

Mark 10:46-52  
October 25, '09

**“ON THE WAY”**

IT'S JUST A TINY 3-WORD PHRASE.

THEY ARE THE FINAL WORDS OF THIS PASSAGE.

NOW, AS YOU READ THROUGH THE BOOK OF MARK, YOU MIGHT THINK IT'S JUST A RATHER INSIGNIFICANT PHRASE THAT ENDS THIS PASSAGE AND ALSO HAPPENS TO END THIS 10<sup>TH</sup> CHAPTER.

IT'S MORE THAN THAT, THOUGH.

FAR MORE.

THIS PASSAGE & THIS CHAPTER ENDS AN ENTIRE SECTION IN MARK.

IT'S KNOWN AS THE “DISCIPLESHIP” SECTION & COVERS TWO & A HALF CHAPTERS – CHAPTERS THAT ARE BOOKENDED BY HEALINGS OF THE BLIND.

IN CHAPTER 8, THE SECTION BEGINS WITH JESUS HEALING ANOTHER BLIND MAN & IT ENDS HERE WITH THE HEALING OF BLIND BARTIMAEUS – THE FINAL MIRACLE OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

THE VERY NEXT VERSE MARKS THE BEGINNING OF CHAPTER 11 & ALSO THE BEGINNING OF THE PASSION NARRATIVE.

*“WHEN THEY WERE APPROACHING JERUSALEM, AT BETHPHAGE AND BETHANY, NEAR THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, HE SENT TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES...”*

YOU RECOGNIZE THAT AS THE BEGINNING OF THE PALM SUNDAY PASSAGE – THE DAY JESUS ENTERED JERUSALEM AT THE BEGINNING OF HOLY WEEK – JUST 5 DAYS BEFORE THE CRUCIFIXION & EXACTLY ONE WEEK BEFORE THE RESURRECTION.

SO NOW LET'S GO BACK TO THAT LITTLE 3-WORD PHRASE THAT CONCLUDES THE “DISCIPLESHIP” SECTION OF MARK & PROVIDES THE SEGUE INTO PALM SUNDAY & THE PASSION NARRATIVE.

“ON THE WAY.”

“IMMEDIATELY HE REGAINED HIS SIGHT & FOLLOWED HIM *ON THE WAY.*”

IT'S A SIMPLE PHRASE – A SEEMINGLY INNOCUOUS THREE WORDS THAT CAN EASILY BE OVERLOOKED.

BUT THINK ABOUT THOSE THREE WORDS & HOW OFTEN WE USE THEM.

YOU LISTEN TO THOSE “ONSTAR” COMMERCIALS WITH SOMEONE BEING CONTACTED WHEN THEY'VE BEEN INVOLVED IN AN ACCIDENT.

THE CALM, REASSURING VOICE ALWAYS ENDS BY SAYING, “*HELP IS ON THE WAY.*”

A WIFE CALLS HER HUSBAND LATE IN THE AFTERNOON & SAYS, “*HONEY, WHEN YOU LEAVE THE OFFICE WOULD YOU STOP & PICK UP A GALLON OF MILK ON THE WAY?*”

IN THEIR WEATHER REPORT, JEFF LYONS OR WAYNE HART INFORM US THAT “*RAIN IS ON THE WAY.*”

YOU SEE A YOUNG, UP & COMING MUSICIAN & YOU PROCLAIM TO A FRIEND THAT “*SHE'S ON THE WAY TO THE BIG TIME.*”

LISTENING TO A BASEBALL GAME, YOU HEAR THE ANNOUNCER SAY "...AND THE 3-2 DELIVERY IS ON THE WAY."

IT'S A VERY COMMON, EVERYDAY PHRASE THAT WE USE WITHOUT EVEN THINKING ABOUT IT.

BUT HERE, IN MARK'S GOSPEL, IT SAYS A BUNDLE.

REMEMBER THE PREVIOUS ENCOUNTERS JESUS HAD IN THIS DISCIPLESHIP SECTION OF MARK?

TWO WEEKS AGO, WE LOOKED AT A MAN WHO CAME TO HIM WANTING TO KNOW HOW TO FIND ETERNAL LIFE.

LAST WEEK, WE LOOKED AT JAMES & JOHN WHO WANTED PLACES OF HONOR, POWER & AUTHORITY IN HIS KINGDOM.

BUT HERE – HERE WE HAVE A MAN WHO JUST WANTS TO BE ABLE TO SEE.

