

Gospel lesson

Yet again, we pick up right from where we left off reading in the Gospel of Mark last week:



picture (reversed) from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-blindman-jericho/>; credit: LUMO

Mark 10:46-52

(NRSV)

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.

The word of God for the people of God

<Children's / Interactive Time>

I need a volunteer willing to be blindfolded?

<Let them respond; apply blindfold>



pictures from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/a-woman-holding-a-baseball-bat-8910463/>; credit: ANTONI SHKRABA production (left) and <https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-blindfolded-8730085/>; credit: lil artsy (right)

OK, you stay put. I need another volunteer, please raise your hand instead of calling out?

<Let them respond; go to person quietly and apply blindfold, then return to 1st volunteer>

OK [second volunteer], please stand up and follow [first volunteer]'s instructions. [First volunteer], can you please direct them to [a wall decoration]?

<Let them respond>

Did either of you peek along the way?

<Let them respond>

Is it generally safe to do this, have someone unable to see directing another who is unable to see?

<Let them respond>

What works better? <Let them respond>

How well do we see God? <Let them respond>

How well do we see the way to live as God wants us to live? <Let them respond>

Who do we go to for instructions on how to live?
<Let them respond>

How well do they see the way we should live?
<Let them respond>

Who should we go to for instructions on how to live?
Why? <Let them respond>

Only God sees clearly the best way for us to live.
<Prayer with kids: God help> [Let] us always <to> put our faith and trust in what [God] <You> tell[s] us to do through the Bible, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, that we may {fill all lives with love} and {help each other in [God's] <Your> grace and mercy}.<Amen>.

<Hymn "Open Our Eyes, Lord">

TFWS #2086>

Message: Let Me See



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/walking-with-jesus/twenty-third-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/twenty-third-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Gracious Lord of infinite wisdom and power,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may see clearly what You would have us see
and live as You would have us live. Amen.

Today we conclude the series "Walking with Jesus," by
asking "Let Me See":

"Have you ever walked through your neighborhood
with someone who has never been there before? If
not, try it sometime. It's amazing what a new
person will notice about your street that you just
don't pay attention to anymore."¹

I had the opportunity to babysit for my granddaughter
in Syracuse. When I got to their house, I had with me
my phone, my laptop, and my camera - all electronic
devices that I may use multiple times in a day.
However, I did not pull any of them out.

I spent the day completely unplugged, reading to my
granddaughter and taking her for walks. When outside,
we looked at the leaves, and I explained to her about
how they change and fall off at this time of year as
the trees get ready to sleep through winter.

¹ Theme summary taken from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/walking-with-jesus>.

We noticed a variety of trees that I had not really paid attention to before, as well as other seasonal changes such as migrating birds and squirrel activity. It was as though I was seeing the world in a completely new way, introducing Vivian to it.

Taking a break from the incessant media was very renewing for me. It felt like a blindfold had been lifted from my eyes, enabling me to see more clearly God's handiwork in the world.

Only God sees clearly the best way for us to live. In Job's day, the faithful thought they had it all figured out: live right and get blessed by God, sin and get punished by God. It was as though they all had faith blindfolds on.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/jtjm-job/>;
credit: The Jewish Museum /
A gift of the heirs of Jacob Schiff

Job had run into an obstacle across the expected path, and his blindfolded friends were trying to help him get back on track by saying there were no obstacles if he just stayed on the path, not seeing that Job was right in saying he had not strayed, that he was still on the path.

Job's friends counseled him that he must have done wrong and it was up to him to set his life right, for

God is just. Job denied their accusations and cried out to the Lord for an explanation. A younger man, having heard their arguing, stepped up and - instead of telling Job to do better - told him that humans should not question God.

It is at this point that God comes as the Almighty, all-knowing Creator, asks who is giving the bad advice Job received, chides them, and then bids Job to speak. Overwhelmed, Job basically says he is nothing and will shut up now.

And this, to me, is the critical part: God insists on having the conversation with Job, telling him to speak. Job then quotes what God said and agrees with God that he (Job) does not have wisdom to understand what is going on. But, because God cared enough about this insignificant bit of creation to come speak to his concern, Job put aside (“despise” and “repent”) the traditional expectation of transactional worship and accepted a newly understood relationship dynamic: that he cannot earn God’s blessing or attention, yet Almighty God is there for him in unexpected ways.

It was as though Job finally had the blindfold taken off, and then was able to tell his friends how to do so similarly. Job prayed for his friends before God, and the Lord blessed Job for it. In their new relationship, Job had twice the blessings as before.

Blind obedience to what we know of God's rules helps us live better than just fighting for selfish gain, but our lives are much richer and our relationships far more blessed when we live in relationship with our Lord.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/qnpi-046-blind-mute/>; credit: Good News Productions Int.

Jesus came to teach us about living in faith and God's love. Today's story is the second time the Gospel of Mark highlights the healing of a blind man. In between, Jesus tells the disciples three times about His upcoming death and resurrection.

At the first healing, the man was not instantly cured. Jesus led him away from town, used saliva, and had to lay hands on him twice for the man's sight to be fully restored.

In each of those three cases following Jesus telling them about His upcoming death and resurrection, the disciples respond as though spiritually blinded (or blindfolded) by worldly concerns about power, wealth, and prestige. In each of those cases, Jesus restores their sight about what truly matters: the power of God and divinity of Jesus, the need to put relationships with others above selfish gain, and the call to serve real needs rather than serve our egos.

Then, in today's healing story, the man's faith makes him instantly well upon asking Jesus to heal him. This reflects how the disciples have been prepared, that now they will be able to see more readily and more clearly what truly happened after Jesus's death and resurrection, and will be ready to respond in faith after events unfold.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/walking-with-jesus/twenty-third-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/twenty-third-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

How have you prepared to see what God is telling you? Evil is in the world, causing trouble and fear. Election day is almost upon us, and hate- & fear-filled division in this country is causing stressed-out people to make some rather poor choices and hurt one another. I pray for our country.

People cry out in need, blind to possibilities, unable to see a positive way forward. Popular wisdom, like that of Job's friends, is often inadequate or even bad – such as when it pushes win/lose instead of collaboration in the way we do things with others.

God sees all possibilities; Jesus's teaching guides us to nurture all; and the Holy Spirit is active in the world, providing wisdom to those who seek it. Human help or advice is limited, usually not addressing underlying issues for permanent and transformative change. Salvation in Jesus does

transform us, eliminating underlying sin so that we can be restored to life in God's kingdom.

So this week, I want you to take a day to stop listening to the chaos of the media. Unplug! Take time to reconnect with God in a fundamental way, whether in solitude or in the company of others.

Remember your loved ones, too. Pray for them, especially if you feel they were wrong, that they may be blessed by God in a transformative way as well - not asking for them to be what you think they need to be, but giving them over to God's wisdom and grace.

And when you are blessed with the ability to see God's love active in your life, share your joy with others, that all may see it more clearly as well, and praise the Lord!