Our Deepest Needs

Mark 10:42-56

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Prayer: *Stillspeaking God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable to you, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.*

When someone rings the church doorbell asking for help, I always step out of my office to meet them. I greet them with a friendly, “What can I do for you today?” Most of the time, they’ll say they need gas money, a bus ticket, or help with a car repair. It’s interesting—most don’t ask for food. I have a personal rule not to give out cash; instead, I like to connect them with local charities and organizations.

But sometimes they respond, “I’ve already been there; they couldn’t help me. I just need a few dollars.”

“I’m really sorry, but I don’t have any cash to offer.”

Truthfully, it’s tough for me to hand out money because I can’t always be sure if they’re being honest or if they might use it for something else. I’ve had my share of surprises in the past! Plus, I worry that if I start giving, word might spread among their friends that I’m an easy target. Before long, I could find myself swamped with requests!

When Jesus asks blind Bartimaeus, “What do you want me to do for you?” it seems pretty obvious that Bartimaeus wants to see again—he's blind, after all! We can imagine he was a bit surprised by the question. But maybe there’s something deeper in what Jesus is really asking him.

In my years of ministry, I’ve learned that our most obvious needs are not always our deepest needs. The needs we show on the surface aren’t always the ones that run deepest. Sometimes, if I’m feeling brave enough, I’ll invite those who come asking for help into my office for a chat, hoping to understand more about their lives and their spiritual needs. Most of the time, though, they’ll say, “No, thanks,” before walking away."

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asks Bartimaeus.

He replies, “My teacher, I want to regain my sight.”

And just like that, Jesus heals his blindness. It's clear that Jesus meets his immediate needs. But then Jesus tells him, "Go, your faith has made you well." There's so much more to this story than just physical healing, and it all comes down to one keyword: *faith*. When Jesus says to Bartimaeus, "Your faith has made you well," he's highlighting the kind of faith that truly brings healing. The story focuses on faith rather than physical healing. Bartimaeus isn't just healed from his blindness—he experiences a profound spiritual healing as well. Jesus addresses his deepest needs.

When you ask a homeless person on the corner what they need, they might say they just want a few dollars, some clothes, or a meal. But what happens next once they have food, clean clothes, or a place to stay? When one need is met, another one often pops up, and then another, and another. Eventually, you start to uncover those deeper needs that aren't so obvious—needs that can make all the other ones seem less important or even unnecessary.

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

So, what do we truly want? Even better, what do we really **need**? We might think we want more knowledge, but perhaps what we actually need is wisdom. We often say we want to be happy, but deep down, we're really searching for joy. We want to be healthy, but maybe what we really need is to feel whole. We all yearn for success, but what truly fuels this desire? Is it the longing for acceptance, the hunger for recognition, or the thirst for validation? At our core, we yearn for more than mere existence, to be more than just alive. We aspire to be radiant and fully human. The truth is our deepest needs are rarely our most obvious needs.

Earlier in the Gospel of Mark, we see another miracle—the healing of a paralytic (Mark 2:1-12). Jesus is in a packed house, surrounded by so many people that there isn't even room by the door! Four friends are carrying the paralytic, trying to get him to Jesus, but they can't make it through the crowd. So, they come up with a clever idea: they climb up onto the roof, make a hole, and lower their friend down right in front of Jesus. What an amazing display of faith and determination!

When Jesus saw their faith, he turned to the paralytic and said, “Son, your sins are forgiven!”

Wait, what? That wasn’t what the man really needed at that moment—it wasn’t his obvious need. He wanted to walk! He was lying on his mat, unable to move at all. Any faith healer worth their salt would have said, “Stand up, take your mat, and walk!” It’s such a surprising response, but it makes us think about what Jesus truly saw in that moment.

Of course, Jesus eventually healed him physically, too. He told the paralytic, “I say to you, stand up, take your mat, and go home.” And with that, the man sprang to his feet, grabbed his mat, and walked home.

But first, Jesus forgave him of his sins. The story doesn’t spell it out, but maybe Jesus looked beyond all those obvious needs to see the man’s deepest need—the need for forgiveness. Perhaps Jesus also digs beneath Bartimaeus’ surface needs and recognizes what he truly longs for—faith and trust in God. Maybe Bartimaeus has struggled with bitterness and anger about being blind, and then he hears about Jesus—this amazing rabbi that people are following. He might feel like he needs someone worth following, someone he can trust not to lead him astray. Maybe what he really needs is a true friend, someone who understands him and believes in him. You can sense this when the people around him scold him, telling him to be quiet as he calls out, “Jesus! Son of David! Have mercy on me!” Some of those voices might even come from friends who don’t really see his heart.

But he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

And Jesus stopped walking and said, “Call him.”

So they called Bartimaeus. “Cheer up!” they said. “Get up! He is calling you.”

Maybe Bartimaeus saw Jesus as more than just a healer. He saw a real friend, someone who genuinely cared about him, someone who was willing to stop what he was doing to help. Maybe Bartimaeus felt a sense of belonging, a sense of peace, that he had never felt before. In Jesus, his deepest needs were finally being met.

What are your deepest needs today? Is it love? That feeling of being truly cherished and cared for? Or maybe it's acceptance—being embraced for who you are without having to prove anything. Perhaps you're seeking forgiveness, too, and not just any forgiveness, but that sweet, unconditional kind that comes with no strings attached. No ifs and buts.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asks. Sure, there are some wishes that might be easy to name. The obvious things. But when we dig down deep, there may be some needs hidden deep within. Some of which we may be too afraid to ask. Some hidden desires we haven't even admitted to ourselves.

Bartimaeus asked Jesus to make him see again. He asked an obvious need. But Jesus saw a deeper, less obvious desire. He said, "Go, your faith has made you well." But instead of going, Bartimaeus chose to stay. He fell in line behind Jesus and followed him on the road to Jerusalem. Maybe he realized there was so much more to sight than just being able to see. Perhaps he understood that he needed someone who could meet his deepest needs. So, he decided to follow Jesus.

And maybe that's why we follow, too. Maybe that's why we're here, too—whether in the church sanctuary or joining online. We come not just because our friends are here or because we enjoy the music and the choir or even the fellowship after the service, though those things are wonderful!

We're really here because we long for God to meet our deepest needs. And the good news is, God will meet those needs! Thanks be to God. Amen.