

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
October 17, 2021
Scripture: Mark 10: 46-52

Sermon: Throw Your Cloak Aside

“At 7:51 a.m., January 12, 2007, a young musician took his position against a wall in a Washington, D.C., metro station. He wore jeans, a long-sleeved T-shirt, and a Washington Nationals baseball cap. He opened a violin case, removed his instrument, threw a few dollars and pocket change into the case as seed money, and began to play.

He played for the next forty-three minutes. He performed six classical pieces. During that time, more than a thousand people passed by. They tossed in money to the total of \$32.17. Of the thousand people, seven—only seven—paused longer than sixty seconds. And of the seven, one—only one—recognized the violinist, Joshua Bell.

Three days prior to this metro appearance staged by the Washington Post, Bell filled Boston’s Symphony Hall, where just fairly good tickets went for \$100 a seat. Two weeks after the experiment, he played for a standing room only audience in Bethesda, Maryland. Joshua Bell’s talents can command \$1000 a minute. That day in the subway station, he barely earned enough to buy a cheap pair of shoes.

You can’t fault the instrument. He played a 1713 Stradivarius built in the golden period of Stradivari’s career. It’s worth \$3.5 million. You can’t fault the music. Bell successfully played a piece from Johann Sebastian Bach that Bell called ‘one of the greatest achievements of any man in history.’

But scarcely anyone noticed. A thousand people walked by. One woman alone recognized him and stopped to listen. She gave him a \$20.00 tip. No one expected majesty in such a contest. Shoeshine-stand to one side, kiosk to the other. People buying magazines, newspapers, chocolate bars, and lotto tickets. And who had time? This was a workday. This was the Washington workforce, government workers mainly, on their way to budget meetings and management

sessions. They were in a hurry, hurrying past Joshua Bell because they had other things to do. Who had time to notice beauty in the midst of busyness? Most did not.” (Max Lucado p. 120-121 *Begin Again*)

It was like Joshua Bell was invisible that day. Not many people took time to listen and appreciate the beautiful music or notice who was playing in the metro that morning.

How many times do we do that as well? How many times do we drive past or walk past someone and don't even notice them and what they are doing or notice their need? Many times, children will notice things and pull on our sleeve to look at something or someone.

This morning we are going to stop, look, listen and notice a man named Bartimaeus, who is sitting along the street in Jericho, begging.

Here we have a man who has been born blind and a prisoner of total darkness. He has been sitting along the road for years asking for money to survive. Many days people just walk by him and don't notice him or his need. He had nothing to live for except the pity of people from whom he begged. We take for granted our sight each day, but he was living each day for a miracle, yearning for sight so he would not have to sit begging every day.

While he was sitting on the side of the road, he would often hear people pass by talking about a man called Jesus. The man who could raise the dead, make the lame walk and make the blind see. How Bartimaeus prayed he could meet Jesus and receive his sight.

One day, while he was sitting on the side of the road, he heard the excitement in people's voices around him. Jesus was coming his way. Can you imagine how anxious and excited he must have been? The Healer everyone talked about was passing by, yet how was he to get to him? Everyone was running to meet Jesus. As Jesus was getting closer to where he was, Bartimaeus started shouting to attract Jesus' attention. Fear must have gripped his heart that he would not meet Jesus that day. Another day that he would be invisible and go unnoticed. Bartimaeus decided to shout out to Jesus even louder because the people around him told him to stop yelling so loud and be silent. The disciples and the crowd wanted him to stay invisible. He

simply had to attract Jesus' attention, ***"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"***

Bartimaeus was willing to face ridicule from those around him because this may be his only chance. He was desperate. Jesus, he knew, was the only answer. He called out even louder. Today, was the day he would be noticed by the Savior as he passed by. He cried out, ***"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"***

Suddenly, Jesus stopped and said, ***"Call him to come."*** So they called to the blind man, ***"Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you."*** Bartimaeus had been noticed by Jesus. He was not invisible today.

