**“Call Him Here”** by S. Finlan, at The First Church, October 24, 2021

**Hebrews 7:23–25, 28–8:2**

23 Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; 24but [Jesus] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. 25Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him . . . 28For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.

8:1Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up.

**Mark 10:46–52**

46They 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. 47When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” 48Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” 49Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” 50So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51Then 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.” 52Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Once again we have a reading from that unusual work, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the only New Testament work that pictures Jesus as a high priest. It makes the point that we have a heavenly, not an earthly, high priest. He is perfect instead of flawed, he is immortal instead of mortal, and he has the power to save.

The gospel gives a healing story. Healing and salvation are closely related, because salvation can be thought of as a kind of spiritual healing. Physical healing seems to be the physical equivalent to salvation, which is spiritual. That’s a point that I’m going to develop throughout the sermon. Let me state it a little differently. Jesus’ healing power is the same as his saving power, and his saving power is the same as his Creator power. Jesus the Creator is able to heal and able to save.

As we know, Jesus and the apostles traveled throughout Judaea and Galilee, and word about him spread wherever he went. People with physical problems, if they did not have family support, were really left on their own, and often became beggars. We don’t know if Bartimaeus was born blind, just that he is begging along one of the main roads out of Jericho. Bartimaeus seems to have his own beliefs about who Jesus is. He calls him “son of David” twice. This would be a Messianic title, expressing a belief in the idea of a royal Messiah, since that is what “son of David” signifies. There were also concepts of the Messiah as a new priest or a new prophet. This fellow holds to the idea of the Messiah as a new king.

It is interesting how people can form their own opinions based only on their reflection on what they hear others say. He has probably heard others assert that Jesus is the Messiah, and he has decided that he agrees with those folks. Maybe he is sensing the sincerity of the people he heard saying that. Maybe he is reading their sanity level, assessing their plausibility. It seems he, too, has decided that the long-awaited hope of Israel, the Deliverer, has come.

He reaches out with faith and bold hope, even after the apostles try to shush him. When Jesus tells his apostles to call the man up, one says to the man “take heart; get up, he is calling you” (10:49). So he springs up and approaches Jesus, who asks him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He answers “My teacher, let me see again” (10:51), and this is done for him.

Earnest and deeply felt hope is met with powerful compassion, and the man is healed. I dare say, he is saved, too. Our translation has Jesus say “your faith has made you well,” but the verb there is *sesōken*, which would usually be translated “has saved.” The verb primarily means “saved,” although it can also signify being made well. I think “your faith has saved you” is more accurate, and more complete, too. It’s not just about his health, but about his whole person. This is what “life in the spirit” can mean for us: attending to our physical, mental, and spiritual health.

The healing might seem a little unfair to us. Why does this guy get to have complete healing from his affliction, while we are not healed from our high blood pressure, or diabetes, or arthritis? Well, no doubt, the people who got to meet Jesus in the flesh were lucky. He healed people in his immediate presence. We can pray for healing, but it is most likely that we will have to live with our conditions, do what we can to get the best medical treatment possible, and seek comfort from our friends. These afflictions will not be present in the next life, when we get a new body. Affliction is part of the natural process of life here. Every life has its difficulties. We are not being punished when we become ill; our pets become ill, too, and they haven’t done anything to displease God. But there may be things that we will learn and experience through sickness that we would not have learned in health.

There is a woman who has turned a terrible accident into a miracle in her life. Her name is Joni Eareckson-Tada. Just before she was to begin college, she got in a car accident that left her permanently unable to walk. She did not let that enormous disability stop her. She now gives speeches and ministers to disabled people, telling them “God desires to write a wonderful story in your life. Some pages will be filled with great joy; others, deep sorrow.” (<https://www.joniandfriends.org/trust-god-to-write-your-story/>). She returned recently to the college she was going to attend and looked down at an athletic field where female students were playing lacrosse. She felt no envy for them, she says, no regret. She looked forward to getting back in her van and travelling to the retreat where she was to give a talk. She writes “I will be the first to confess that his providence can, at times, read like a mystery novel, but in the end, his story line for those who trust him is always wise, specific, and good.” I think Jesus will say of each one of us, “call him here” and “What do you want me to do for you?”

Regardless of our physical status, the basic spiritual facts are the same. Our faith still gets us saved. We should still “take heart,” as Bartimaeus and as Joni did. We have a Teacher who is seated at the right hand of the throne of Majesty. And if we have any spiritual blindness, any coldness of heart or uncertainty of mind, we can ask the Teacher to help us, to heal our hearts, to comfort our minds, and he will respond, just as he did to this man, when he said, “What do you want me to do for you?” So trust the Teacher, or the High Priest, however you think of him.

Can you imagine having your desire and your needs as simplified and as focused as Bartimaeus’s were? Profound focus and sincerity are spiritually powerful. Jesus notices them. Imagine yourself as Bartimaeus: needy, focused, ready to plead. Direct that prayer to Jesus and see what might result. Maybe it *will* be a miracle. God certainly wrote a story in Bartimaeus’s life, and it is now a permanent part of the gospel story.

In any case, bring all your cares and thoughts to Jesus in prayer. That’s your direct line to Jesus, and he is always willing to listen, to comfort, and to heal.