

What do you see?

When I first started out repairing coffee machines, I knew next to nothing as to how they worked, what to look for especially automatic machines. For some of them it was a puzzle as to even how to open the front door! Much like when faced with my first computer, where is the on/off switch.

Over time you begin to learn what to look for, you begin to see the machine differently it is no longer a mass of wires copper tanks and seemingly incomprehensible piping systems.

When approaching a machine now it is no longer a total mystery, there is order in the seeming chaos, there is a logic and a reason why each component is there, what is meant to do and what happens when it does not function in the way it was designed to operate.

What do you see?

An apprentice of whatever ilk when first starting out will look at what is in front to them with little comprehension with little understanding as to either what is taking place, why it is happening and how it all fits together. They may have a burning desire and focus to learn the trade to master the complexities etc but at the start and even along the way there are levels of experience they just do not know, and need to learn.

A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing.

What do you see?

A master craftsman one who has been working in their trade for many years can see things a layperson or a novice cannot. An good experienced teacher can see in his or her classroom, and so handle the activity and environment of that classroom what is needed to get the students to achieve the best outcome they can.

It is what they see, and the knowledge of what needs to be done, the focus the perseverance and the faith.

Mark 10:46-52

The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus

(Mt 20:29–34; Lk 18:35–43)

⁴⁶ They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁹ Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” ⁵⁰ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher,^{g1} let me see again.” ⁵² Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his

1 ^g Aramaic *Rabbouni*

sight and followed him on the way.²

We often come to a passage a story an account in the bible and have the unfortunate tendency to read just the one small part, not looking wider not reading wider to see or reflect upon the context of what is happening.

The healing of Bartimaeus is a marvellous miracle, this blind man begging on the side of the road is healed, he shows perseverance, focus and faith which is highly commended. It is a wonderful thing in its own right and salutary in the example of faith that Bartimaeus demonstrates, and what he does in response to his healing.

He was blind but now he sees!

He was begging sitting at the side of the road now he is walking on the way!

He was being told to shut and be quiet but his persistent loud cries bring him to Jesus' attention and he is encouraged and healed.

Waiting for others to give and to sustain him, on the sidelines of the life of the community, now he is in the middle of the crowd, walking with Jesus.

The contrasts are extreme and wonderful.

But that is not all that is happening here, it is not just this miracle of sight to the blind, or the reward of faith to the faithful, though that has happened, there is the wider contrast that gives the question, what do we see?

Earlier in chapter we have a couple of scene setting stories that contrast with what we have with Bartimaeus.

First one is the encounter that Jesus has with the rich young ruler, the man who wanted to please God who was looking to follow Jesus, asking what was needed. On hearing that it what was lacking in his life was his abundance of material possessions, that what he lacked was to sell all he had, not some of it but all of it put his entire trust in Jesus for everything and follow, it was a bridge to far. He couldn't take that step for it says he had many possessions. He goes away sorrowful.

The disciples are shocked at this, and question Jesus on who can be saved? In essence no one!

At least not by their own effort, not by their own skill, discipline, energy or ability, no one can be saved it is impossible. But, but with God all things are possible!

The focus has to be on Jesus if anyone is to be saved, the rich young man's focus was at this point in his life on his possessions, not on Jesus. There can be no other contenders for the throne of the heart, for the focus of life than Jesus, is in essence what is being said, any other focus, putting our trust in any other place, will not get us saved.

So Jesus gives them the teaching that firstly salvation is impossible for people to do on their own but with God all things are possible, (which is a great relief, and encouragement for us).

Yet there are a couple of the disciples there, James and John the sons of Thunder, or Zebedee, who's focus is not on Jesus' or his teaching at this particular point and time.

For Jesus goes on to tell them all again why he is going to Jerusalem. It is not just for the festival of Passover, it is so that he can be handed over to the rulers and authorities, so that he can be flogged and so that he can die! Yes and three days later be raised from the dead, but he is deliberately going to

2 *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Mk 10:46–52). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Jerusalem, deliberately going into harms way for that is why he came to serve not be served, to give his life as a ransom for many, so that rich young men, and poor fishermen can be saved!

Yet the disciples, like apprentices, who have gained a certain amount of knowledge and insight, have their eyes and dreams on much grander things than death! They have taken their eyes of Jesus, of learning from him, they have become dangerously knowledgable, and instead of seeing the trial, the cup that Jesus has to take and the reason why, nor even the call that he gave them at the very start, that he would make them fishers of men. They see only glory and grandeur, power and prestige. This clouds their vision clouds their thinking and taking Jesus aside, they ask Jesus to grant their request and he says this to them;
What do you want me to do for you?

