

Mark 10:46-52
Pentecost 22
St. Mark's – October 24, 2021
William Grow

Right Time, Right Place, Right Reason

In today's Gospel we are introduced to Bartimaeus, a poor, blind man. He has heard that Jesus, a person capable of doing miracles, of curing people of their afflictions, will be going up from Jericho to Jerusalem. He has gotten up early so he can get a good spot along the side of the road that Jesus must take. He sits and places his cloak on his lap in order to catch coins tossed his way.

He waits. Soon he hears a throng of voices as a crowd approaches. He cries out to Jesus, but is told to hush, to be quiet. This only makes him call even louder. Jesus hears Bartimaeus and tells him to come forward. Bartimaeus throws off his cloak, which in itself is an act of faith. For in those days a cloak was a most prized possession. It provided warmth during the day and was used as a blanket at night. He gives up his position and goes to Jesus.

Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus replies, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said, "Go. Your faith has made you well." Bartimaeus immediately gains his sight and follows Jesus on his way.

Faith, and in this case we might say blind faith, faith in Jesus, allows Bartimaeus to regain his sight. It was not just a matter of being in the right place at the right time that allowed Bartimaeus to regain his sight. It was his faith in Jesus that put him there, at that time, at that place, for that reason.

Sometimes it is not just faith that puts a person at the right place at the right time. As Mordeci said to Esther, "Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." What does that mean? What does it have to do with anything?

Well, Mordeci was instrumental in getting Esther to marry the king and become his queen. At this time the king had an adviser named Haman. Haman despised Mordeci and all Jews. He had a plot to hang Mordeci and kill all of the Jews in the kingdom.

Mordeci found this out, told Esther and asked her to tell the king what Haman was plotting. She was afraid to do so, because at this time no one, not even the

queen could approach the king without first being summoned for fear of their life. Hence Mordeci's statement, "Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." In other words, "Perhaps you are in this, the right place, at this, the right time, in order to save us all."

Esther found the courage to go to the king and told him of the plot. The king put a stop to it, hung Haman on the gallows Haman had built for Mordeci and the entire Jewish population was saved.

As you may recall from the readings of prior weeks, Jesus has been trying to prepare his followers for what he knows is coming. He knows what is going to happen to him. What must happen to him in order to save us – to give us eternal life in the kingdom of Heaven.

The gospels provide information about his death on the cross. They record seven last words or phrases or sentences that he says while on the cross. One of them is, "My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?" Some scholars think that he is feeling alone and that he may have lost contact with God. Others think he is starting to recite the 22nd Psalm, which starts with those words.

The psalm starts in a very dark manner, proceeds through what Jesus must endure for us, and ends in the glorious understanding of God's kingdom. Jesus was sent to us by God for this very purpose. I believe he had no choice but to be at the right place, at the right time, for the right reason.

I have read that through baptism we are all brought to "royal dignity" in the Kingdom of God. We all might experience one or more moments in our lives where we are at the right place, at the right time, for the right purpose.

Two weeks ago, Michelle told us about her friend Margo. As you may recall, Margo was suffering through debilitation caused by an ALS type disease. Michelle was able to spend a lot of time with Margo as she got more and more ill.

It was through this closeness that Michelle said she felt as though she was transformed by the experience. I am sure that Margo was helped greatly by having Michelle with her, by her side, helping her to ease from this life to the next. Michelle was at the right place, at the right time, and for the right purpose.

I feel that today I have come to royal dignity for just such a moment as this. Michelle has been spending a lot of time working with me. As a self proclaimed “Church Geek”, she has been trying hard to impart the customs of the church, knowledge of how we came to be Episcopalians, and the right way to perform throughout the service.

She has also been gently prodding me to prepare a homily. I told her I did not think I would be able to do so, but she continued to lead me in that direction. I asked how long it takes her to prepare her weekly sermons and she said about an hour for each spoken minute. That just gave me further doubts about my ability to do so. Yet, here I stand before you today.

She did such a good job that I began to think that maybe I am supposed to become a priest. One afternoon I sat down in a quiet place, closed my eyes and began to pray. When I got to the point of asking God if I should pursue that endeavor, I got an almost immediate, three word answer to my question. It came so quickly into my mind that it startled me and I opened my eyes. The answer was, “No. Help her.”

Father Brian was removed from us suddenly and we don’t know how long it will take before he can return to us. In the mean time Michelle has been taking care of this flock, this church, and ensuring we have the ability to come to this beautiful place and continue to hear the words of our Lord.

The Church is defined in the Episcopal dictionary as, “The community of faith headed by Christ, the body of Christ in the world.” I was reminded that the church is often referred to in a feminine manner. For example, as stated in Ephesians, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Jesus loved the church and gave himself up for her.”

My duty is clear. Help her! By helping her, Michelle, I will help her, the church. I hope you all will continue with me in helping her. We are in the right place, at the right time, for the right reason to do so.