

Some people would rather complain than change. Do you ever get that way? We complain about a broken lamp for months before ever fixing it. That's not Bartimaeus the blind man. He stepped right up to Jesus and asked for a change in his life.

This story comes at a crucial point in Mark's Gospel. A couple months back we heard Jesus ask the disciples up in Caesarea Philippi, "Who do you say that I am?" Ever since then he's been travelling south to Jerusalem, instructing his dense disciples about what to expect when he gets there, and how to live after he's gone. Today he arrives in Jericho, fifteen miles from Jerusalem, the last stop on the road. The next verse after today's passage begins the story of Palm Sunday and the week of Jesus' passion.

The question, "Who do you say that I am?" began this whole journey, now at its end, Jesus hears someone else give the right answer. It's Bartimaeus, the blind man. He calls him "Son of David," a title that recognizes Jesus as the Messiah. All along the road the disciples have misunderstood Jesus' teaching--they can't quite see his point. But Bartimaeus who cannot see sees clearly with the eyes of faith.

Bartimaeus overcame some obstacles. He was blind; he had to overcome his infirmity. People tried to stop him; he had to overcome public opinion. But when he got there, in the presence of Jesus, Jesus asks him the most wonderful question in the Gospels. Imagine this--Jesus walking down the street in front of you, you catch up to him breathless, you're close enough to smell his tunic, he looks you full in the face, and you hear his rich full voice ask this question, "What do you want me to do for you?" Isn't that great? Better than a genie in a bottle. And Bartimaeus' response is wonderful: "I want to see." The story does not end with his healing. Mark tells us that Bartimaeus followed Jesus up the road. Up the road to Jerusalem, up the road to the cross, and to resurrection.

Bartimaeus overcame the obstacles. He did not just complain; he stepped up to get changed. We're all blind in different ways, but we don't always step up for the cure. There are many ways we can improve our vision. We can read books, read the Catholic Key, attend scripture sharings and educational opportunities offered here and elsewhere. We can talk with a friend. Usually someone else is better at finding our blindspots. Once we know the lamp is broken, we really can get it fixed.