Power, prestige, glory and honour is what we want.

Can you pay the price?

Sure thing!

You will pay the price but to sit at my right or left is not mine to grant but it is for those for whom it has been prepared!

Jesus then in calming the all the disciples tells them the Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

He is at once telling them off but also teaching them, for the are apprentices still. It is useful to remember that, as it is easy to right them off in the same way we are eager to right the scribes rulers, etc off, forgetting that we sometimes sit in the same place, and we sometimes do the same things. We also need to be taught, and refocus our attention on who it is we are following on who it is we are. We are if we have been called to Jesus accepted his offer of salvation, followed Him we are disciples, apprentices, juniour counsels, learning the way of the Master.

Their focus had shifted and is now brought back.

Their reliance and perseverance was waning, and it is now refocused, retrained!

The scene is now set, and is now changed to our encounter once more.

Busy road, with a large following of people, all on their way to Jerusalem, for the Passover festival, for Jesus this was the last road, the road to the cross, he has set his face to Jerusalem, knowing what is ahead.

Sight to the blind, physically, spiritually, emotionally.

Then we come to Bartimaeous a beggar, blind, and on the edge, sitting on the ground. He knows a real need, he knows he is on the outer, dependant on the grace of others, not able to do much for himself, except beg. Excluded from the fellowship of the main community. He hears the great many feet, he has placed himself in a strategic place on the edge of the city, on the edge of the main road to Jerusalem. He knows the time of the year that there will be many pilgrims going from Jericho to Jerusalem, he knows that they are also obligated to give alms to the poor, so he has placed himself in the best place he can find to take advantage of the situation.

The blind man Baritmaeous sees more than all the sighted, more than the rich man, more than the crowd who told him to shut up one minute and the next encourage him.

He sees more than the disciples who a short time before argue over who will be the greatest!

He sees Jesus Son of David, Saviour, healer, Master, Rabbi!

What allows a blind man to see more than twelve who can open their eyes?

Why does the poor beggar, have more sight than the one who has the most?

It's his focus, knowing his need, aware of his lack, that there is nothing to lose, (unlike the rich man) knowing this might be his one and only chance, he calls out, persevering until he is answered, focusing on Jesus Son of David, ignoring all the others who set themselves up to dissuade to shut him up to exclude him. Holding onto a desperate hope that Jesus is who he hopes him to be and able to do what he longs for him to do.

What do you want me to do for you?

Master I want to see again!

Clarity and precise in his request, it was not for personal power or prestige or riches, just to physically see again, to then as a result enter once more into the life of the community into its worship of God. Jesus heals him with a word, "Go, your faith has healed you"

The term used here the Greek word used is used also in other contexts for saved, you could say that because of his faith he was physically healed and spiritually saved!

Then one of the most telling and easily overlooked lines in Marks Gospel, "Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way"

Jesus in another place says "I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me"

Bartimaeus is healed, he can now see what his insight had lead him to, and he follows Jesus on the way his name coming down the centuries to us as an example of great faith. Of sight greater than what could be only physically perceived!

What are we blind to see?

Are we blind to that which is around us, are we blind to the pain and disillusion the lies that we tell ourselves as individuals or as a society?

Are we blind to the truth, and instead replacing it with lies, with half truths, with phantoms, longing for a healing that is out of our reach?

Are we hiding behind our ambition?

How can we see what is real and what is important?

Do we see Him, Jesus Son of David is our focus set on finding him following him?
Or are we blind, bumping around in the dark, trying to figure it all out on our own, struggling to get through each day each hour, do we see Him? Do we dare to cry out Have mercy on me?

If we do are we prepared then to have our eyes opened and then to follow him, despite the prevailing society and culture that every day moves further and further away from truth and into delusion.

What do you see, when you look around your life, your neighbourhood?

Can we as followers of the Way the Truth and the Life, disciples of Jesus Son of David, see as He sees, can we serve as he served?

To see our neighbours, our friends our work colleagues as Jesus sees them, to see the interruptions to our day our schedule our life from those who make us uncomfortable as possible opportunities to serve as Jesus served?

More importantly even than that, and preceding that is this question. Are we needing this day this morning to refocus on Jesus, to be brought back to what is important once more, after being distracted with daydreams or sights that clouded our vision?

Can we see Jesus? If not are we willing to cry out as Bartimaeus did Jesus Son of David have mercy on me?

To ask of Him what is on our heart to ask, specifically?

Do we really want to see Him, Jesus Son of David?

This is a journey, following Jesus, learning to see as he does, learning to serve as he does, learning and being transformed more and more into his likeness, much like an apprentice.
Asking looking, copying the Master, following Him in the way.