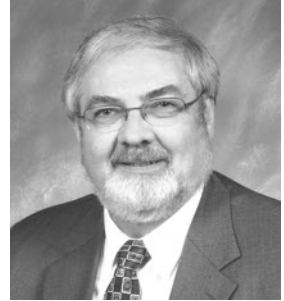


First Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)
210 North Fifth Street
Ponca City, Oklahoma

The 21st Sunday after Pentecost
October 25, 2009

Job 42:1-6,10-17; Psalm 34:1-8;
Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52
the Rev. Larry B Metzger, pastor



In 1972 a song came out that spoke so much to me as well as many others. It was written by Elton John and Bernie Taupin. The title is Daniel. Bernie is the lyricist of the duo and it was written after listening to the news of the day.

Some of you remember; some of you experienced the troubling times when Viet Nam Vets were returning home. In some ways it was like today, except it was an unpopular war. The similarity is with the returning vets and the wounds of war.

Daniel, not a brother by blood, is a fictional character who embodies the plight of the returning veterans whose scars won't heal.

There is a line that always catches me up short. "Your eyes have died but you see more than I."

Seeing is a sense we prize dearly. With our sight we are able to appreciate the absolutely gorgeous colors of the trees this Fall.

We see the action of the football, baseball or basketball games; or the grace filled movements of skaters upon the ice.

Seeing is a gift of God that we who have sight cannot imagine what it must be like to not have sight.

I recall being with people who have been blind since birth. It always causes me to stutter just a bit when I hear one of them say, "I see." Because they don't see.

But Elton John's song reminds us that seeing is more than light rays hitting our cornea and forming visual images.

Bartimaeus was not blind from birth. That seems clear when he request Jesus to let him see again. We don't know when he lost his sight or how. Perhaps it was a disease. Maybe he lost his sight in a

battle. Perhaps he had a good job or a good position in the Army but losing his sight rendered him a beggar.

This is how he made his money. Each day he sat along the roadside in the community begging for money to live day to day.

Jesus was on his way out of town. They were leaving after a rather busy schedule. There have been teachings and healings. There have been the discussions about who is the greatest, asking favors in the life to come. There were the teachings about divorce and the law, about children and helping others in their faith.

I would think he and the disciples were ready for some rest. It was the end of the shift, the last final, they clocked out, and suddenly there comes another request, another call.

Be quiet Bartimaeus. The people did not want ole Blind son of Timaeus embarrassing the town. It had been a good visit and the proper people had seen Jesus and were healed. They didn't want this beggar to give Jesus a poor impression of the good people of Jericho.



But like a teenager, the more he was told to be quiet, the more he called out and the louder he got. And like the proverbial squeaky wheel, got noticed.

It is interesting in this passage, that Jesus doesn't say much. We don't know what he did to heal this man. It doesn't say if he used spittle, or placed his hands on his eyes or anything else.

The scripture simply reports Jesus saying: "Go; your faith has made you well." And immediately he regained his sight.

A realtor was driving around a young couple to search for their first dream house. After listening to their concerns about mortgage points, maintenance costs, and school systems, he decided to give them a bit of advice. "I've been selling homes for 23 years," he said, "and I've discovered only three things matter when you're buying a home: location, location, location."

To prove his point, he drove the couple to see two homes. The paint was peeling on the first house, and the driveway was heaving in spots. "It may be a handyman's special," he said, "but look at the view." The house sat at the foot of a purple mountain, adjacent to ten acres of untouched forest.

Then the group went to see a charming two-story stone farmhouse with five bedrooms, a big kitchen, and plenty of closets.

"Everything's immaculate," the wife exclaimed after a brief tour inside. "In fact, we might buy it if it was located somewhere else." Then she pulled back a curtain to see an interstate highway and a busy airport runway. Location, location, location.

It is a good rule in considering real estate. It is also a good rule in biblical interpretation. Anybody who wants to know the deeper meaning of a biblical text can benefit by looking around its neighborhood.

Mark tells this story in this place because he is telling us something. It is something that was going on with the disciples and is just as true for us today.

Mark is telling us the disciples aren't very bright. Over and over again Jesus has explained to them what is going to happen and why. He is taught them about serving others and what lies ahead. And they never get it.



Or, to put it another way, they are blind to the message and they fail to see the truth in the messenger.

Bartimeus eyes had died, but he could see more than others. He saw with prophetic clarity Jesus, the Son of David. One can only see Jesus with the eyes of faith.

Today we have the same issue as the early disciples. We think we know so much; we think we have all of the answers; that we know the will of God. Because we do, we fail to see what we can only see by faith.

Each day we are confronted with absolute fact and truth... but is it? We try to know the truth about health care. We try to know the truth about political leaders. I don't know about you, but I wonder on any given day if anybody knows the truth.

Each side, and I'm not speaking here of two sides, I mean all the sides, left, right, up, down, somewhere in-between, all of them, working at convincing us there is only one way, one truth, one side.

We pride ourselves in having such instant access to information. Think how our Great-great-grandparents would deal with

information. In the old days one would have to wait for the mail or some traveler to bring news. Even the death of a President could take a long time to reach all the people.

We take such pride in having instant access to information now. But there is a real debate going on about investigative reporting, that is the newspaper, versus the blogs, the twitters, and instacams.

When someone is going into a police raid with police carrying a phone camera, wifi it to the local news, there is no time to get any background information. It just becomes instant news, whether correct or not.

The boy feared lost in the family ballon last week is a case in point. And the sad thing is, it became news just on the speculation that a child may have been in the balloon. Meer speculation is news.

So we have these impediments to seeing clearly.

This is when our faith must be stronger than what our eyes see.

Here is this blind beggar, perhaps one of the little ones Jesus refers to, the ones that it would be better if a milestone were hung round the neck than to cause them to stumble in their faith. There is no one who believes like a child and Jesus says unless our faith is like that of a child's.

Seeing by faith means we can see the love of God, the strength of the congregation in working together; it means seeing more than plants sprouting up from the ground, or children singing together; it means we see more than beggars, we see the face of God.

So blind Bartimaeus sees as a child and calls out, "Jesus, Son of David." After his encounter with Jesus, Mark says he followed him on the way.

Let us pray:

Jesus, Son of David, open our eyes to see what you would have us see, to hear the cries you would have us hear, to be able to say, "What do you want me to do for you?" And in the your name, may our faith allow us to do it.

