

## God's First Response - Jesus

King of Glory Lutheran

Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

October 23-24, 2021

Worship, Grow, Serve Generosity Appeal

### Mark 10:46-52

<sup>46</sup>As [Jesus] and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>48</sup>Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>49</sup>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." <sup>50</sup>So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup>Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." <sup>52</sup>Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

*'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus, God's first responder, asks us how He can help us. Bartimaeus wanted to see. Some of us want to hear, or know, or walk, or understand, or just not hurt. The challenge in the story is that not everyone we know gets healed. We won't know why until God returns or we die. The Good News, is that God stops, notices us in our pain and responds. We can see God in the First Responders all around us.*

God's healing grace and peace be upon you and with you this day. Amen.

As we heard in Ron Nolan's temple talk, he has had personal experience with receiving help from medical personnel – first responders. Thank you, Ron, for sharing your story with us.

The third initiative that the Generosity and Leadership Team decided upon for this year's Generosity Appeal is for First Responders, particularly the Loveland Fire Department.

Every congregation understands the need for using financial gifts to buy Bibles for Sunday school and pay the electric bill and employees. But every healthy congregation understands the need for and the joy of giving money away. King of Glory is an incredibly generous congregation. We know the money we give to World Hunger or KidsPak or House of Neighborly Service changes lives. This

kind of outreach reminds us, what God has given us is not only for our use. It is for the good of all God's people.

Over the last year as Covid cases were on the rise, First Responders have been in the news. At the beginning of the pandemic, we went out on our front porches at 8 pm to ring bells for all the medical workers. First responders included nurses, doctors, hospital employees of all sorts including the kitchen staff! Policemen and women give their best to keep our communities safe. Then in August, the terrible Cameron Peak fire came and fire fighters from all over the country came to lend a hand.

We have a unique opportunity with Fire House #2 right down the street. These amazing people respond when there is a medical crisis. They fight fires. Then they do all sorts of other things like change batteries in smoke alarms and educate children, and supply carbon monoxide alarms to families who cannot buy their own. Talk about responding!

My message is to let you know the Leadership of King of Glory think it healthy stewardship to give financially to First Responders, our Fire department, who are still in the thick of this pandemic. But this sermon is also about God as a first responder. God who stops to heal and hold.

Jesus responded when he heard the call for help. Although there were a large crowd and people trying to shush blind Bartimaeus, Jesus heard the cry and He stopped. He stood still. Then He said to Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?"

When I went to my Doctor last week, he said the same. "What can I do for you?" I'll bet yours has said the same!

First responders, people in caring professions....Jesus....want to know how they can help.

The crowd following Jesus that day, didn't want the Lord to be bothered by this blind beggar. They tried to make a choice for Jesus by telling Bartimaeus to be quiet.

We are getting better at it, yet there are times when individuals and groups simply don't know what to do with a person who is sick or grieving or lives with a physical handicap. A woman recently told her story of needing a wheelchair when

she was a very young girl. When the time came for her to enter Kindergarten, her mother pushed her to school. This was before ADA regulations so there were no ramps, only stairs, so her mother pulled the daughter in her chair up the steps. When they finally got inside, the principal told her mother, “Your daughter cannot come to school. She is a fire hazard.” (PBS Newshour. Brief but Spectacular, Thursday, October 21, 2021 <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/a-brief-but-spectacular-take-on-the-disability-rights-movement>)

“She is a fire hazard.” Can you imagine being told you are a fire hazard? I think I would have had some choice words for that principal about what is and what is not a fire hazard! Lord in your mercy!

Do you see? Some folks try to steal one’s identity and soul simply because one is differently-abled. Not dis-abled. Or they try to push them into the shadows. ‘Bartimaeus, be quiet!’

But we can take from this story that Jesus responded first and in His own way. If today you are hurting in any way: grieving, living with chronic illness, or have an upcoming surgery, know this promise. God sees you. God stops to be with you, stands in your presence to ask you what you need. Our Lord doesn’t allow others to decide how He should treat you. Our Lord acts of His own accord, from His own deep abiding well of love and mercy. “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus said.

Bartimaeus responds, “Let me see again.”

People of God what do you want? Be honest with God, tell the Lord exactly what you desire. He is listening. Maybe you want to hear, or the pain to go away. Perhaps you need strength or healing for a long-standing family quarrel. Tell God what you need and want. Take a minute, right now. Go ahead. What do you want?

For blind Bartimaeus, that day he could suddenly see the trees. The rocks on the road. The colors of people’s eyes and clothing. Bartimaeus got the healing he desired. Praise God!

The challenging part of the story is healing for whatever reason doesn’t always come to us as we would wish. You already know this. One person recovers and the other remains on the prayer chain. One person can fight off Covid and the next family is planning a funeral.

Even this knowledge can be extremely painful. You and I live within a sinful broken world. We will in a broken creation that will never be completely restored until Jesus comes again to redeem and restore all of creation including our very bodies.

But I promise you this! Just as Jesus stopped to respond, to listen and to heal Bartimaeus that day, I promise you there has never been a funeral Jesus has not attended. Jesus has been in every hospital room, sat on every couch where you lay, He was with your loved one during their funeral when you were crying.

He comes through the ambulance staff, the ER nurse who promises the needle won't hurt too badly. Jesus is in the doctor's kind eyes and the therapists' extra five minutes. He comes in the strong arms of the fireman. Jesus stops. He heals – in God's own way and in God's own time for God's own reasons.

Just remember that even God's question opens space for healing. "What do you want me to do for you?"

Today we pray with thanksgiving for those connected to our congregation through whom God does acts of healing:

Jason / Josh / Tracy / Trisha / Nicole / Faye / Rindy / Jeff / Lana / Dee/ Gara / John / Betty / Maddi / Tom / David

We also give thanks for the men and women of the Loveland Fire Department, especially Fire House #2. God bless them.

Amen