

Sunday, October 28, 2018

Job 42:1-6.10-17

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52

### Hearing the Story, Changing One's Mind

Did you hear the story about the wealthy Smith family who lived in a big circular house? Well one morning, Mr. Smith woke up and found his mirror had been shattered. He knew it was one of his employees who had done it. So he asked them what they were doing in the morning and he got these replies:

Driver: I was outside washing the car. Maid: I was dusting the corners of the house.

Cook: I was starting to make lunch for later. From the replies, he knew who it was.

Can you guess who it was who broke the mirror? The maid. The house was circular; it didn't have any corners. Did you listen to the story to know who had broken the mirror? Did you hear and understand why the answer is the maid?

Have you ever made a decision and then wished you had decided something differently? Not about a food choice whether Cheerios or Rice Krispies for breakfast, but a life changing choice? We hear of people who made specific choices which lead them to be on a different airplane, or in a different location than first planned and then something incredible occurs. Both positive and negative events occur and they remain alive and safe. Had they acted on their first choice circumstances would have led to a different outcome! Has this happened to you?

Then we have the story of Job who is like a pawn as God and Satan have interfered in his regular life for the purpose of testing his faith. Job was described a blameless and upright, he feared God and shunned evil. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. (Job1:3) It is when Satan asks the Lord about Job and how he would respond if everything he has around him were taken away he would certainly curse God to his face. It is through this challenge that Job is tested and tried for his faith. He lost everything- family, livestock, wealth. But Job did not sin. He continued to have faith; Yes, he had doubts he wondered why him. His friends sat with him in sympathy for seven days and nights. Job was truly suffering-physically, emotionally and mentally. In turn, each of his friends spoke and offered their support, wisdom and friendship. In spite of all that Job endured he did not choose anything different. His faith was strong. He states, "I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth!" He also believed that after death he would see God! (Job 19:25-27)

When we hear the story of Job and his suffering, we might ask, "Why didn't he just change his mind about God and curse him for what God had done? After all God put him to the test, and he lost everything he had and then he was deeply grieving and mourning. But because his faith and trust in God was stronger than any of his other feelings and thoughts he continued to face whatever would come his way and God was in control of his life. In today's reading from Job 42 Job states, "I know that you can do all things, no plan of yours can be thwarted." Job believed and in time came to fully know who was in charge not only of his life but all things. He tells God, "I spoke of things I did not understand things too

wonderful for me to know.” But God knew and loved him and by Job coming to fully understand this about God, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as before.

Job stuck to his faith convictions throughout his suffering. How often do people really uphold their faith when crises come, or in times of grief and bereavement, or tragedy. No, most often people do not do this but blame God for the circumstances of their lives or what happens in times of loss, crises or grief. But when we hear the story of Job and his trials do we really listen to the words of God and how he teaches Job more about hope and life? Often when this story is shared, people change their minds about God and begin to trust the Lord in new ways. Maybe we need to test our faith to become stronger or to be challenged to grow closer in relationship with God. Yes we believe, but what about our unbelief? What is the story we hear and what do we do in response? Do we change our mind because of the story or because our response to it is more important?

Sometimes we really need to listen and hear the story to understand, assess and discern our thoughts, feelings, and then eventually reply, respond, act.

Blind Bartimaeus is at his usual post near the gates of Jericho begging to passersby for assistance. From the people in the street he learned that Jesus of Nazareth was down the road and making his way out of Jericho. Jesus and his followers would be passing in front of him. When he heard this, he started shouting, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” He shouted this again, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” The people walking by told him to keep quiet. But Bartimaeus did not listen to him. He shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” He continued to shout and people ssshed him. Then as Jesus and the disciples were walking down the street Jesus heard him. Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” The disciples called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you!” The people could have said other things like you really want him a beggar near you? But Jesus said call him. Get him here. It’s your day, Bartimaeus. Jesus heard you. Now move!

Nothing was going to slow Bartimaeus down. He took off his outer cloak; he jumped up to his feet and walked to Jesus having heard his voice. Jesus asked, “What do you want me to do for you?” Had Jesus heard his cry from down the road? Did Jesus know that Bartimaeus knew who he was and believe it? Did those people who told him to be quiet realize who Jesus was and is? It didn’t matter to Bartimaeus, Jesus called for him to come closer. Now, Jesus was asking him what Bartimaeus wanted him to do. What would be the best thing he could ask for?

Bartimaeus knew who Jesus was – Son of David, a descendant of the king; the one sent by God and he called him Rabbi. Teacher, I want to see. I want to see. Did Bartimaeus only want to see physically or might we read into this a little bit more? Did he want to see his faith tried and to ask Jesus to heal him would be the ultimate questioning of God’s love for him. Bartimaeus’ knew that being able to see would change his status in life and yet to be able to see Jesus was ultimately a gift of hope that he woke up with that morning.

