

Commentary about upcoming elections tells us voters are negative. I guess we should plead guilty. We complain about lack of progress. We vote out leaders complacent with the status quo. Voters criticize so much you wonder why anyone would spend so much money to get a job we'll hate them for having.

But as so often happens, the sin we see in others is what we ourselves commit. Truth be told, we all get complacent with the status quo. We expect this year's murder rate to match last year's. We expect movies to contain sex and violence. We expect the television news to be dramatic, even if there's nothing much to report. We expect people to use vulgar language and we're proud of ourselves when we're not shocked. We sit on the side of the road of life, blind to more positive possibilities, and complain that health care is so hard to reform, that we're stuck in the same job, or that relationships never get deep.

We're like Bartimaeus, blind, sitting on the side of the road to Jericho, surrounded by people with similar complaints. Sitting on the side of the road, we may not like what we see on the road, but it's a lot more comfortable being on the side than trying to do something about it. It's easier to complain than to change. So when Bartimaeus hollers at Jesus, when he seeks help for change, he breaks the mold, and people try to stop him. "Don't bother Jesus. He's busy. You're blind. Just leave well enough alone." Our society bargains with us: it promises comfort if we leave it alone. Jesus the miracle worker asks what seems to be a stupid question to a blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?" But he asks because Jesus has been around for a while, in fact he's beginning the last week of his life with this story, and this guy's still sitting on the side of the road. It's not clear what he wanted. Nor is it clear to God what we want. Do we want more safety on the streets of our town? Do we want better working conditions? Do we want friends of other races? I can hear Jesus now: Really? I wouldn't have known. Have you prayed for those things? What have you done to promote them? He has to ask what we want because when we're negative, we're not very clear.

Bartimaeus got off the side of the road and followed Jesus up the road. When we wait for someone else to take action, we forget the first leader is inside us.