.

Bartimaeus calls in a loud voice, "Jesus, Son of David."

That was another term Jews used to refer to the Messiah.

Happens to be the only time in Mark that this term is used.

It acknowledges that the Messiah, the Saviour, was commonly understood to be someone whom the prophets said would come from the lineage of King David.

David - leader in the glory days of Israel. When all was well. The nation was safe. Justice reigned. God's blessing was experienced. Hopeful days.

Jesus is the one who would restore that hope.

Sometimes, most of the time in Mark actually, when someone - a person, even a demon - assigns that title to Jesus, he silences them.

But not this time.

This time he openly accepts it.

The heat is turning up.

It's becoming time for Jesus to now publicly declare his anointed role.

He's had it out just earlier with James and John about his royal rule.

And soon, in fact in the very next verses, he will enter Jerusalem in a royal parade.

Yes, Jesus **IS** the giver of hope in the royal tradition of David.

He **IS** David's son.

He **DOES** come with, and **DOES** bring, the blessing of God.

From the margins that title is announced.

And accepted.

Which is, more often than not, the way it works in the Kingdom of God.

Wasn't it, for example, shepherds, that received the announcement of the saviour's birth?

God's kingdom isn't always announced, or seen, in the places or people of power.

Look in the alleys.

Look in the shadows.

Look among the poor.

Sometimes, stripped of what we often see to be the blessings and bounty, they can things a little more clearly for what they are.

The poor beggar makes a prophetic call.

How much he understands is, of course, open to debate.

But that's often how it goes with the words of a prophet. Not even Isaiah or Jeremiah would have understood the full implications of their words.

He calls.

And the crowd that mills around Jesus tries to shut him up.

Oops!

Some things never change, do they?

Don't hear this as a "dis" on the church.

It's not meant to be.

But more of a cautionary note. A self-check, so to speak.

Sometimes it can be the people closest to Jesus that turn out to be the biggest obstacle to a person encountering Jesus. And there can be a whole host of reasons.

Dale Brunner (*Matthew v.2*) speculates on a few:

Sometimes it could be culture - we're not used to having beggars around, without a shower, dirty clothes,

rough manners. Ignore them. If they move in the neighborhood, we move out. Stay away.

Sometimes it is orthodoxy - here's someone shouting something they don't fully understand. They haven't nuanced it quite right. Not the words we like to use. Not the place to say them. Not the tone of voice to use. Not the right decorum. We don't do that here. Keep it out.

Sometimes it is because of misplaced discipleship - Jesus is great. He's important. He doesn't have time for that sort of thing. Or those kind of people. Or this sort of activity. It doesn't belong in the prayers of the church. It's not the right kind of activity for the church to be involved in.

Sometimes it is plain ol' pride - we're enjoying our place near Jesus and don't want someone else to get between us. We don't want anyone, or anything, to interrupt the fellowship and the worship that we're enjoying. It's so good the way it is. Don't want to change it.

Yes, it can be any of these.

And a whole bunch more.

Motivations sometimes on the surface - and sometimes hidden below.

They get in the way of the Church being to the world what Jesus is to the Church.

Thankfully, Jesus is bigger, and his work reaches further, than the people around him.

Always has been the case.

Always will be.

Which is grace, too.

Imagine if it all rested on our shoulders - if our faithfulness, or lack thereof, determined the full and complete boundaries and scope and impact of the gospel of the Kingdom?

Thank God that it is not so!

That, if nothing else, frees us up from guilt or the paralysis of fear, and allows to move forward in kingdom service with a humble measure of confidence.

No matter what - he gets the last word, and sees more clearly, and hears more sensitively, than all of us.

Thank God!

So, here, too.

Jesus stops, his ear tuned in to this voice of one in need, and responds.

He calls those in the crowd to bring the man to him.

Ah, there's grace again.

Jesus could have pushed his way through that crowd which was serving as a barrier, just pushed them to the side and gone over to Bartimaeus.

But he doesn't.

He calls those around him into active service.

They perhaps don't get it.

But Jesus engages them anyway.

And they meet - Bartimaeus and Jesus.

What did the beggar expect?

Money, probably.

It's what he was used to.

It's what everyone gave. A coin here, or there.

A hand down, a hand out.

A bit of leftover.

And - if the son of David was coming, doesn't that mean he's royalty?

And if he's royalty, he's rich.... right?

Can spare some change, right?

No harm in asking.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.... right?

Jesus? He avoids the easy road.  
He could have sent a disciple over with a coin or two.  
He could have stopped the crowd and taken an impromptu collection for the guy.  
He could have encouraged others to fork over a handout.  
But he didn't.

Handouts are quick. A bit of aid is simple. And doesn't demand much. You do it, and carry on with your life.  
As you were. By the next paycheque, it's all forgotten.  
Something we need to remember in our various ministries, too.

Instead Jesus asks the question - "What do you want me to do for you?"  
He enters the life of that man.  
He invites response beyond the trite answer, beyond the expected.

I wonder how long Bartemaues mulled over what to say.  
Did the question take him by surprise?  
I suspect it did.  
Because, everyone knew the drill.  
Just like you and I do when we encounter a street person on Rideau St.  
And we either reach for our wallet, or shrink back.

So – the question..... "Hey, Bartemaues, what do you *really* want?"

Stopping to ask that is part of real mercy.  
We could presume to know what people want.  
How much better to draw them into a conversation about what the need is, the real need.  
They are not just a "case" to be filed, handled, and closed. They are people to be brought into relationship.

And, beyond a handout, how much better to equip someone with what is needed to be truly restored, to be able to live as the person that God intended them to be.  
Beyond perpetuating and propping up the misery for a little longer, INSTEAD offering a way out, a new way, a wholesome way.  
Like Jesus did by restoring the man's sight.

Not sure if you're aware of this, but Matthew records this same incident.  
It adds something important.  
Jesus was "moved with compassion."  
His heart goes out to Bartimaues.  
And he touches him.  
Beyond the act - There is a physical connection with them.

All sorts of modelling provided here for ministry, isn't there?  
Guiding us so that we can follow in the footsteps of the Saviour,  
being the Body of Christ to the world.

Living out the theme:  
*As Jesus is to the Church, so the Church is to be to the world.*

And notice the lovely fall-out.  
The healed man follows Jesus.  
As do we.

Together we follow Jesus - we and Bartimaeus.  
Partners in his service.

And who knows?

Perhaps, through our service on Christ's behalf, others will also come to follow Him.

Also becoming partners.

What a wonderful thing that would be!