

## October 24, 2021

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

In today's texts we find Jesus bringing restoration, healing and hope to people in need. Our first lesson from Jeremiah reminds us that even nations scattered in a diaspora will be gathered together by God, who calls the remnant of the people and adopts them as a loving parent adopts a child. Those who are in need will be led to an oasis that is able to restore health, wholeness, and a right relationship with our creator.

Our psalm is really a song for the remnant, a song for those who dream of the day when God will restore not only fortunes of Zion, but the whole creation.

Our second lesson gives us a systematic theological rendering of Christ's forever priesthood – the one who is both intercessor and sacrifice is worthy of restoring the remnant and restoring vision. His call for us is eternal in nature. In the midst of our wandering in the far corners, we have the promise that Christ, the perfect priest and perfect sacrifice, is able to restore us like the watercourses of the Negeb – a barren and dry land adjacent to the Sinai desert that blossoms in the rainy season into a lush place of sustenance and dazzling growth.

As miracle stories go, the one before us today in our gospel text is relatively short. Yet it is only one of many healing miracles of Jesus sprinkled throughout the gospels.

An interesting way to approach the miracle stories of Jesus is akin to the way we can approach the many parables of Jesus. That is, where do we find ourselves in the narrative?

Going back to last week's gospel text we find Jesus asked James and John as they stood before him – "What do you want me to do for you?"

And today we hear Jesus ask the blind man – "What do you want me to do for you?"

Same question. Last week found Jesus responding to James' and John's request of sitting at Jesus right and left hand when he came into his kingdom. What he gave them was a lesson on the Kingdom of God vs. the kingdom on earth.

Today we find Jesus responds to the blind man's request for restoration of his vision – by – restoring his vision.

So, it seems to me, given that in our gospel text today, this short miracle story, there are the disciples, Jesus and the man who was blind. I doubt we see ourselves as Jesus or the disciples.

And the key for us today, I believe, is to hear Jesus ask each one of us, "What do you want me to do for you?"

And we might be initially flippant and answer something like this – “How much time do you have?”

But let’s take Jesus’ question seriously – “What do you want me to do for you today?”

As we deal with this question as being an extremely serious question, I suspect that we are likely to go through a process where we could mentally or with pen and paper in hand make a list of all the things that we want Jesus to do for us.

And then as we truly search our hearts and minds and souls, we narrow down the list, whittle it down, to a few items. We may not want to mention the more insignificant items on our list. We surely don’t want to waste Jesus’ time. We don’t want to complain or whine. Yet we want to respond to Jesus’ question to us.

You may have noted that the blind man didn’t beat around the bush. He spoke right up and said, “My teacher, let me see again.” Short, sincere and to the point.

Jesus understands the blind man’s answer to be faith, that the blind man surely has faith that Jesus can and will heal his vision. And Jesus does not disappoint.

“What do you want me to do for you” Given that you and I and are people of faith, just what do we want Jesus to do for us today?

Keeping in synch with the gospel, some of us might consider expectantly asking Jesus to heal what it is that ails us. We know Jesus is the Master Healer, capable of miracle healings then as well as now. Who among us couldn’t ask for some sort of physical, mental or spiritual healing?

One possible answer to the question that struck me has to do with the pandemic. Many of us might say, “Jesus, I want you to miraculously rid our planet of COVID and all its variants and restore life as it was before the pandemic. Period.

We might perhaps ask for a restored relationships with those from whom we are estranged.

We could ask for renewed vision and strength to live a more Christ-like life.

We could answer by asking for a global spiritual renewal – a new and profound reformation that adds dedicated and faithful followers to God’s kingdom.

We could ask for a lasting, healthy and constructive cooperative relationship with our new partner in ministry that was initiated last week.

Our gospel text today concludes by stating, “Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.” And we rightly rejoice. The blind man of great faith was healed.

As people of faith, we know that Jesus hears our prayers. And in one sense our prayers are always an open opportunity to speak with, to communicate with God. And because God knows us and what’s going on with us, when we pray, we are always in various

ways responding to God asking what we would like God to do for us. So, as we stop and think about it, I suspect that many of our prayer petitions are answers to the question – “What do you want me to do for you?”

We’ve perhaps not thought about our prayer requests in quite that light before. And we know that while we believe Jesus always answers prayers, we also know that God’s timing and answers may not always be the same as what we might envision.

One of the concepts you have repeatedly heard me talk about, in one way or another, is for us to continue to struggle to lead a more Christ-like life. Remembering that Christ often retreated to find a quiet space so that he could be in prayer with God his Father. I suspect Jesus was in conversation with his Father as if God was asking, “What do you want me to do for you today, Son?”

There is yet one other point that I want to make this morning before we leave our gospel miracle story. When the blind man had his vision restored, he didn’t go to find all his family and friends and have a party and celebrate his newfound vision. No, scripture says that he immediately followed Jesus. We don’t know for how far or how long. Yet he did something meaningful. His actions were a response to what Jesus did for him.

When we let Jesus know what he can do for us I believe that we also need to ask, “Jesus, what do you want me to do for you today? What do you want me to do in your name? How do you want me to live out my faith today?”

May we continue to ask those questions and then to step out in faith. Let God be God, and do what God is calling us to do.

Thanks be to God. Amen