BARTIMAEUS SAYS, *"I'M NOT LOOKING FOR ETERNAL LIFE. I DON'T CARE ABOUT POWER. I'M NOT CONCERNED ABOUT POSITION OR HONOR OR AUTHORITY. NONE OF THOSE THINGS MATTER TO ME. I JUST WANT TO BE ABLE TO SEE!"*

WHEN JESUS HEALS BARTIMAEUS OF HIS BLINDNESS, HE TELLS HIM TO "GO."

*"GO. YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL."*

HE'D GOTTEN WHAT HE WANTED & HE WAS FREE TO LEAVE.

HE WAS FREE TO GO BACK HOME & LIVE THE NEW LIFE THAT JESUS HAD GIVEN HIM WITH HIS RESTORED SIGHT.

BUT HE DIDN'T DO IT.

HE DIDN'T TURN AROUND & WALK AWAY.

HE WASN'T LIKE THE RICH MAN WHO COULDN'T BRING HIMSELF TO MAKE THE SACRIFICE JESUS WAS ASKING OF HIM.

HE WASN'T LIKE THE DISCIPLES, WHOSE SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS KEPT THEM FROM UNDERSTANDING THE PATH JESUS WAS ASKING THEM TO FOLLOW.

NO, BARTIMAEUS CAN FINALLY SEE.

NOT ONLY HAS HE BEEN GIVEN PHYSICAL SIGHT BUT HE'S ALSO BEEN GIVEN THE SPIRITUAL SIGHT TO SEE WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW JESUS ON THE WAY.

HE'S NOW ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS.

HE'S NOW ON THE WAY TO DISCIPLESHIP.

HE'S NOW ON THE WAY TO SERVICE & COMMITMENT.

HE *"FOLLOWED HIM ON THE WAY."*

*"ON THE WAY,"* THOUGH, DOESN'T SIGNIFY ARRIVAL.

YES, HE ENCOUNTERED JESUS.

YES, HIS SIGHT WAS RESTORED.

BUT THAT DIDN'T COMPLETE HIS JOURNEY.

HE WAS SIMPLY "ON THE WAY" TO WHOLENESS.

THIS, TO ME, IS ONE OF THE MOST PROFOUND LESSONS WE CAN ALL LEARN FROM THE STORY OF BARTIMAEUS.

WE WANT LIFE TO BE NEAT & TIDY.

WE WANT OUR FAITH TO BE NEAT & TIDY.

WE WANT THE PEOPLE AROUND US IN CHURCH TO LIVE LIVES THAT ARE NEAT & TIDY.

THAT'S NOT THE WAY REAL LIFE WORKS, THOUGH, IS IT?

OH, WE PRETEND THAT IT DOES.

YOU PRETEND THAT EVERYTHING IS FINE IN YOUR LIFE BECAUSE, AS YOU LOOK AROUND, EVERYBODY ELSE IS FINE & SO YOU CONCLUDE THAT YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S OUT OF STEP.

DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU THAT EVERYONE ELSE IS PRETENDING, JUST AS YOU ARE?

LOOK AGAIN AT BARTIMAEUS.

HE STANDS AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD AS JESUS GOES BY.

HERE, HE'S NOT "ON THE WAY" BUT MORE "ON THE SIDEWAY."

HE CRIES OUT TO JESUS – OUR TRANSLATION SAYS HE "SHOUTED."

THE PEOPLE ARE APPALLED.

MARK SAYS, "*MANY STERNLY ORDERED HIM TO BE QUIET.*"

*"SHHH! HUSH UP! WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE REVERENT & RESERVED IN THE PRESENCE OF THIS GREAT MAN. AND BESIDES, YOU'RE KIND OF A MESS WHILE THE REST OF US HAVE IT ALL TOGETHER."*

SURE – THEY HAVE IT ALL TOGETHER.

THERE WERE PROBABLY A FEW MORE RICH, YOUNG RULERS NEARBY, LOOKING FOR AN EASY WAY TO GET TO HEAVEN.

AND THERE WERE THE DISCIPLES IN THEIR SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

BUT YOU CAN'T LET ANYONE SEE!

YOU HAVE TO AT LEAST PRETEND TO BE ON TOP OF THINGS.

WHEN OUR BOYS WERE YOUNG, WE HAD A HOUSEKEEPER FOR A WHILE.

