

Consider the blind and nameless beggar in the gospel. “Wait a minute,” you say, “he’s got a name, ‘Bartimaeus.’” But . . . maybe not. In Hebrew, and the Aramaic spoken in Jesus’ day, bar timaeus just means ‘son of Timaeus,’ like Bar Mitzvah means Son of the Law. Perhaps Mark was just translating for his Greek speaking readers.

Now, if you were a blind man in first century Israel, and you wanted to eat – which you probably would – you’d have to get money, but nobody’s would hire you, being blind and all, and there were no social service agencies to help you out, so you’d have to beg on the streets and nobody would care to know your name. You’d be an annoyance to them. At best, they’d only know you as ‘the son of Timaeus.’

But let’s put ourselves more deeply into the place of that blind man. It shouldn’t be too difficult. We are blind! True, most of us can see with our eyes, but there is a whole realm of things we can’t see. We don’t see what we truly want. We want our lives to be perfect and ourselves to be happy; but our lives are not perfect, and we are not always happy and we don’t see clearly how to make that happen. Indeed, often what we think will make things perfect, what we think will make us happy, ends up making things worse! We are blind to the way things really are.

And . . . nobody knows our name, not really. What I mean by that is, they don’t know our authentic selves, they don’t know who we really are. They know who they think we

are, they know who we pretend to be, but people just don’t understand us. I don’t mean that in a whiny kind of way (sniff-sniff) “Nobody understands me!” (sniff-sniff) it’s just that we are, all of us, fundamentally alone. We don’t even understand ourselves all that well, we don’t know our own true names.

Ultimately we want to love and be loved but things keep happening to us, and we ourselves keep doing things, that interfere with that. We don’t see the way to the love we really long for, who also known as God. We don’t see the way to God! So, yes, it should be easy to think of ourselves as this blind beggar, sitting on the street, hoping for someone to care, but . . . we are one among many and nobody seems to care.

So there you are, blind in your own unique way, nameless in the sense of being unknown, begging on the street just trying to get by . . . And you’ve heard about Jesus. You’ve heard about the seemingly impossible things he does. It’s been said that he can even cure the blind! Well, he’s coming near, in fact, he’s never very far from you. And he knows your true name. Would you like to know it?

I know, I know, you’ve got a lot of other things to do, you do like food and if you don’t keep crying out “Alms for the poor, alms for the poor!” you might not get any. Keep that nose to the grindstone! Besides, there are a lot of other things you like to do, games to play for instance – Blind Man’s Buff anyone? These are the things you’re used to. These are the things that frame your life. You can stay there. You can keep doing the things you always do as

you've always done them . . . but there's a bigger life waiting for you, and Jesus knows the way. Jesus IS the way!

There's a sizable crowd following him, of course, but sad to say, sometimes they can get in the way. They have their own way of doing things which are not always in keeping with his ways. I know, I'd like to think I'm a member of that sizable crowd. I try to be a follower, but I know I do things that could scare people away. It's part of my blindness. But if you can put up with the fact that his followers are a bunch of sinners and if you can trust him enough to give yourself over into his hands, I bet he can help you.

Call to him. "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." If he doesn't seem to hear you at first, keep calling. It's not that he's ignoring you, it's not that he's too busy, I think he does that sometimes to help us know our neediness. We have to know our neediness, we have to feel our need before we will be willing to do what it takes to deal with it.

So call to him, even if the crowd, those people who don't really know you, rebuke you, call to him "Son of David, have pity on me!" He will stop, he will listen, he will ask "What do you want me to do for you?"

Think about that. It's part of knowing your neediness. How are you blind? How are you clinging to things that keep you a blind and nameless beggar on the street? Then, when you are ready, tell him "Master, I want to see."

And if you really mean that he will say "Go your way; your faith has saved you." "Go your way" Jesus says. That may seem strange but, remember, he knows your true name, he knows what your true way is. I think that's why that original blind beggar, having gained his sight, followed Jesus on the way.

Can you think of a better way to go?