**Mark 10:46-52 October 24, 2021**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Mark chapter 10 here re-reading these words. “And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This is a scene of desperation. A blind beggar named Bartimeaus crying, and calling, and begging for more than a few pennies on the side of the road. To be a blind man at the time of Jesus’ meant a vulnerable and desperate life. A life lived on the generosity of others and a life of begging where there is no other option and there is no plan B. There is no safety net for the beggar, it’s beg or starve. This man is truly desperate, it’s not an act, it’s not a ploy, this isn’t some kind of scam. This is the challenge we face in our own world today when it comes to aid and getting it to those who are most in need. We’ve seen it over this past year and a half when it comes to the relief efforts of the Pandemic. We’ve seen it in foreign aid efforts to other countries who have disasters and tons of people in need. There are those who truly, desperately, need help and won’t be able to survive without it, but mixed in are those who say the same things and make you believe that they are just as desperate and vulnerable, yet in truth this is just a handout for them and they’d be fine without it. Which means that the one who really needs it can get lost in the shuffle and the chaos and the horde of people who come with their hands out expecting to receive aid of some kind. Like a mob of people who swamp a truck that drove up handing out loaves of bread there isn’t time to vet every person and see how much of a need they truly have, you throw out the loaves until they are gone and you go on your way.

This is an impersonal picture of aid and help though, and it’s not one that we’d find in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus doesn’t just walk along the road, zapping and healing every person he sees who is sick, or materializing bread in the middle of town for everyone to eat. Jesus isn’t the miracle man, the bread king, the one who bestows mercy upon all in this way because His ministry is about bestowing mercy to all for their ultimate need. It may be helpful today to bestow bread to the hungry, but they will get hungry again. It may be helpful to provide healing, but they will need it again as well. Jesus came to heal the brokenness brought on by sin by laying down his life to pay for all sins and by living a perfect life to give to the sinful and broken people of the world so that they will be saved. That was his ultimate mission, so when he hears the cries of Bartimeaus, he could have just walked on by, and it’s certainly what the crowds would have wanted as they rebuked Bartimeaus in his crying and desperation, but Bartimeaus is a man who has only known desperation, who knows there is no way other way for him to restore his sight and to be made whole and so he cries like a man who has no other option. He cries and begs like a man who recognizes his need and the true power of the Son of God.

This is what makes this particular story so powerful, because in it we see a mirror of how we should see ourselves, and we are convicted. Bartimeaus knows desperation, do you? It is a powerful scene in the movie Batman Begins where a young Bruce Wayne, a teenager at the time approaches a crime boss in a bar and attempts to get vengeance for the murder of his parents. He eventually has an audience with this crime boss who points out how interconnected the crime and corruption is in Gotham City and gives Bruce Wayne a reality check when it comes to his pain. The line that summarizes his point to the rich and spoiled Bruce Wayne is when he tells him, “You’ve never known desperate.”

Have you known desperate? Have you had no plan B, no backup plan, no emergency fund? Poverty in the United States of America is different than poverty in 3rd world countries. You may have fallen on hard times and been in debt, but have you known true desperation? Have you had to rely on the generosity of strangers to survive? It’s a mindset that we just can’t quite grasp and it seeps into our faith and spiritual life. Bartimeaus was desperate, and so when others rebuked him and tried to stop him he wouldn’t, he knew, this is my chance, this is it, there is no other shot, and he cried and called for mercy. He had nothing to give, he had no right to ask for it, he simply is begging for mercy from God for the state he was in, a blind man on the side of the road. If we were desperate for the same mercy in our lives on account of our sin, what would our lives look like? What would we do? What would be important to us? If we truly believed that falling away from our faith would mean an eternity in torment and this, what we read here about our Savior, this what we have here on the altar the very body and blood of Jesus Christ, was the only way to be forgiven and to be saved, again I ask you, what would we be doing? Would we miss an opportunity to come to God’s house because of something else going on in our world that has nothing to do with Christ? Would we neglect the study of God’s Word both privately and joining together with others to gain a deeper understanding of who God is and what He’s done? Or instead would we sacrifice everything else in order to be strengthened and forgiven and assured of our place in heaven for all eternity?

A few weeks ago we looked at the relationship between faith and good works in our Monday and Tuesday Bible Class. The conclusion that James comes to is that faith and good works are connected. If you claim to have faith than your good works are the evidence of your faith and your good works are not necessary for your salvation, but your good works are necessary in they show the evidence of your faith. In the same way, your cry for mercy and forgiveness is the evidence of your understanding of your sin. You may read this particular Gospel lesson from Mark chapter 10 and see Bartimeaus in his desperate and vulnerable state and think that isn’t you. That isn’t your life. You can see, you can provide for yourself, you don’t need a miraculous healing, you don’t really need anything and you certainly aren’t desperate and crying for mercy like some poor beggar, embarrassing yourself in a pathetic and pitiful display in front of the whole town. That’s not you. And you’d be wrong. You, on account of your sin, are as desperate and vulnerable as Bartimeaus, because sin means death and there is no other road to salvation and so when it comes to Christ you are in as great of a need of salvation. And yet you don’t beg, in your pride you feel it’s beneath you. You don’t cry out for mercy because you don’t think you need it. You show your lack of understanding for your sinfulness in what you don’t do, just as you show your lack of faith by the absence of good works.

You need mercy, I need mercy, there is no plan B, there is no other option. There is no hope outside of Christ, it’s what Bartimeaus knew, and Jesus calls him to himself. It is a small detail that in verse 50 of Mark chapter 10 Bartimeaus springs up, throws off his cloak and comes to Jesus. Again I remind you this is a desperate man who has nothing, his cloak is what would catch the money that people would give him when he was begging, the cloak would be his means of staying warm and being blind it would be difficult for him to find it again and it probably would be stolen by the time he came back. But he leaves it behind, Mark never records that he went back and got it. Jesus restores his sight. Jesus cares. He cares because He keeps going, he is not undeterred, his march continues toward the cross and salvation for the brokenness of the world around him, to bring the same restoration for all of us affected by the sickness of sin. And Bartimeaus’s life is now changed, he doesn’t go get his cloak and the pennies that others have thrown his way. He doesn’t go back to begging on the side of the road and pretending to be blind or some other deception in order to live his former life. He follows Jesus. Jesus is His guide. Jesus leads the way. When Bartimeaus meets others as he is now a follower of Jesus Christ he can share the story of how Jesus heard his cries for mercy and restored his sight. How he is truly the Son of God who has power over the affects of sin in our world. He goes from beggar to witness.

My dear friends in Christ, there is two questions you will sing in our upcoming Communion Hymn “What Is This Bread” that sum up the desperation and need for mercy that Bartimeaus exemplifies and that we all should learn from when it comes to our sin. We will sing, “So who am I, that I should live and he should die under the Rod?” And again we will sing, “Is this for me?” Who are you? You are exactly what Martin Luther says you are in his final words on his death bed. “We are beggars, this is true.” You are a beggar. I am a beggar. And yet is this forgiveness for you? Not based on what you’ve done. Not based on your own accomplishments. But it’s still yours, mercifully given by Your Savior. He hears your cries and gives you what you need. O taste and see on this blessed morning in God’s house, the Lord is your peace, your King, your freedom, he is really present here in this feast of forgiveness, and his holiness makes you holy through the forgiveness that can only come from Him. Come and receive. There is no plan B, there is no other path of forgiveness and life. He hears your cries, He shows you mercy. You have all you need here.

Amen.