

The Needs of the One  
Mark 10:46-52  
Colebrook Congregational Church  
November 25, 2015 / Ordinary 29

“The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one.” I am sure we have all heard this expression. It is an old concept, and is a part of ethical philosophy, but I was surprised to learn that this phrase, as I said it, is relatively recent! It first said like that in Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan, by Mr. Spock, when he sacrificed himself to save the starship Enterprise. This is a concept that is very familiar, and you could say it is the basis of democracy! But Jesus, in today's selection, turns that concept on it's head.

Today's selection is from the end of chapter 10, where Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem, and the verses that follow this describe the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, which we celebrate on Palm Sunday. This is the last story of Jesus' healing ministry in Mark's Gospel. By identifying Jericho as a waypoint on His journey, we know that Jesus is taking the road down the Jordan Valley, and is 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem. And the use of the term, “Son of David” suggests that it was either written in Judea, or by someone who grew up there, as well as those hearing it, because it was a term used in nationalistic messianism, unique to that area.

We start off with a huge crowd following Jesus down the road, and there was Bartimaeus. In the original text, there is a mix of Greek and Aramaic, with a bunch of redundancies. Luckily, the English translators cleaned it all up for us.

When Bartimaeus heard who it was, he called out. We have another pun here! This time in Hebrew. Jesus is from Nazareth, and a Nazarene is a term for a specific type of person dedicated to God. The best known example of a Nazarene in the Bible is Samson, the strongest man, with his long beautiful hair and dubious taste in women. This pun was to connect the two, Jesus as a Nazarene, a person dedicated to God. Also, Jesus was a common name back then, so Bartimaeus had to specify which one he was calling to in that multitude!

Bartimaeus was then hushed by those near him in the crowd. Understable.

Who among us would want to put up with someone yelling when you are trying to pay attention to something? He was being distracting!

But then, Jesus asks for Bartimaeus to approach Him, and so the crowd tells him to take heart. The word was *θαρσει*, meaning, courage, like how we would say “cheer up” today. Then, from the second part of this verse to the first half of verse 51, is a section that is omitted by the parallel accounts in Matthew & Luke. Mark is the one giving more vivid details in this case!

How Jesus then interacts with Bartimaeus is like Socratic or Rabbinical educational models. Scholars suppose that this is an unfiltered look at Jesus and His style & personality. Jesus is always asking questions of people. As a teacher and pastor, Jesus gave people the opportunity to express themselves and their faith, upon which Jesus could act and build.

The story ends with one of the most repeated phrases in the Gospels: “Your faith has made you well.” In the Greek, it is a poetic & metered phrase. Bartimaeus then follows Jesus, not as a Disciple, but as part of the crowd for the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.

So, Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem and He knows what is going to happen there. He's been foretelling it to the Disciples what was going to happen for awhile now. And the entire Gospel of Mark is rushing toward Jerusalem and Jesus' fate. All of this chapter, Jesus has been on that road, and all of his teachings have dealt with the bigger picture, lessons for multiple people or whole crowds...until the very end of the chapter where He stops everything for one last healing before Jerusalem. And there was no crowd big enough to hide a single person from Jesus.

Picture this, Jesus has been on His way to Jerusalem, followed by a growing crowd, teaching loudly on great topics, even cracking jokes, and when His goal, Jerusalem, is in sight right over there...He stops. He stopped everything for one person. He had a multitude hanging on His every word and action, but instead of paying further attention to them, He is concerned over the well-being of one blind beggar. Just imagine that contrast: Jesus has all the good traits of a great leader, with a huge amount following Him, and He is more

concerned for a person who at that time is of the lowest social status.

Consider the bigger picture here as well. Jesus has a mission to perform, one which will reverberate through time and space, affecting every person. Jesus' sacrifice for all of us and for our sins is certainly outweighed by the condition of person? The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few or the one, right? Not according to Jesus! To Him, the needs of the many do not outweigh the needs of the few. Jesus put salvation for all on hold, to help one faithful person!

