

**Mark 10:46-52
Creekside COB
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Now You See It, Now You Don't

I have worn eyeglasses since I was in third grade. I don't remember not seeing well in class, and I don't remember seeing better after I got glasses. But someone knew I had a vision problem. The only fun part about wearing glasses is choosing the frames--so many shapes and sizes! These are the largest ones I had--remember when they were in style? These are the strongest prescription--they were heavy because you couldn't get the thinned-down lenses back then. These are the smallest--the ones I wore time before last, I think. I bought this pair to use at the computer--but my eyes took forever to adjust back to regular glasses, so I ditched them. I've heard people who wear glasses being called "four eyes." So what do you call glasses with clip-ons???

Cary and I met a couple in Wyoming who both needed drugstore reading glasses and had dozens of pairs at home--but they only brought one pair between them on the trip! Oops! And I hate it when

I want to show something to someone, and they say “Sorry, I didn’t bring my glasses.” It kind of scares me--what if there were something really important for them to see?

I remember being scolded for reading in a dark corner. My mom would say, “Turn on the light, you’ll go blind!” I don’t think I’m blind, but she was right--words were fuzzy in the dark, and I could see much better with the light on.

There are two accounts of the Bartimaeus story in the gospels, the one in Mark that Sandy read, and another in Luke, although Luke doesn’t give his name. Bartimaeus had two strikes against him. He was blind, and he was a beggar. In Jesus’ day, either one of those was cause for being ignored. But Bartimaeus could hear. He heard what people said about him. And he heard what they said about Jesus the healer. Bartimaeus thought, if Jesus could heal the lame and the deaf, why couldn’t he make a blind man see? One day when Bartimaeus was begging by the roadside, he heard people getting all excited about something. Jesus was coming down the road! Bartimaeus began to shout as loud as he could, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” His shouting upset the crowd around him, and

they said, “Hush up!” But that made Bartimaeus shout even louder, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stopped and said to the crowd, “Tell him to come here.” So the crowd said to Bartimaeus, “Take heart, Jesus wants to see you.” “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked. “My teacher, let me see again.” Jesus smiled, “Go, your faith has made you well.” Immediately Bartimaeus could see, and he followed Jesus on the way.

Clearly, the crowd and Jesus did not see Bartimaeus the same way. All the crowd saw was that Bartimaeus was a blind beggar. Be quiet, Bartimaeus, Jesus doesn’t want to bother with you! But they were wrong. Jesus said, “Come.” The Genesis 1 story tells us we were all created in the image of God. Jesus saw that image in Bartimaeus-- not a blind beggar but a son of God.

There’s a custom in some eastern countries, particularly in Hindu culture, where people greet each other by folding their hands, bowing slightly, and saying “Namaste.” Cultures translate that in many ways, but I’ve heard it used in Christian circles as “The God in me sees the God in you.” or “The Light in me sees the Light in you.” Think about

that the next time you get angry with someone! It could change your perspective.

We tend to think sighted people have advantages over visually impaired individuals. But Charlie Boswell didn't think so. He was a visually impaired golfer who became the National Blind Golf Champion 13 times! His highest honor was receiving the Ben Hogan Award in 1958. Ben was a famous golfer. One day Charlie met Ben Hogan in person and challenged him to a game. "I can't," Ben said, "I'd be taking advantage of you." "Aw, come on, Mr. Hogan," Charlie begged. Ben reluctantly agreed, but added, "OK, but I'm going to play my best. You name the time." And a very self-assured Boswell responded, "Let's play at 10:00--tonight!" I suspect Ben "saw the light" that night as he and Charlie played golf in the dark.

Seeing God in each other puts us on a level playing field. Just before the story of Bartimaeus in Mark 10, James and John came to Jesus asking, "Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask of you." Notice that Jesus asked them the same question he asked Bartimaeus.

"What do you want me to do for you?" James and John said, "Promise us we can sit on your right and your left when you become

king.” They thought that would make them somebodies. I wonder if they were part of the crowd who thought blind beggars were nobodies? To Bartimaeus, Jesus said, “Your faith has made you well.” To James and John, he responded, “You don’t know what you’re asking for! If you want to be a somebody, you have to become a nobody.” At the end of the day, blind Bartimaeus could see the light, but I suspect James and John were still in the dark.

Like James and John, our spiritual vision can be blurred or blind. Without getting ridiculous in the analogy, let’s compare spiritual vision with physical vision. Myopic, or nearsighted people, are like the blind men and the elephant--they see their own world clearly but distant vision is fuzzy. That is, their world (or religion, or viewpoint) is all there is, or the best there is, as though there is nothing more to see. Similarly, persons with Tunnel Vision are like Archie Bunker--their line of thinking is right. Hyperopic, or farsighted people, see the big picture “out there,” but they keep stepping on toes of the people in front of them. Spiritually colorblind people are like Eeyore--their pessimism comes because they can’t see life in its true color. Presbyopic people, whose lenses have lost elasticity, can be inflexible in their faith or intolerant of diversity. These are spiritual

diseases because they fail to recognize what God sees. God sees himself in us, even when we fail to see God in others. The spark of God lives in the rich and homeless, abled and disabled, friendly and unfriendly, sweet and cranky, good and bad. God may be covered up-
-but the spark is there!

In 6th century Ireland, St. Colomba and other Irish missionary monks went to spread the gospel in England and Scotland. The monks were dedicated and tireless. Unlike some missionaries who are spiritually myopic or presbyopic, these Celtic monks respected the cultures of other people. They knew that the divine spark was already present and their mission was to liberate and release that spark.

Namaste--the God in me sees the God in you.

Just like my mom said, we can see more clearly when the light is on. Jesus turned on the light for Bartimaeus. The question is, where does the light need to be switched on for us, where are we still blind? When God asks us, "What do you want me to do for you?" I hope we will respond, "My teacher, let me see again."

Lord, change our darkness into light,
turn our blindness into sight,

help us want to “turn round right.” Amen.