

**“Restoration In Christ”**

Psalm 34:1-8, Mark 10:46-52

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This week, my family had a special opportunity to stay two nights in South Lake Tahoe. The resort is located in Markleeville which is at 8,000 feet elevation. On Monday afternoon, Youngjae was driving because I was still having back spasms. It was snowing. I thought it would stop soon. At first, it seemed to be okay to drive, but it turned into a heavy storm. The road became slippery and icy. Worst of all, we couldn't even see 30 feet ahead of us. It was scary and dangerous, and I couldn't drive for Youngjae. Youngjae began to panic because our car was slipping all over the icy road. Cars kept passing us. Youngjae had to pull the car over. I picked up my phone and fortunately reached the resort reception desk. Thankfully, my phone worked! Receptionist said that we were only three miles away from the resort. We took a big breath and we were able to drive again and arrived at our destination safely.

I thought that our life is like an encounter with a snow storm on a mountain road. The metaphor of 'snow storm' can be compared to any sudden or unexpected thing that blocks our life journey. Our lives are powerfully affected and changed in a real way as a storm changes circumstances dramatically. It was only 16 miles from Tahoe to the resort, but we didn't expect the stormy, winter weather. We were overwhelmed and out of control. Our life is not what we want it to be all the time, but God is aware. What would you ask of God to do for you in this life crisis situation?

Our New Testament reading tells us the story of the blind beggar in Jericho. Jericho is located in the middle 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 Luke wants to draw our attention to this blind beggar and asks us to listen to his life transformation story. According to our reading, we know him as Bartimaeus and he was the son of Timaeus. What happened to this man?

Blind Bartimaeus was a beggar. What he usually does is 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 restore his sight. 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 is a huge burden, suffering and hardship to him. But here ‘blindness’ doesn’t only mean his handicap of physical sight, but also it symbolizes barriers, suffering, and overwhelming situations. Or it can be something that we can’t control for ourselves. As the Philosopher Sartre points out the dilemma of life; “there is NO EXIT.” This blind man is stuck in his life.

Let’s stop here for a second and think about the meaning of the blind beggar. Do you think that this blind Bartimaeus represents blind people or poor people because of their handicaps? 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 deal with them 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.” “Take heart” is a comforting word for us and gives us hope, “Put your trust in God, don’t give up and don’t be in despair. God will be with you.” Imagine how many times you are challenged, tested and overwhelmed by the storms of life. How many times are we tempted 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.” We should remember that Jesus asked this blind man whether he really wanted his sight. If Jesus asks you the same question, what would be your answer?

Remember that Jesus said, “Your faith made you well.” Then what is faith? Faith is persistent hope, eagerness about God doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves and doing for God what only we can do.

In our first Scripture reading, as the Psalmist confessed, “When I sought the Lord and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.” When we are so scared and intimidated by invisible fear and hurt inside of us, Jesus Christ invites us to have faith and say, “Take heart; get up and I will be with you!”

After our family arrived at the resort, my wife and I had a devotion time and reflected on our faith. We recalled Gospel of John 14:27 and shared our experience. In Apostle John Jesus offers us this gift of peace and faith saying, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the

world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” Jesus knew that our life is full of difficult times. What he really wants to give us is not to avoid these challenges and escape from the troubles and hurts, but he wants to give us faith, inner peace that we never be shaken and stand firmly before our challenges. My wife and I shared that if Jesus asks us, “What do you want me to do for you?” Our answer would be “Peace - faith in our heart.” Then what would you ask for from Jesus? I hope you ask for faith which will sustain you and keep you well in life’s journey. Amen.