Can you imagine the joy on Bartimaeus’ face when Jesus enabled him to see, and who does Bartimaeus see first? Jesus, the Rabbi, the Son of David. And then Jesus tells him, Go your faith has healed you. Bartimaeus is healed and is now able to see.

Bartimaeus was a blind beggar in the street. But he believed and had faith in spite of his low place in the society and city of Jericho. Bartimaeus could now see because he believed in the promised Son of David, the teacher who was to come and through this faith, he was able to shout out in faith in order that Jesus would have mercy on him.

We are not told how long Bartimaeus was blind, but he is named and a beggar in Jericho. From the story we read we know that he believes in God, the promise of the Saviour- Jesus and from what he has literally heard on the street about the teacher. And in order to be changed- he shouts out loud for Jesus to come by him. He is seeking to change his life and to be able to see was the first step.

But there is more to Bartimaeus' healing than being able to see. He will undergo a full metanoia experience. This metanoia will be a journey he undergoes whereby his mind, heart, self and way of life is transformed. And what begins with a physical healing will strengthen his faith and he will become a new person all together. All because he heard that Jesus was walking by that day.

What about you? Our whole life is a journey of metanoia. It is the recreation of ourselves through learning. Just think about this. What you learned in elementary school formed the basis for your education in high school. But what happened after that still enabled you to re create yourself into who you are today. You became able and continue to be able to do something you did but in a new way.

In this journey we call life, we take the world at face value and our relationship to the world changes as we grow older. Just think of how we believe everything was in God's hands until weapons of mass destruction were invented. Yet today we can re-perceive the world and know it is not perfect. Our role to play in the world changes as we are transformed and grow older. As a child we did not think about the details of money for the family household. Yet as an adult with family we need to make decisions which not only affect us, but those whom we love and this is challenging for all. When there is peace or conflict or war, our perception is based on what we learn. And if we have a hunger for this type of learning, there is within us the capability to find out more. This is what we call a change in mind or shifting of one's ideals. This change reveals a mind shift and includes a change in attitude, ability and action.

Job had it all until his faith was tested by God and Satan. He had wealth and family and strong relationship of God in his world. He had great friends and was highly respected. Yet when everything was lost even his wife to him to curse God.

Bartimaeus was poor, physically handicapped, lived in the street and begged in order to survive. He lacked wholeness and possessions but it was his faith that led him to be at Jesus' feet. Both Job and Bartimaeus experienced major life changes their life's journey/ metanoia was not what they each expected. Yet what they fully engaged in was a spiritual conversion to draw closer to God. God had tested Job; Job remained faithful. Bartimaeus believed in Jesus as teacher, as the Son of David, sent by God and he risked losing his space at the gate by yelling. He risked his place being taken by another person, by shouting while Jesus was still down the road Jesus have mercy on me. His faith truly led to his metanoia experience. His spiritual conversion had already formed but once Jesus enabled him to see, he looked on Jesus with joy and wonder, his life was forever changed.

How often do we feel that we are blind to the facts for not hearing the full story or understanding the big picture of life and that of our family? Are we blind because we do not see the stumbling blocks placed in our way or were they placed by us? How do we change our mind if we truly do not hear the story of us? As we continue in this journey of life we will have transformations and changes in thought and faith, we will have moments of declarations of hopefulness and then we will also feel that we need to bury everything of the past and not move on. But to truly follow God we need to believe and have faith knowing that there is more than right now. There is reason to hear and respond.

There is reason to follow Christ's calling and to ask for Christ's help on this journey of metanoia. For in the long term we will receive eternal life.

What will you choose?

As John Kenneth Galbraith wrote, "Faced with the choice of changing one's mind and proving that there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy on the proof."

As people of faith, we are to trust our thoughts and to act in faith. Bartimaeus did not know if Jesus heard him, or whether Jesus would even acknowledge him. Yet his journey in life, had a major transition based on his faith in God and in Jesus the teacher. How we respond to hearing the story of our life unfold in this time and moment in history, is what determines who we are in faith and whether we have hope. Are we willing to change our mind and live by faith, or are we going to look for proof that transformation is possible? Jesus calls us to come to him. And when we respond he will not let us go. We just need to choose faith and then tell others of the healing that is possible in Jesus.

Let us rejoice in our faithfulness as we hear stories of faith and come to Christ.

Let us pray:

Holy God, hear us we pray. As we continue to live our lives we pray that you would show us who we are as we grow in faith. You call us and we are yours. Enable us to hear your voice. SILENCE. Amen.