SHE'D COME EVERY TUESDAY MORNING FOR A FEW HOURS.

I REMEMBER HOW MUCH I DREADED MONDAYS BECAUSE IT MEANT CLEANING THE HOUSE TO GET READY FOR THE HOUSEKEEPER!

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THAT DOESN'T MAKE A LOT OF SENSE, DOES IT?

AND YET WE DID IT – EVERY WEEK.

DO YOU FIND THAT YOU DO THE SAME THING WITH GOD?

YOUR LIFE IS A MESS & SO YOU WANT TO GET EVERYTHING CLEANED UP BEFORE ALLOWING GOD TO ENTER.

YOU KEEP YOUR DISTANCE IN YOUR PRAYER LIFE, IN YOUR READING OF THE BIBLE, IN YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

YOU WANT TO GET IT ALL TOGETHER BEFORE YOU LET GOD INSIDE BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT GOD TO SEE WHAT A MESS YOUR LIFE REALLY IS.

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS AS THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN ROLLING AROUND IN MY MIND, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO APPROACH THIS WHOLE TOPIC OF BEING HONEST WITH GOD ABOUT WHO WE REALLY ARE.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO DETERMINE HOW TO MAKE THE POINT THAT WE NEED TO COME TO AN ACCEPTANCE OF THE FACT THAT, NO MATTER WHO WE ARE & NO MATTER HOW FAR ALONG WE ARE IN OUR CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE, WE'RE STILL SIMPLY "ON THE WAY" TO BECOMING WHO GOD WOULD HAVE US BECOME.

EARLY THIS WEEK, AS SO OFTEN HAPPENS, SOMEONE HANDED ME A BOOK TO LOOK AT – A BOOK THEY FOUND VERY HELPFUL & THOUGHT-PROVOKING.

THE TITLE OF THE BOOK SAID IT ALL – MESSY SPIRITUALITY: GOD'S ANNOYING LOVE FOR IMPERFECT PEOPLE.

NOW I SUPPOSE I COULD HAVE TAKEN OFFENSE AT SOMEONE GIVING ME A BOOK WITH A TITLE LIKE THAT.

WAS SHE TRYING TO SUGGEST SOMETHING?!

WAS SHE TRYING TO SUGGEST THAT I MIGHT BE ONE OF THOSE "IMPERFECT PEOPLE?"

I HOPE SO, BECAUSE IF THAT'S THE CASE, SHE WAS DEAD ON!

BUT WHAT SHE WAS REALLY TRYING TO SAY WAS THAT IT SPOKE TO HER & IT MIGHT SPEAK TO ME AND IT MIGHT SPEAK TO ALL OF US.

WE'RE ALL SIMPLY "ON THE WAY" IN OUR JOURNEY OF FAITH & THE SOONER WE QUIT TRYING TO PRETEND THAT WE'VE ARRIVED, THE SOONER WE'LL BE ABLE TO GET ON WITH THE REST OF THE JOURNEY.

WHY DO WE ALWAYS TRY TO FAKE IT & MAKE IT SEEM LIKE LIFE IS SIMPLE & EASY & WE'VE GOT IT ALL TOGETHER?

WHY CAN'T WE JUST BE HONEST – HONEST WITH OURSELVES, HONEST WITH EACH OTHER & HONEST WITH GOD & SAY, *"MY LIFE ISN'T WHAT I WISH IT WERE. IT'S NOT WHAT IT COULD BE. I'M NOT WHERE I WANT TO BE. I'M JUST STUMBLING ON THE WAY."*

IN MY FIRST CHURCH OUT OF SEMINARY, THERE WAS A YOUNG MAN ABOUT MY AGE WHO BECAME A GOOD FRIEND, BUT FOR SEVERAL YEARS, I NEVER REALLY KNEW HIM BECAUSE IT WAS DIFFICULT TO TALK TO HIM.

HE WAS VERY INTELLIGENT & HAD A GOOD JOB BUT HE WASN'T ABLE TO COMMUNICATE VERY EASILY.

YOU SEE, DON WAS A VERY PROFOUND STUTTERER.

WHEN I SAY PROFOUND, I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT SOMEONE WHO WOULD SAY, "*HH-I. I-I-'M D-D-DON. G-G-G-OOD TO M-MEET YOU.*"

IT WOULD TAKE HIM SEEMINGLY FOREVER TO GET SOMETHING LIKE THAT OUT.

