

ever seen the sun rise, gazed into a child's face, "Blind Bartimaeus" they called him. His whole

age, even though they'd heard that Jesus was on his way to the roadside, hoping to get near Jesus who was a healer.

They were in pretty good health, fairly well fixed. They desperately needed something that only Jesus could

do for him and healed him. By a wonderful gift he opened the world that everyone else had been seeing. He healed him.

Miracles? Some say to get people to believe in

miracles then it didn't work. How many of the people do we never hear of ever again?"

It's a healing story that became a

healing story. He went home and began living a "normal" life. The rest of his life in peace and quiet after having

begun his new life, then we would know no more of others whom Jesus miraculously healed.

Some, become a disciple, been remembered. Why are all the rest, have remembered his name? We

remember him. He used to teach at a church in Galilee. We remember the same again. We remember him."

Bartimaeus really saw. He saw that Jesus was about not just to heal him, but that in healing him, Jesus had invited

Bartimaeus followed on the way. That's why we remember his name. He really saw who Jesus was.

To know, see, and to believe in Jesus, is to *follow him* on the way. His way is not meant simply to be praised, admired, and adored. His way is meant to be walked.

Bartimaeus is remembered by us as the one who "got it." He followed on the way.

That's very different from how we tend to look at it today. We forget that the gospel is about following Jesus on the way, not about merely getting our way.

We've molded the gospel to suit ourselves. We think coming to Jesus is about fulfilling ourselves and see faith as a way to uncover our potential – potential for personal, social, and business success, that is. We look at church as a way to bring Jesus into our lives rather than bringing us into his. We believe Jesus is here to help us do better at what we're already doing, not to do something new, for him. He doesn't change our lives, he improves them. As we see it, coming to Jesus, faith, and the church, are for ourselves, not for God, not for God's world. So, we're always asking how Jesus can fulfill our lives, not how we might serve him.

Clarence Jordan, the founder of Koinonia Farm, the interracial community in Georgia, got the focus right – on following and serving Jesus. Raised in a prosperous family, he received a traditional theological education, was known for his writing, and was on his way to becoming a professor.

Instead, he left seminary to establish an interracial community in segregated Georgia in the mid-50s. Opposition was not unexpected, but it was led by his own people, the local congregation that eventually excommunicated the whole Koinonia Community. The charges leveled against them read: "Said members. . . have persisted in holding services where both white and colored attend together"

The excommunication was followed by vandalism, cross-burning, legal pressures, beatings, bombings, an economic boycott, and gunshots into the farm property. Clarence turned to his brother, attorney Robert Jordan, for legal counsel and asked him to represent the Koinonia Community.

Robert, who later served as a state senator and a justice of the state Supreme Court, declined.

"I can't do that. I've got political aspirations. I might lose my job, my house, everything I've got."

b.”

t seems to me, that you and I were confirmed
preacher asked me about the same question he
ept Jesus as your Lord and Savior?” And I

point.”

e – the cross?”

cross, but not on the cross. I’m not getting

iple. You’re an admirer of Jesus, but not a
o go back to the church you belong to, and tell
ple.”

ke I do did that, we wouldn’t have a church,

do you have a church?”

ed reminders of what discipleship means.

lt, to bear such persecution, another for a child.
ome in tears. “What’s wrong?” he asked. She
ne, Billy Speck is the worst. Every time he sees
, and throws my books around

ernails. Why don’t you scratch him good?”

but you said Jesus said we’re supposed to love
t.”

ing to do: tomorrow I’ll go to the school, and
a Christian for about 15 minutes while I beat

n’t do that.”

om being a Christian for 15 minutes

Loving God,

We thank you for the witness of Bartimeaus, for his example of discipleship.

Help us want to follow you as he did.

We pray, today, for all the ways and places we need to grow in our following.

We pray for our church school, that you would help parents keep their baptismal promises
...by bringing their children to share in a regular and timely way in all the learning.

We pray that you would move adults to recognize their need to continue to learn and grow
...by reflecting on faith with others.

We pray for our Youth Fellowship,

...grateful for what our youth have come to mean to one another,

...through sharing in Sunday School, Camp, Mission Trips, and weekly fellowship together.

We pray that you would help those who work with them, and each of them,

...to fulfill the mission that they have received from you – to be a group that welcomes all,
...brings to light the gifts each has to share, and strengthens each one to let their faith show.

We pray grateful, too, for ministries of care-giving,

...for all who reach out to the sick and homebound, to share our love and yours.

We pray for our many missions that you would not only help us serve

...but to nurture more and more among us to be your servants in the service of others.

Help us in all our work, not to simply want to do the job as quickly and easily as possible,

...but to that the time to reach out and invite new people to share the work with us.

We pray with gratitude for the retreat last weekend,

...for the time that was spent together building faith and sharing fellowship.

Increase our desire to be a true family of faith, and to want to share time together so we can be.

We pray, for those who bear the difficult and often lonely burdens of leadership;

...give them strength, patience, and a thick skin; but most of all a renewal of love for this family.

Help all of us see and appreciate the burdens that are borne, and be grateful.

Help all of us to always begin with trust, to speak directly and openly,

...to listen carefully and non-defensively, always seeking understanding and never vengeance.

We pray knowing that our family, as any other, has brokenness, sickness, and spirits of discord.

We pray for those who hurt their children, who will not set boundaries or discipline.

We pray for those who hurt their friends, who turned away or withdrawn support.

We pray for those who gossip, those who pick, those who stir,

...those who withhold their gifts out of anger or vengeance,

...turn us all, in every way we need to be turned, toward you will and your way.

Renew us, revive us, and restore in us your vision for the world.

Breathe new life into our fellowship.

Send us out with the good news that there are no boundaries in your reign,

...and that all are welcome, just as we are.