Bartimaeus recognizes Jesus as the Son of David, and he knows that Jesus has the authority and power to heal. Jesus stops walking. He stands still. He looks beyond the crowd pressing around him and makes room for one more.

When Jesus says to the disciples, ***"Call him over here,"*** he is reminding them that following him means inviting others to follow. It means welcoming others into the group. It means making room for someone who was an outsider and inviting that person to become an insider.

Can you imagine how excited Bartimaeus was to hear that Jesus noticed him and was calling to him to come to him. This was the day. Bartimaeus knew this was the day his life would change forever when he met Jesus.

A man once asked a lifeguard, "How can you tell when someone is really in need of help, when there are thousands of people on the beach and in the water making a tremendous amount of noise?"

The lifeguard answered, "No matter how great the noise and confusion, there has never been a single time when I could not distinguish the cry of distress above the others. I can always tell it."

That's exactly like God. In the midst of the noise and confusion of life, He never fails to hear the cries of desperation. Jesus heard the desperation in Bartimaeus' voice!

Lives are changed when they meet Jesus, not just then but today as well. Lives all over the world have been changed when they meet Jesus their Savior and are made new creations.

Verse 50 says, ***“Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.”***

The act of throwing his cloak aside demonstrated that he was leaving his old life. The cloak defined who Bartimaeus was; that he was poor and blind. It was probably the only possession he owned. He probably had the cloak positioned so he was sitting on part of it and had it draped over his knees to catch the coins thrown his way as he sat and begged each day. Throwing off that cloak showed he believed he wasn't going to need it anymore. Bartimaeus expected a transformation. He obviously expected a change in his status, his health problems and his economic problems. He had faith. ***“Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.”*** (verse 50)

Bartimaeus was obviously very excited to go to Jesus. He threw off his cloak and jumped to his feet. Picture that scene and his excitement. It is like seeing a little boy excited about going to the zoo. Would you be like that if you had a chance to meet Jesus and ask for a new beginning? Have you done that?

We all have to throw off our cloaks, our dependencies, our worries, our burdens, that bind us to our circumstances. The cloak of Bartimaeus can also speak to us about our lives. We need to throw our cloak aside and come to Jesus asking to be made new, having new life in Jesus and healed from our spiritual blindness, healed from our lack of forgiveness, healed from our anger and bitterness, healed from our lack of trust in others. Throwing off the cares of the world that weigh us down and starting again.

When Jesus asks Bartimaeus, **“What do you want me to do for you?”** his reply is a simple request voiced with the confidence that Jesus can deliver. ***“That I would see,”*** states Bartimaeus.

This reminds us that Jesus has not come to give power but to open the eyes of the blind, not just physically but spiritually, The disciples were more “blind” than Bartimaeus was and sometimes so are we. Aren't we?

Jesus said, ***“Go, your faith has healed you.”*** Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road. He did not go his own way, he followed Jesus who is the Way, and the Truth and the Life.

Jesus tells Bartimaeus that his faith has saved him. Bartimaeus, who sat by the road everyday, became a follower of Jesus on the road to Jerusalem as Jesus makes his way to the cross.

Bartimaeus, who was no longer invisible to society, was now a member of Christ’s Kingdom and the family of God.

We are all blind spiritually and beggars without the healing touch of Jesus.

Do you hear the footsteps of Jesus? He is passing by this morning. He’s here!

Jesus is the answer to our problems.

Jesus is asking us, ***“What do you want Me to do for You?”***

Jesus is not too busy to stop and talk with you. Jesus always has time for you and your needs.

Today, ***throw your cloak aside*** and have faith like Bartimaeus to ask for what is upon your heart.

Throw your cloak aside and you will be changed as you follow Jesus.

Your eyes will be opened, and joy will fill your heart and you will see the glory of his salvation.

God’s grace and forgiveness is available for everyone who wants and needs a new beginning.

Throw your cloak aside.