As most of you know, I recently adopted three kittens. It was supposed to be two, but a leftover from another litter had bonded with them, so I took all three. Because of this, I decided to name them after the Three Musketeers, from one of my favorite stories. And they seem to have the personalities of their namesakes: Athos is the leader with a tough exterior, but is a softie inside. Porthos, the fluffiest, a bit of a glutton, the instigator, and always happily purring. And little Aramis, the silent, seemingly weak, but really has the heart of a baby puma.

What Jesus does in this story reminded me of the iconic line from The Three Musketeers: All for One, and One for All!

So while I was studying the text, I had a mini-marathon of Three Musketeers movies. One of my favorite favorites is the Disney live action one from the mid-nineties with Kiefer Sutherland, Charlie Sheen, and Tim Curry.

In the first part of their version of the story, D'Artagnan is not a Musketeer, but has been imprisoned by the evil Cardinal's guard and he when interrogated, he refused to give up the Musketeers...even though he was just dueling with them. He could have saved himself, but he chose not to inform on them, very much like a person of faith, back before it was legal to be a Christian, but he wasn't one of them, not yet. When he was brought to the chopping block, the axeman told him that the ax was a gift to him from the Czarina of Tokyo, and D'Artagnan looks up at him, confused. Then the priest leans over and says, "Fear no, my son, for we are with you always, all for one, and one for all!" Of course, those two were our heroes who then

heroically save D'Artagnan and make their daring escape.

The Three Musketeers did not have to come back & save D'Artagnan. They had already gotten away, they were wanted by the Cardinal as well, but they risked their own freedom to come back and commit a daring rescue of someone they just met, who had annoyed them to the point of dueling, and he wasn't even a musketeer either! They could have just gone away, melted into the countryside, saving themselves. But they didn't. The needs of the Three, the many, relatively speaking, were put at risk, to save the one.

How easy it would be for any of us to pass by a single person in need, when we are expected someplace else, where there are many waiting for us. To say, I don't have time to deal with this right now, I have more important things to do! Jesus certainly had more important things to do when Bartimaeus called out to Him on the road to Jerusalem, but still, Jesus stopped, and helped the one, before continuing on to help the many.

And so as our church's committees prepare their annual reports and budgets and plans for the next year, I challenge you to consider whether we have just met the needs of the many, or the needs of all we can, including the few, or the one. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

[PAUSE]

God of mercy and healing, You who hear the cries of those in need, receive these petitions of your people that all who are troubled may know peace, comfort, and courage.

We thank You for Your blessings, and for the lessons You teach us. We thank You for those You have sent to help us in our daily lives. And we thank You for the opportunities to serve You through serving others, seeing to their needs. We thank you for the generous donations that will help us our neighbors in need.

We know we are not perfect, so we pray for the forgiveness of our missteps. We pray for your guidance to live our lives in more loving ways.

We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those who are burdened, by troubles of mind, body, or spirit. We pray for their unburdening, we pray for their caregivers. We pray for those who are lost, so that they may find guidance. We pray for those who protect us, please keep them safe as they have kept us safe. And we pray that you help us to be instruments of your divine love.

We are reminded of all in world who need our prayers. We pray for the family of the victims of violence. We pray for the refugees around the world, both home & abroad, for victims of natural disasters, please see them to safer places, and we give thanks to those who provide them shelter. We pray for those who are enduring drought & famine. We pray for all to have a safe place.

We especially pray for:

Sustaining God, heal our lives, that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds and offer you thanks from generation to generation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Psalm 126

126:1 When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

126:2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

126:3 The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

126:4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb.

126:5 May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

126:6 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

## Mark 10:46-52

10:46 They 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.

10:47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

10:48 Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

10:49 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."

10:50 So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

10:51 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."

10:52 Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.