

March 1, 2020

Healing Stories "Mercy Me"

Isaiah 35:1-7

Matthew 9:27-31

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The story of the two blind men for this morning, is in some ways a repeat of last Sunday where we see someone who was spiritually blind, who later was able to see clearly when he not only discovered Jesus was the Messiah, but also when he saw what kind of Messiah he really was – a suffering servant.

Yet, today's story is more than a repeat of last week's healing story of a blind man. In this story we also see one remarkable request and one extraordinary response. So, what was the shouted request, "Have mercy on us, Son of David (another name for the Messiah)", and the response, "according to your faith let it be done to you."

Let start with the two chaps who can't see, who don't have sight, but are soon going to get and give us insight. They could have shouted a lot of things, yet they only shout out one thing. Notice they don't say, "fix me, they don't even say heal me." Instead, they say, "have mercy on me."

The Associate Conference Minister of our Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ, the Rev. Sharon Morris had her farewell reception this past Sunday. As is typical in a lot of farewell receptions people shared nice things about her. Yet, the MC said that she had asked to have the last word. I thought that she would just say thank you and sit down. Instead, she came to the center of the room, looked each person in the eye and said "be kind to each other". She

mentioned that the years in her job had been rough, really rough at times. Mainly, because of the way people treat and behaved toward one another: nasty emails, public put downs, judgments based on half truths, and even more. She asked us, even begged us to cut each other some slack. We don't know all the information and yet we tear one another apart because of what we think is the whole truth and nothing but the truth and it is not!

Who was she talking to - she was mainly talking to clergy about clergy behavior. And I thought, "and this from the church's leadership, no wonder the church is in such a mess." If the clergy don't know how to behave, how can we expect our parishioners to live the gospel!

The two blind men wanted what we all want - mercy, mercy that shows itself by kindness, mercy that cuts each other slack, and mercy that is filled with compassion on those you have the ability to harm.

I recently saw a sign, which cuts to the chase about judging others and it said,

"If you didn't hear it with your own ears
or see it with your own eyes,
don't invent it with your small mind
and share it with your big mouth."

Ouch!

Whenever we judge others, and refuse to show them mercy, we have decided to fill in the blanks with what we do not know for sure.

I would not say I am like the clergy the Rev. Sharon Morris describes, yet I have filled in the blanks when I did not or could not have known all the information. I assume and in end it

ends up just being all about me. In the word assume, we have the lettering, which says “me, u ass.” Why do we not assume the best instead of going to the worst? Why do we assume ill intent, rather than finding out if that is the case? Why do we assume not trustworthy, when the person has yet to show they are untrustworthy?

Jesus in this story grants them mercy. And can't you just hear their sigh of relief and the huge thank you that rapidly fell from their lips.

This is the healing work we too are to do – to grant others mercy, regularly, often, and without acting like we are put out by it.. But rather to act and react to one another with love, and generosity, and compassion, in other words, to feel another's pain and not inflict another pain.

We have heard the men's request, now let's go to Jesus response, “According to your faith it will be done to you.” Immediately, I' m thinking when I read it, that seems unfair. Some people have a harder time trusting than others.

Yet, after a little more thinking, I wondered if Jesus was trying to say something here about what your faith does for you. Your faith can heal you. Not much faith applied and lived not so much healing., much faith applied and lived lots of healing.

What is interesting about the gospel of Matthew is the writers phrase “O you of little faith” coming from the mouth of Jesus. This is not found in the gospels of Mark or Luke.

How much faith do we have? Enough to heal us and others or just enough to make ourselves, and others miserable.

Some segments of Christianity spend a whole lot of time and energy saying who is in and who is out, who is right and who is wrong, who is going to heaven and who is going to hell on a sled, who is righteous and who is a sinner, who God loves and who God hates.

The faith we proclaim and the faith we live is so others may be healed. Some of us, have been wounded by the institutions that espouse faith. Other of us, have been wounded by the leaders and members of those who claim to follow Jesus, yet do not bring healing, but rather division, strife, heartache, suffering, and deep lifelong wounds.

Let's not just have a little of faith espoused by Jesus, let us have all the faith espoused by Jesus. Let us not dole it out on a teaspoon, but rather unload it by excavator bucket full. Let us show our faith like a skid and make a level playing field. Let us show our faith by clearing the things that block people from moving forward in their healing. Let us show our faith by making sure everyone has a solid foundation of love, mercy, compassion, and encouragement to build on.

Therefore, like the work of the Messiah, the Son of David, the giver of mercy, let us:
strengthen the weak hands, not slap them.
make firm the feeble knees, not knock them out from under them,
say to those who are fearful, that they are strong..
Then there will be streams in the desert, the burning sand will become a pool and the thirsty ground will spring forth water.

So, let's go into the dessert, there are two blind me there, and so many others who need the refreshing and life giving water

of mercy from a those who have a lot of faith. And when we do so, healing will come to us and them!