

October 24, 2021

Texts: Jeremiah 31: 7-9; Mark 10: 46-52

Title: “Your Faith Has Made You Well”

I’d like to start this morning with an example of technology that has helped a lot of people. It’s an app that came out a few years ago called “Be My Eyes”. A blind or visually impaired person can download this app to their phone and enter in information on what state or country they live in and what language they speak.

Sighted people who sign up to volunteer also download the app and so when a blind user needs help with a simple visual task, they can tap the app and send out a call to multiple volunteers in their general area. The volunteer and the blind person are connected by video chat.

As of this year, there were 300,000 blind or visually impaired users worldwide who had downloaded the app, and around 4 million sighted volunteers registered to assist them.

On their website there are all sorts of amazing stories of how people were helped like Stephen, a blind man from Idaho, who, while bending down to pick up something he’d dropped on the floor, he banged his face on the countertop. He felt that his nose was bleeding, but he couldn’t tell if he needed stitches. So he tapped the Be My Eyes app, and a volunteer on video chat assured him that his nose was just fine.

They chatted a few minutes, and the volunteer mentioned that she was having trouble with her phone. Stephen works with computers and is tech-savvy, so he was able to diagnose her phone problems and explain how to fix them. They were

both able to help each other. -----

In Jesus' day, there were few options for people born blind. If your family or community didn't help you, then you were a beggar. That was your only option for survival.

Today's lesson is about a man named Bartimaeus. And **the first thing we learn about Bartimaeus is that he was disadvantaged.** He was blind. He was a beggar and that was his likely destiny for his life, to spend it in rags begging by the side of the road. He was truly among the disadvantaged.

It's amazing to anyone who studies history how many great people start out with the odds against them. The late Stephen Hawking, the famous physicist, who was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease at the age of 21. He has spent much of his adult life in a wheelchair, only able to communicate through a computer program. Steve Jobs, actress Emma Watson, singer Justin Timberlake, and Bill Gates have ADHD. Surfing champion Bethany Hamilton lost her left arm in a shark attack at the age of thirteen. You never know what kind of disadvantages the people around you are facing. You never know how hard someone had to work to achieve the life they have.

Bartimaeus was likely to have been rejected by a lot of people in his lifetime. The religious people in that time believe that a physical handicap was a punishment by God; that someone had sinned that this had happened. Stay away from him might have been their recommendation.

All of us, to a certain extent, have our disabilities. They may not be physical;

they may be emotional. They may be handicaps of attitude. Some people let their disadvantage define them. Others let it drive them. Perhaps one of the most dangerous handicaps is that of living a privileged life, because we never develop the mental and emotional and spiritual toughness that is required for dealing with adverse life situations.

There's an old Swedish saying, sort of a put-down, to refer to someone who has had an easy life, who didn't have to work to get where they are. It translates as, "To slide in on a shrimp sandwich." Some people's greatest disadvantage is that they slid in on a shrimp sandwich.

Bartimaeus was disadvantaged but notice this; **He was also determined**. Bartimaeus was sitting beside the road going away from Jericho. Word came to him that Jesus was passing by. Bartimaeus started crying out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Now remember, in that day, Bartimaeus was a nobody. A blind beggar. Someone to be ignored or avoided or pitied. But he refused to let his disability define him. He was determined to reach for the only hope he had—the mercy of the Lord Jesus who said, "Go your way. Your faith has made you well."

Disadvantaged but determined. He wasn't going to let people tell him to be quiet. He wasn't like the rich young ruler who walked away from Jesus sadly when he learned that he'd have to choose between his wealth and Jesus. Bartimaeus wasn't like the man beside the pool of Bethesda, who, when Jesus asked him if he really wanted to be healed, made excuses for why nothing could

be done about it.

Bartimaeus wanted to see with his eyes, and he was willing to pay any price to achieve this goal. He was determined. What a difference determination makes in life. Thank God for the Bartimaeuses of this world who won't be denied despite their circumstances.

**Bartimaeus was disadvantaged but determined. But finally he was also disciplined.** Disciplined is a verb we have made out of a noun. We talk about making disciples in the church. We “disciple” people. A disciple is a follower, someone who shows loyal allegiance to another. Bartimaeus cried out for mercy and he was disciplined. “Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately” we read, he received his sight and followed Jesus on the way.”

Bartimaeus became a follower of Jesus Christ. How could he do anything else? All his life he'd been blind, and finally this man Jesus had set him free of this tremendous disadvantage.

I believe something happened to Bartimaeus that day, don't you? I believe the scales not only fell away from his eyes; I think they fell away from his heart. His eyesight was restored but his healing also said to Bartimaeus, “You really matter. You're a person of worth. God cares about you.”

I don't think he was ever again the same. I doubt if he ever let anyone put him down again. I doubt if he ever gave in to discouragement. Why? Because he knew he mattered. His healing was proof of that.

Every person who comes to Jesus in faith finds freedom. It may not be

freedom from a disability or a difficult circumstance. It may be the freedom of finding new purpose in life, of discovering the overwhelming and unchanging love of God for you, it may be the freedom of finding a new identity in Christ. There's nothing you can't overcome if you trust in God. Amen.