

Pentecost 22 / October 24, 2021

Mark 10:52

“Your faith has made you well.”

Do you have faith? In whom and in what do you have faith? Upon what is your faith founded? Faith is often associated with religious belief, but faith is part of everyone's life. Faith is the expectation that certain things will happen, based on past experience. We expect that when we get into a vehicle that we will be safely transported to our destination. It doesn't always work out that way, but most times it does. When we board an aircraft, we expect the engines won't fail. We lack the ability to know absolutely for certain, but unless we see flames shooting out of the jet's engines before we embark, we presume the craft is physically sound. When we have faith in people, we expect they will be truthful, keep their promises and fulfil their responsibilities to the best of their abilities. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes, but we have faith others will act towards us in good faith. In every day life, faith is a trust that is founded upon the assumed or previously expressed goodwill of others.

Do you have faith in God? I hope so and presume so, since we are here to worship God. God values faith above all things. In Genesis it says “Abraham believed God and God reckoned it to him as righteousness.” Jesus said to Thomas who refused to believe He had risen until saw with his eyes and touched with hands, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” John wrote his gospel for our faith, saying, “These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that believing you may have life in His name.” In daily life, faith comes through our interactions with others. However, sometimes the only choice we have is to believe, or find alternate transportation. But in relationship with God, faith comes by the word through the working of the Holy Spirit. Faith takes God's word to heart and believes Him. God wants us to take His word and believe Him! Jesus told Bartimaeus, “your faith has made you.” Faith made him well, because He took Jesus' words to heart and believed. Faith makes us well, because it receives God's promises of forgiveness and life in Christ Jesus.

Bartimaeus couldn't see Jesus with his eyes, but he could see Jesus was the Saviour. He was blind in his eyes, but in his spirit he could see. He had faith! He believed Jesus was the Messiah. Unlike anyone else, he addressed Him as the Son of David. When Jesus called, he didn't hesitate, he leapt to his feet and came to Jesus. A few chapters earlier a man asked Jesus to heal his son. Jesus said all things are possible for one who believes. That man expressed a timorous faith saying, “I believe, help my unbelief.” Bartimaeus responded to Jesus' call with a vibrant faith. He jumped up! He literally took the leap of faith. He came to Jesus boldly, without a shadow of doubt.

It was important for Bartimaeus that he receive healing in his eyes. It's most important that we receive healing in our spirits and see Jesus as our Saviour. Before his sight was restored, Bartimaeus received the greater healing of the spirit and saw the most important thing: that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of David. Bartimaeus was blessed with sight, but in time his eyes again became blind, in death. Yet because of his faith, he still sees Jesus his Saviour. According to His good and perfect will God may or may not grant us healing in our bodies, but He wants to give us healing in our spirits through faith in Jesus. He wants us to believe in Him as our Saviour. He wants us to believe Him when He says our sins are forgiven and we are saved; healed in our relationship with Him! Our eyes will one day close in death, but because of our faith we will continue to see Jesus. In fact, we will see Him better!

A time of perfect healing is coming. The creation will be set free from bondage to decay. The nature of things will be changed. Isaiah sang, “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” When Christ returns and makes all things new, there will be no more blindness, deafness, sickness, disease, injury or death. This is the goal to which our faith presses. In Philippians chapter three Paul writes, “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body...” Every healing Jesus gave of the body was a foretaste and foreshadowing of the great healing He will give, soul and body, to all believers, when He calls us to share in His resurrection.

The healings Jesus gave to people like Bartimaeus and to the son of the timorous father, were signs showing that He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of David. They show that we should put our faith in Him as our Saviour from sin and death. Isaiah sang of the coming of the age of the Messiah, saying, “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute shall sing for joy.” They are not blanket promises that He will do the same for us, if we just believe. They

are not given because of the depth or quality of our faith; as though we would receive healing if just believe hard enough. They are not denied because of the weakness of our faith. They are given or withheld according to God's holy will, as He works all things in our lives for our eternal good. They are signs pointing to Jesus that we might know that He is the Christ, believe He will never leave or forsake us and trust He will give us perfect healing of body and spirit in His resurrection. The most important thing to believe about Jesus is that He is our Saviour from everything that causes illness, injury, disability and death!

Saving faith looks to Jesus as Saviour. Faith that looks to Jesus receives salvation, whether it leaps forward with boldness like Bartimaeus, or reaches out with fear and trembling, like the man who asked for faith to believe Jesus would heal his son. God doesn't give according to the depth or quality of our faith. Whether its big or little, strong or weak, faith receives what God promises. God doesn't portion out His gifts according the quality of our faith; according to our knowledge, learning or capacity for understanding. Faith is the gift of God, given through the word and received by the working of the Holy Spirit; regardless of age, capacity or any other intellectual or physical ability. That's why we baptize infants and children. We believe they have faith! That's why the psalmist sang, "You made me trust you even at my mother's breast." That's why Jesus held up children as models of faith. Children are the epitome of faith! Whether we have the faith of a child, the faith of Bartimaeus or a faith that fears and trembles, faith receives the promises of God for the sake of Jesus.

Jesus rejoiced to see bold expressions of faith, such as He saw in Bartimaeus and in the Canaanite woman before him. Remember her! Jesus pushed her and tested her, but she would not relent in her faith He could and would help her daughter. He cried out, "O woman, great is your faith." He called Bartimaeus to come forward and publicly express his faith. It was a witness to His disciples, who were slow to believe and understand all that the prophets had written about Him. It was a witness to the masses, who followed only for material blessing and benefit. But as Isaiah said of the Messiah, "A bruised reed He will not break, and a faintly burning wick He will not quench," neither the Canaanite woman or Bartimaeus received anything more than the most timorous of believers. All received healing in their bodies according to God's particular will; even as all who believe in Jesus as Saviour receive forgiveness and eternal life; whether our faith can move mountains or is smaller than a mustard seed. Faith receives the promises of God in Christ Jesus!

God wants us to take hold of His promises and come to Him for health, help and healing. But He wants us to distinguish between promises He made to particular people and promises He makes to all people. He wants us to allow for His will in our lives. Not every blind person in Jericho received restoration of sight, but everyone who believes Jesus is the Saviour receives eternal life. God had a good and specific purpose in granting healing to Bartimaeus and others during Jesus' ministry. His purpose was that through their healing, Jesus would reveal His glory, so all might see and believe. He may not have the same purpose for our infirmities. But He will use them to accomplish His saving purpose in our lives. He will help us bear our burdens; and through our infirmities, He will draw us closer to the heart of His love in Christ Jesus; so that believing, we may experience the perfect healing of eternal life. Faith in Jesus as Saviour makes us well in time and for eternity.

God bless us with faith, nourish it through word and sacrament and bring it to fulfillment in the resurrection to life everlasting. In Jesus' Name. Amen