

January 8 Adult Spiritual Growth Class Synopsis

Let There Be Light: A Study of FPC Stained-Glass Windows – Jesus Healing The Blind Man

First Presbyterian Church has been blessed with parishioner memorial gifts of 15 beautiful stained-glass windows over the years, as summarized in the wonderful guide put together by Virginia Wiley in 1990, as part of the 175 year anniversary celebration of the church. The window of focus is Jesus healing the blind man, located in the right back side of the sanctuary, facing the pulpit, and framed in the upper medallion.

In the window, we see a beautiful pictorial of Jesus healing the blind beggar Bartimaeus as shared in Mark 10:46-52. As with the previous windows, this window is bordered with leaves of green laurel symbolizing the triumph of eternal life and with leaves of golden oak signifying God's glory and strength. The upper medallion is framed in an ornate gold mandala, which symbolizes the everlasting life that God has given us in Christ Jesus through His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. On top of the mandala rests an angel, robed in blue on a half shell, who is God's messenger of the Good News of His sacrificial love, saving grace, and everlasting hope sent from heaven that is present throughout our life's faith journey.

Pictured is one of the last miracles performed by Jesus as he is completing his final journey to Jerusalem as King and Savior. We see that the healing takes place along the Jordan River near Jericho with the backdrop of Elijah's Hill and in the vicinity of His baptism, which took place 3 years earlier. We see Jesus and a disciple standing with an unknown man along with a blind beggar kneeling before Jesus. Jesus is shown with the Divine nimbus, dressed in gold tunic representing God's glory and strength and red cloak symbolizing His suffering and sacrifice that is to soon follow. The disciple shown with nimbus and dressed in a green tunic and burgundy cloak is likely Matthew, given his personal account of Jesus healing two blind men in Matthew 20:29-34. The blind beggar, who Mark names Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus (meaning honor in Greek), is shown with a beggar's crutch and is dressed in a simple, worn, pale yellow/brown tunic with a red sash. The beggar's sash is the same red as Christ's tunic, possibly symbolic of the "Belt of Truth", as the beggar exclaims publicly Jesus's identity, "Jesus, the Son of David". The beggar wears no cloak, which is consistent with Mark's account that he threw off his cloak running to Jesus, a cloak that would have likely been a government issue allowing him to beg. It could also be symbolic of removing a self-reliance in the security of a cloak that protects from the elements but prevents us to rely upon Jesus as Lord. The unknown man dressed in a gold tunic and burgundy cloak may possibly be one from the crowd who told Bartimaeus to be silent but who praised God after the healing. He may also be the second blind man yet to be healed in Matthew's account since his eyes appear to be closed. Amid the healing, we see a green oak tree along the river bank, signifying God's eternal strength. We recall the prophet in Jeremiah 17:8 comparing the righteous man to a tree with deep roots, which is able to withstand any drought or storm. In Psalm 1:3, King David praises the man who is "like a tree planted by streams of water," whose "roots go down deep into the soil." One such man is now Bartimaeus who has been healed and made right by the faith that Christ has given him.

The healing is shared in all three synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Each story varies some which indicates that they may be one or more healings. The Mark and Luke accounts occur with Jesus healing one blind beggar while approaching Jericho. Mark names the blind man Bartimaeus, while remaining unnamed with Luke. Mark also has Bartimaeus throwing his cloak aside and running to Jesus.

Matthew's account occurs with Jesus leaving Jericho and includes two unnamed blind men. All three accounts are consistent with 1) the blind man (men) shouts to Jesus, "Son of David, have mercy on me (us)"; 2) the crowd rebukes the blind man (men) but he (they) is persistent in calling to Jesus, 3) Jesus asks the blind man (men), "What do you want me to do for you?", 4) the response to Jesus' question being, "I (we) want to see", 5) the blind man (men) is healed, and 6) the blind man (men) follows Jesus. In Mark and Luke, Jesus states that "your faith has healed you" while Matthew has Jesus touching the blind men's eyes. Luke has all of the crowd who sees the miracle praising God.

The story of the healing also has a particular interest in what precedes it. In all three synoptic Gospels (Mark 10:32-34, Matthew 20:17-19, and Luke 18:31-33), Jesus foretells his death to his disciples. The disciples clearly did not understand and did not know what he was talking about (Luke 18:34). The Mark and Matthew accounts are more specific and revealing in the disciples' egregious inability to understand. Mark 10:35-45 provides the full account of the exchange. Immediately after Jesus has shared what is to come for Him, the disciples, James and John, boldly tells Jesus, "We want you to do for us whatever we ask." It is then that Jesus asks them the same question that he will ask the blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?" Their response is quite different from that of wanting to "see" Jesus but is reflective of a heart more of self than of Jesus. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." In telling them they do not know what they ask, Jesus follows with a miracle in revealing to James and John and to all of His disciples what He was about and who they as followers of Christ were to become in Mark 10:43-45. "Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

At times, we are all challenged in our faith and assurance that Jesus, out of great compassion and love, can and does, according to His will, answer the question, "What do you want me to do for you?" May we be about decreasing and Christ our Lord increasing in all things and at all times, always fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, taking delight in our God, who fills our hearts with joy and peace, and abounding in hope through the power of His Holy Spirit.

A song to reflect and pray on:

[\(1176\) Judy Collins Amazing Grace Lyrics - YouTube](#)

Looking ahead – Sunday January 15

Rear Window on Right Back Side Facing Pulpit (Lower Medallion) – The Huguenots Suffering For Their Faith