Our text today is about healing blindness. This is interesting, because I think today that in our culture, blindness is becoming something we don’t want to be healed of. It’s something instead that people often seem proud of. Here’s the sense that I’m talking about. By blind, I mean I just don’t get you. Don’t understand you. Can’t figure it out. Stopped. Stumped. Is that making sense when I’m using the word blind in that way? I just don’t see how someone can believe this. I can’t see it. I think we’re saying this a lot more these days than ever before. Maybe you’ve said that this week. I just don’t get it, these people. Completely baffled. I don’t see why that person did that. I don’t see how people actually believe these crazy things. We’re all finding ourselves increasingly in this kind of place I think. I just don’t see how a person can think that. But we really don’t want to see I think.

Take for example the Covid 19 vaccinations. What’s the problem? Millions of people are just refusing to get one. A lot of us just don’t see it. Why wouldn’t you get one? To help yourself and your neighbor? All the hoopla about mandates. People all over the country are walking off their jobs, policemen and health care workers. I don’t see why? It’s like I listen to that and it’s like the lights go out in the room and I’m just stumbling around in the dark. What in the world? I don’t see it. I don’t get it. And then someone will respond to that by being just as amazed that I can’t see it. How can you not see the problem with vaccinations or mandates? How can you not see what I see? And they don’t see how I can be the way I am. This is big today in our culture isn’t it? Confessing our blindness. I just don’t get you at all.

Yeah, blindness is becoming pretty popular these days, its very stylish to be blind. I just don’t get it. I don’t see why she just stays with that guy. I don’t see why he just can’t stop drinking. I don’t know why he just keeps shooting himself in the foot all the time. Making the same mistake over and over again. I don’t see how he can vote for that guy. I just don’t see why they’re like that. I don’t see why anyone would want to move to the city, all that traffic. How could anyone do such a thing? It’s sort of a way to sound like you have it all together. Using your own blindness, to express your own superiority. And sometimes even contempt.

Isn’t this all very interesting? I find it fascinating, that being blind would be something to aspire to. Yet it often seems to be the case. If I asked anyone here today if they wanted to be blind, I’m sure they would say no. But when you listen to people you find out that they often settle for just that. Being blind. I just don’t get it. I just don’t understand it. Just don’t see how someone could do that. Blindness becomes a way to dismiss people. I’m preaching to myself this morning because I’ve been doing an awful lot of this lately. I just don’t see how they can believe this or that. Well, Pastor Mark, don’t you want to know? But it seems an awful lot of the time, I really don’t. Because blindness can become a very comfortable place to be. I just can’t understand how they’re like that. Just can’t see it. And you seem really seem intelligent and smart when your blind. I’m enjoying my blindness, its very sophisticated. Hmm. Interesting.

So we have our text today from Mark about Bartimaeus, a blind begger who wants to see. Jesus and his disciples are on their way out of Jericho, just getting out of town. So they’re probably on a main drag and it’s busy with people walking here and there, a little chatter going on. And suddenly, this guy starts yelling really loud. Jesus, have mercy on me. Just making a ruckus. Yeah, it’s like your at Walmart and suddenly a kid has a melt down. Just screaming at the top of his lungs. That’s what happens here. And it doesn’t let up.

Well what happens next? The text says, “many”. So it’s not just the disciples, it’s the whole crowd that begins to react to this. It’s uncomfortable. It’s rude, it’s not proper to draw attention to yourself like this. So people in the crowd start yelling back at him to be quiet. Hey, knock it off. And you can just in your imagination hear the people begin to confess their blindness. Ugh. I just don’t get it, I just don’t see how someone can sit there all day begging for money. We need to do something about this. Man, I just don’t see how someone could let themselves go like that. Where’s his family? The blindness sets in. Blindness becomes status, a way to sound important. Blindness becomes all knowing. Man, I just don’t see how anyone could ever get that messed up. A blindess that doesn’t want to see.

But Jesus has a different reaction doesn’t he? Why? Because he wants to see. And the lesson today is that you don’t have to have to stay with this kind of blindness if you don’t want to. If we just can’t see how a person can be like that, or believe like that, or do such a stupid thing, there is another alternative than to just stay blind. See, (and the pun is intended). And I think in this present day, where so many people are so willing to be blind or enjoy it. I think learning to see why would bring much healing. It would be good thing to ask God to help us see how another person can be like they are, and do what they do. To not be so content to be blind about it.

And that is what Jesus does. The text says that he stood still and said, “Call him here”. Jesus just flat stops, and makes time for this guy. I think that’s the whole story right there. The crowd wants to go blind. They don’t want to see this guy, or listen to his yelling. They don’t get it. But Jesus just flat stops and makes time. And notice that as the crowd begins to go blind , the man is beginning to see. He came right to Jesus. How could he do that if he couldn’t already see at least something?

You don’t have to stay blind to why people are the way they are. There is at least one alternative. You could stop and listen and make some room. It’s a huge issue because sometimes when we don’t get it, we just stop listening. When Jesus started listening, the man started seeing. And so did the crowd. They came right around. “Take heart, get up, he’s calling you!” See how fast that change happened? And God can work that miracle through you too, if you don’t want to stay blind. It’s a great lesson. The next time you don’t get it, start listening. You might start seeing. It worked for blind Bartimaeus and it can work for you.

This past Wednesday at church council we were talking a bit about how people see the faith. And the general jist of the conversation was that man, people are all over the place when it comes to faith and what it means, and what they believe. And so it’s hard to see how to bring all that together. That’s exactly how we need to think about our future I think. How do we get these different ways of seeing things together? And in our theological conference the message was virtually the same. The title of the conference was, ‘how to lead when you don’t know where your going?”. And the whole point is that we live in this way of life now where it’s almost impossible for people to understand each other. It’s just all over the map. It’s not just covid 19, but that’s a great example.

But what this opens up of course is a chance for a great engagement. A real engagement with what we don’t get. With what we don’t see. With what we don’t know. That’s what faith is, isn’t it? A willingness to step outside of what we know. That’s exactly the sight that came to Bartimeaus. He started following. And that’s our text today. The very person that the crowd couldn’t understand, who they just didn’t get, showed them what it means to be healed. What was possible when real listening began to happen.

So the next time I say, “how can a person believe that, or be like that”. The next time I confess my blindness, Lord help me not to be content with just staying blind. Help me to see. Help me to understand. Help me to get it. Open my eyes. Our future may depends on that miracle that you can work. Amen.