

## Sit in the Question

St. Ben's

10.27.24

Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you, Holy One. Amen

In seminary, I took a class on Leadership Practices. It was a truly formative course for me as it not only gave me some new ways of understanding my own leadership style within a church context but also helped me dive deeper into my own spiritual practices.

One important exercise we engaged in, in this class, was sitting with questions. Questions like “Says who,” “Why,” “Where is God in this,” or “What is being asked of me here”? These questions were designed to be asked repeatedly to allow us to get to the heart of whatever dilemma or quandary we might be facing.

The lesson was that too often, spiritual leaders stop at the surface-level answer and miss the important, rich information that can come from sitting with their questions a bit longer. The solution is to keep asking, even if it get's uncomfortable, ask just one more time. Even when you think you've found your resolution, ask one more time. Always following with is the real and authentic response to my question?

Our gospel text for today might be a familiar text for some.

It's the story of Bartimaeus, a blind beggar sitting on the roadside, who, when asked, simply told Jesus he wanted to see again.

Because this is such a familiar story, we might have our own versions of this sermon percolating in our heads, but hopefully, you will stay with me as we journey through this text together with open hearts and an open spirit.

The first thing I find quite interesting is Bartimaeus calling out to Jesus, saying "Jesus son of David, Have Mercy on me!" this clues us into him knowing Jesus in a specific way, as one who could help him. Then we see the crowds trying to quiet Bartimaeus, yet he persists in his effort to get Jesus' attention, yelling louder over the crowd, "Jesus, son of David, Have Mercy on me!"

It's at this point that Jesus responds, and in what almost feels like exasperation, Jesus stops and says, "call him here" And a shift happens in the crowd. They have gone from gatekeepers to the welcoming committee offering solace to Bartimaeus as they say, "Take heart, get up. He is calling you." And at that moment, Bartimaeus throws off his cloak and goes to Jesus.

It is in Jesus' response that we find an amazing invitation.

Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?"

What a powerful question. Jesus didn't make any assumptions but offered an invitation to Bartimaeus. The response is just as powerful: "My teacher, let me see again," and with this, Jesus says to Bartimaeus

that his faith has made him well; he immediately regains his sight and then begins to follow Jesus.

One of the most impactful moments of this text for me is still the calling of Bartimaeus. While the crowd and seemingly the disciples tried to quiet him, he persisted.

This felt like an important moment in the gospel as this healing miracle was unique in its simplicity. Jesus didn't seem to need added tools like mud or saliva, only the faith of Bartimaeus, and similarly, Bartimaeus didn't need to see Jesus to know he could help.

This text also helps us to see the perspective that sometimes the "outsider" may have much to teach us while the "insider" may not be able to see because they are confused by the crowd or simply unable to see through them.

The disciples struggled as they often do in our text, and prevented Bartimaeus from getting to Jesus until Jesus said, wait, bring him here. Then, the energy shifted, and they were also invited to remember their role as they walked alongside Jesus, aiding him in his work.

It's the same mission we carry on today, to listen for that voice along the road, in the crowd, whether it's a loud shout or the quietest of whispers. We are called to listen for those on the margins and continue going out and listening knowing that we are never alone in that work.

The class I took in seminary helped me to understand that sometimes the best path forward is to stop and listen, and sometimes

there are no answers, only the next good question. It taught me a spiritual discipline of curiosity and the importance of taking time to sit in the question or pause and discern. That here, in our communal lives together, we can choose to operate in a different way to take the time we need to do the work we are called to do.

The invitation in Jesus' question truly gets at the heart of that work.

“What do you want me to do for you?” What is our soul’s deepest desire?

Would that desire be only for ourselves? Would it include an interconnected understanding of creation and community?

This text calls us into deeper discernment. To sit in the question beyond our initial response.

It reflects back to us that to create truly welcoming and inclusive spaces, we must be able to step outside ourselves and listen for those who might be yelling

“Jesus, Have Mercy on me!”

Because they shouldn’t have to shout over the crowd here, we should be ready to welcome them in even if they whisper or say nothing at all.

It reminds us of our own need for healing and care as we seek our own deeper connection with God, getting to the core of what we would ask Jesus and why.

As I reflect on my time here at St. Ben's, I hope I have planted some seeds for future discovery and discernment. Maybe even ignited a spirit of curiosity for some of you. I hope that I have in some way encouraged you to think differently about how you might engage the community around you. Think more thoughtfully about those who identify differently than you.

I truly hope that you have felt heard and seen.

Most of all I pray that you will remember the love I have for you all and more importantly the unconditional love God has for you as God journeys alongside us all now and always. **Amen**