WELL, DON WAS ELECTED TO THE SESSION & WE HAD A SIMILAR ARRANGEMENT TO WHAT WE HAVE HERE AT EASTMINSTER WHERE THE ELDERS SERVED AS LITURGIST IN WORSHIP.

WE GAVE DON A PASS AS WE ALWAYS DO HERE WITH ANYONE WHO WOULD RATHER NOT BE LITURGIST.. BUT DON DIDN'T WANT A PASS.

HE WANTED TO BE ABLE TO TAKE HIS TURN AS LITURGIST.

AND HE DID.

I'LL NEVER FORGET WHAT IT WAS LIKE THE FIRST TIME DON STOOD IN THE PULPIT & ADDRESSED THE CONGREGATION WITH AN INVITATION SIMILAR TO WHAT OUR LITURGIST SAYS EVERY SUNDAY MORNING.

*"LET US JOIN TOGETHER IN THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION PRINTED IN THE BULLETIN."*

3 MINUTES.

THAT'S HOW LONG IT TOOK DON TO GET THAT ONE SIMPLE SENTENCE OUT.

I'M NOT EXAGGERATING.

EMMA SUE WILL ATTEST TO THE FACT THAT 3 MINUTES IS NOT AN EXAGGERATION.

I WAS SITTING BEHIND HIM & I LOOKED OUT AT THE CONGREGATION OF NEARLY 800 WORSHIPERS AS EVERYONE AGONIZED RIGHT ALONG WITH HIM.

BUT DON WASN'T AFRAID TO SAY "*THIS IS WHO I AM. I'M NOT AFRAID TO ALLOW MYSELF TO BE SEEN FOR WHO I REALLY AM. I'M NOT GOING TO WAIT UNTIL MY LIFE IS IN ORDER TO LET YOU SEE ME & I'M NOT GOING TO PRETEND THAT EVERYTHING'S OKAY, BECAUSE IT'S NOT.*"

IT WAS A TREMENDOUS LESSON FOR EVERYONE IN THAT CONGREGATION.

WE'RE ALL IMPERFECT PEOPLE – STUMBLING THROUGH LIFE, DESPERATELY CRYING OUT – OR SHOUTING OUT AS BARTIMAEUS DID – FOR JESUS TO TOUCH US & HEAL US & DELIVER US FROM WITH WHATEVER BLINDNESS AFFLICTS US.

THE LESSON WE CAN LEARN FROM BARTIMAEUS IS THAT IT'S OKAY TO BE BLIND.

IT'S OKAY TO BE IMPERFECT.

IT'S OKAY TO BE A MESS.

IN FACT, WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE STORIES OF JESUS IN THE GOSPELS, IT'S TO YOU WHO ARE BLIND, IMPERFECT & A MESS THAT HE IS PARTICULARLY DRAWN.

IT'S YOU THAT HE LONGS TO SEE JOIN HIM ON THE WAY.

I MUST TELL YOU ONE MORE THING ABOUT MY FRIEND DON.

AFTER LIVING VIRTUALLY HIS ENTIRE LIFE WITH HIS SEVERE STUTTERING AFFLICTION, HE WAS CHOSEN TO PARTICIPATE IN A NEW FORM OF THERAPY TO ALLEVIATE HIS PROBLEM.

AFTER 6 MONTHS OR SO OF HIS TREATMENT & AFTER WE'D BEEN FRIENDS FOR NEARLY 5 YEARS, WE DROVE TO A PRESBYTERY MEETING ONE EVENING – A MEETING THAT WAS NEARLY AN HOUR AWAY.

THOSE TWO HOURS – ONE *ON THE* WAY THERE & ONE *ON THE* WAY BACK WERE AMONG THE MOST MEMORABLE HOURS I'VE EVER SPENT BECAUSE THE TREATMENT HAD WORKED.

IT HAD WORKED FAR BETTER THAN ANYONE HAD ANTICIPATED.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, I COULD TALK TO DON – WELL, MORE ACCURATELY – LISTEN TO DON.

AND THAT'S WHAT I DID.

I LISTENED AS HE TALKED UP A STORM.

DON'T GET ME WRONG – HE WASN'T COMPLETELY CURED & PROBABLY NEVER WOULD BE.

THAT DIDN'T MATTER.

DON WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT & ACKNOWLEDGE HIS FLAWS & IN SEARCHING FOR WHOLENESS, HE WAS WELL ON THE WAY. AMEN.

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