

2024 10 27 – Healing Power of Sacred Love

Scripture: Mark 10:46-52 (*The Inclusive Bible*)

Jesus and his disciples are on their final journey to Jerusalem. Today's passage begins with the news that they have reached Jericho and are therefore about 30 kilometres from their destination. That doesn't sound like a long distance; according to Google Maps today you can take Route 1 and drive there in under an hour. But Jesus and his followers are travelling by foot and that last bit of their journey will be mostly uphill, in fact the rise in elevation will be close to 4000 feet. So they have probably stayed in Jericho overnight and now, at the beginning of a new day, are leaving the city with a large crowd following them.

A blind beggar named Bartimaeus ben-Timaeus (or Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus) was sitting by the side of the road in his usual spot. Hearing the sounds of the crowd going by Bartimaeus asked, "What's going on?" One of the people in the crowd stopped long enough to answer his question saying, "It is Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth; he and his followers are travelling to Jerusalem for Passover."

Bartimaeus had heard of this Jesus of Nazareth. He had heard about Jesus' teaching, his storytelling and his amazing ability to heal. He had also heard the rumours about Jesus' true identity, that Jesus was the Messiah, the heir of King David, the one that God had sent to save the Jewish people from their Roman oppressors. Bartimaeus believed that if anyone could heal him, Jesus, the Messiah, could.

So he decided to take a chance. Bartimaeus decided to call out to Jesus in an attempt to get his attention. He shouted over and over, "Heir of David, have pity on me!" When the people in the crowd told him to be quiet he just shouted even louder. "Heir of David, have pity on me!"

Eventually Jesus heard his cry and he stopped. He turned to his disciples and said, "Call him here." The disciples did as they were asked and told Bartimaeus, "Don't be afraid. Get up because Jesus is calling". Bartimaeus did not hesitate. In fact, he threw off his cloak and he jumped up and went to Jesus.

When he arrived, Jesus didn't assume anything, he asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man replied, Teacher (or in Aramaic, Rabbuni), I want to see." Jesus replied, "Go, your faith has saved you."

"Go, your faith has saved you." This particular line has been translated in many different ways. Some biblical translators have chosen, "your faith has made you well," (NRSV) others have said, "your faith has healed you" (NIV) and still others state, "thy faith has made thee whole" (KJV). The amazing thing is that all these translations are correct. The Greek word, *sozo*, that they are translating does mean saved, but it also means healed, and made well. There is another word in Greek that the authors could have used if they were implying a physical cure alone, but they chose this word instead. The meaning of healing in this story is much more than just the return of physical sight.

The healing that Bartimaeus experienced was also emotional and spiritual. In fact, when Jesus said, "Go, your faith has saved you." Bartimaeus didn't head

back to town to celebrate his newly received gift of sight. Instead, he chose to follow the path that Jesus was on. He chose the climb to Jerusalem, the challenging road of truth and justice, of peace and love. Bartimaeus became a disciple of Jesus. .

Healing does come in many different forms. In today's bulletin, I included a quote from Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen in which she said,

Healing may not be so much about getting better,
as about letting go of everything that isn't you—
all of the expectations, all of the beliefs—
and becoming who you are.

I was intrigued by this quote and decided to do a little research to find out more about the person who wrote those words. Dr. Remen is a physician, a teacher and an author. She was one of the first physicians to explore the role that the heart and soul play in healing. One of her medical students was a man named Vivek Murthy and he has become the Surgeon General of the United States. In his role as Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy has created a series of You Tube videos in which he invites experts to come and have conversations about healing that go beyond the physical. Topics such as, How Do We Navigate the Joy and Sorrow of Being Human,, Finding Strength Through Kindness, Can We All Be Healers, and You're Not Alone in Feeling Lonely.” I was intrigued enough to listen to the hour that he spent with his mentor, Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen.

Dr. Remen has spent her life working with people who are physically sick, many of whom have cancer and she has seen and experienced the many forms of

healing that have taken place in their lives. Even those who eventually die from the disease will often first experience spiritual and emotional healing within themselves and in their relationships with others. As an illustration, I am going to use a story that Dr. Remen told in one of her books. She wrote:

MY PATIENT, a physician who has cancer, comes to his session enormously pleased with himself. Knowing my love of stories, he says that he has found a perfect story and tells me the following parable:

Shiva and Shakti, the Divine Couple in Hinduism, are in their heavenly abode watching over the earth. They are touched by the challenges of human life, the complexity of human reactions, and the ever-present place of suffering in the human experience. As they watch, Shakti spies a miserably poor man walking down a road. His clothes are shabby and his sandals are tied together with rope. Her heart is wrung with compassion.

Touched by his goodness and his struggle, Shakti turns to her divine husband and begs him to give this man some gold. Shiva looks at the man for a long moment. "My Dearest Wife," he says, "I cannot do that." Shakti is astounded. "Why, what do you mean, Husband? You are Lord of the Universe. Why can't you do this simple thing?" "I cannot give this to him because he is not yet ready to receive it," Shiva replies.

Shakti becomes angry. "Do you mean to say that you cannot drop a bag of gold in his path?" "Surely I can," Shiva replies, "but that is quite another thing." "Please, Husband," says Shakti. And so Shiva drops a bag of gold in the man's path.

The man meanwhile walks along thinking to himself, “I wonder if I will find dinner tonight—or shall I go hungry again?” Turning a bend in the road, he sees something on the path in his way. “Aha,” he says. “Look there, a large rock. How fortunate that I have seen it. I might have torn these poor sandals of mine even further.” And carefully stepping over the bag of gold, he goes on his way.

It seems that Life drops many bags of gold in our path. Rarely do they look like what they are. I ask my patient if Life has ever dropped him a bag of gold that he has recognized and used to enrich his life. He smiles at me. “Cancer,” he says simply. “I thought you’d guess.”

From Remen, Rachel Naomi. *Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories that Heal*, 10th Anniversary Edition (pp. 88-89). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

May we, like Bartimaeus and like Dr, Remen’s cancer patient, recognize when the opportunities for healing appear in our lives and accept the bag of gold, the care of neighbour, the grace of God that are there for the asking. May we be able to name that which is holding us back, see the possibility of healing and have the courage to reach out for help. May we find the healing that we need, and may we be a healer for others.

May it be so. Amen.