

“Get Unstuck”

Mark 10:46-52

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No matter how busy I am, I help my two boys floss their teeth every day. There is a reason: Youngjae and I were surprised to hear from a dentist two months ago that both of my two sons had cavities in their teeth. The dentist warned us that since one of Joshua’s teeth wasn’t developing correctly, his teeth needed more care, especially thorough careful flossing work. He advised us to help them floss their teeth well. At first, it was quite boring, but now I enjoy it. Sometimes, I trick them while I am helping their flossing, “Oh Jacob, your floss is stuck in between your teeth! It’s an accident!” For a second, he seemed to be startled, but he easily took out his floss on his own.

“Getting floss unstuck” is easy. But why don’t we take this “getting stuck” situation as a metaphor for life troubles? Have you ever experienced the feeling of “being stuck” in your life and troubled as to how you were going to get “unstuck”? Once you are ‘stuck’, either emotionally or psychologically, you may find it difficult making any further steps forward. Today’s scripture reading is about a blind man’s life story of being stuck due to his physical disability. Jesus helped him “get unstuck”. What happened to this man?

Today’s scripture reading is a story of the blind beggar in Jericho. Jericho is located in the end between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Jordan River runs from the Sea of Galilee through Jericho and to the Dead Sea. If you imagine a picture of Jesus’ ministry, he had been north near the Sea of Galilee and traveled down south by the Jordan River and through Jericho. If you are traveling this route, you may see many sheep. Ironically, this peaceful image of sheep overlaps the sight of a lonely blind beggar sitting on the side of the road in Jericho. The Gospel of Mark recorded his name as Bartimaeus. He was a beggar. What he usually did was to sit on the side of the road and ask people for money. One day, he happened to hear that famous Jesus was passing by his place. He desperately wanted to meet Jesus because he desired to have his sight restore. When Jesus asked him saying, “What do you want me to do for you?” Without hesitation, he answered that he wanted his eye sight back. Being blind was a huge burden, with suffering and hardship. But here, ‘blindness’ doesn’t only refer to his handicap of physical sight, but also it symbolizes barriers, suffering, and overwhelming situation. Or it can be something that we can’t control for ourselves. This blind man is stuck in his life.

“Being blind” in the ancient Jewish culture had special stigma religiously and socially. In Jewish culture, the health of eyes was essentially important because they believed that eyes are understood as a “channel” and “mirror” for inner pure spirit and soul. If someone was blind or born to be blind, it was believed that that person was punished by God. For this reason, in Jesus’ day, the blind were the most poor because they had no way of earning an income. The only thing that was possible for them to do and to survive was to beg. (Even stealing wasn’t possible for a blind person!) So, society treated them literally as outcasts. It meant they had no value as a human being. When Bartimaeus heard Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples, he cried out to have Jesus’ attention. Now, it makes sense to us; nobody has paid any attention to the blind man, even disciples. The blind people were totally invisible in the community, but they weren’t to Jesus. Jesus lifted them up and cared for them, giving them wholeness and full value in God’s name. Jesus embraced this blind man whoever he was. The blind man had never experienced such a welcoming, accepting and embracing encounter in his life. It was a life transformational experience! The point of this story is that God’s healing touch and caring love reaches out to everyone. This is essential to Jesus’ ministry and the point that we want to be inspired by Jesus’ ministry.

What does it mean that Jesus healed this blind man or saved him from his blindness? The meaning of “save” in the original Greek text, is to “bring into a large open space.” That is a unique concept of salvation. Jean Paul Sartre, the great French philosopher, wrote a play entitled *No Exit*. He explained that the human condition and our life are like being trapped in a room from which there is no escape. But our Scripture reading gives us great hope that God so loved the world that he guides, each of us, into a wide and broad space, where there are new alternatives to what we may consider to be dead ends. Christian faith in God is not that life has *No Exit*, but that it has an open door to a new life. If we can compare our life to a boat sailing in the storms of life without any direction on the darkest night, Jesus Christ came to us as a light to show us a right direction in the darkness. Faith is like a light. When we have faith, we can choose to follow the light!

How about your life? Have you ever felt despair and being ‘stuck’ in your life? Jesus is speaking to a blind beggar, but we know the real audience is us. We have to face our difficulties, sufferings and hardships which are real to us and we may think we must deal with these difficulties by ourselves. Here Jesus offers the words of hope to a blind beggar and us: One of Jesus’ disciples said to blind Bartimaeus, “Take heart; get up, Jesus is calling you.” Imagine how many times you are challenged, tested and overwhelmed by the storms of life. How

many times do we tempt to give up, throw away the last straw of hope in front of waves of life? The word, "Get up" echoes in my mind and heart. "Don't remain sitting on the side of the road; don't lose hope, but be ready to stand up for hope. This reminds me of Bob Marley's song, "Get up, Stand up and Stand up for your life!" Ironically, Jesus reminded us that the key is in each of you. Jesus asked this blind man whether he really wanted his sight. Notice what Jesus said, "Your faith made you well." Faith is persistent hope and eagerness to envision what God can do for you when you take heart and bravely stand up for your life. Jesus didn't come to be our superman hero, rather he came to us to be our friend by encouraging our faith and giving us strength in our time of need. I want to share a story that I found to be meaningful and inspirational for our Christian faith:

"This guy's walking down the street when he falls in a hole. The walls are so steep he can't get out." A doctor passes by and the guy shouts up, 'Hey you. Can you help me out?' The doctor writes a prescription, throws it down in the hole and moves on." Then a priest comes along and the guy shouts up, 'Father, I'm down in this hole can you help me out?' The priest writes out a prayer, throws it down in the hole and moves on" Then a friend walks by, 'Hey, Joe, it's me can you help me out?' And the friend jumps in the hole. Our guy says, 'Are you stupid? Now we're both down here.' The friend says, 'Yeah, but I've been down here before and I know the way out.'"¹

God sent the only son to be our Savior but his choice and act wasn't to rescue us by miraculous power. Instead, he chose to 'jump' down in the hole where we are and help us get us out of troubles! By his humble sacrificial act, we "get unstuck!" When we are so scared and intimidated by invisible fear and hurt inside of us keeping us from seeing possibilities, Jesus Christ invites us to have faith. "Take heart; get up and stand up for your life!" If you haven't done so already, now is a great time to put Jesus' words into action commanding yourself to get unstuck, and listen to God's call to move forward in your life's journey. Amen.

¹ <http://westwing.bewarne.com/queries/story.html> Accessed October 21, 2016