

Blind Bartimaeous sat by the roadside begging. There was no welfare program he could count on, no food stamp program to mercifully supplement his food supply. He was totally at the mercy of those who passed by.

That is a tragic situation for anyone to be in - sitting by the roadside begging for someone to notice and to help. Have you ever been there? Have you?

Some of you have. You have if you have ever been young and unsure of yourself. I see a young lady who wants to be included in her peers activities but has to sit on the outside because she is not 'in'.

Or old. Walk thru any nursing home and see the hands reaching out...not for money nor for food, but to be noticed and to know that someone cares.

Have you ever sat on the side of road and cried "O Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me?" You have if you have ever sat in the emergency ward of a hospital while critical aid is being administered to a loved on, or stood beside the open ground as they lowered a loved one into a grave.

You've been there if you have laid awake at night trying to figure out how you're going to feed your family, or hold your marriage together, or help your child thru a hard time.

The truth is that at some time in your life each of us is a blind Bartimaeous sitting by the road praying that someone

The good news of the day is that Jesus does notice and does care.

He noticed Bartimaeus. Jesus, his disciples and many others were on the Jericho road. They went right by the place where B. sat begging alms. When Jesus came near, B cried out "Have mercy on me, thou Son of David, have mercy on me". People tried to get B. to keep quiet, but they were unsuccessful. Still he cried "Have mercy on me..." Jesus was moved by this simple plea. He called for B. When B. knew Jesus was calling to him, he jumped to his feet, cast aside his garment, and started toward the master.

The garment he cast aside probably was a blanket or a loose piece of cloth that beggars in that part of the world carried to protect themselves from inclement weather. He did not want anything to hinder him from coming into his Master's presence. Oh, that you and I were as eager to come to Jesus.

A story from the days of American slavery. In 1773 a great religious revival was sweeping America. Horseback preachers covered the then known area. The response was startling. People were being changed. Whites and Blacks alike heard the preachers gladly....A few months after one of the revivals a white man and a black man were discussing the effect on their lives. The white man said: "For three months after the revival I suffered in an awful inner turmoil before God spoke to my soul and gave

me peace". The black man said, "I know what you mean, I went thru the same thing for 2 weeks". But the white man was bothered and said: "Why is it that God spoke to you sooner than he spoke to me?" And the black man answered kindly: "The reason is that you white folks have so much clothing on you. When Christ calls you cannot run to him. But we poor colored folk have only one ragged coat. When we hear his call we can throw it off instantly and run to him".

A simple way of stating a profound truth - some of us would have to hthrow off too many outer garments...our pseudo sophistication, our somewhat cynical world view, our pre-occupation with the material - to run gladly to Jesus as did B.

Well Jesus saw B's need....and he cared.

Jesus cares about those of us who are sitting by the side of the road. You have accepted that mentally, but have you toally accepted it with you heart.....Jesus cares.

It is easy to have misgivings. This world is so big. How could I possibly believe that God cares about me?

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Harry Emerson Fosdick dealt with this years ago in a book called 'The Meaning of Prayer'. He reminded us that we do not judge value by size. While we were yet children we learned that a small dime is worth more than the larger nicel. We know, too that a two ton rock is not as valuable as a small diamond. And put the diamond on the thrid finger of a lady and its value

increases immensely. We do not love a baby on the basis of 4
its size. We do not judge on the basis of size and neither does
God. We may be a very tiny part of the whole of creation but
all the evidence of theology and science supports the proposi-
tion that this world was created on our behalf. We are the most
prized creatures in all creation.

But, you may say, there are so many of us for God to love.
There are more than 3 billion people on earth now. How could
God care about us individually. Is God like the old woman who
lived in the shoe who had so many children, she didn't know
what to do.

But, isn't it true, that the more you know about a subject,
the less you think in terms of the general and more in terms
of the specific or the individual.

Some examples:

An illiterate man wanders into a great library, and sees
row upon row of books. What do they mean to him. He can't read.
What does he see. Don't you imagine that he says "My what a
lot of books" That is all he sees. But the Librarian. What
does she or he see? Not just a mass of books. She thinks in
terms of individual books, individual authors, specific subject
matter. The more you know about books, the less you think in
terms of the universal and the more you think in specifics.

Another example.

Some of us know nothing about cars, particularly what is

under the hood. Suppose you have a big car, loaded with all the options - power steering, brakes, cruise control, etc. But for some reason the car stops on a lonely road, and you lift the hood. What do you see? Well, chances are you see a mass of wires, hoses, belts, and metal. A meaningless blob. So you have the car towed to a garage. A mechanic looks under the hood. But he doesn't see a mass. He sees a distributor cap, spark plug wires, a carburetor, fuel pump, and etc. He reaches around the carburetor, adjusts a nut that you had not seen. Then he carefully listens to the motor and perhaps makes further adjustments. You see, the more you know about cars, the more you think about individual parts of a car, and the less you think about the car as a whole.

Another example.

Suppose you and I were to travel to China . . . that great nation of over a billion people. We go downtown. It is the rush hour. Thousands of busy people are jostling thru the streets. Our first impression is likely to be to see a great mass of yellow humanity. I don't want to offend anyone this morning, but do you know what one of the greatest statements of ignorance is? This one - They all look the same to me.

But if we were to stay awhile among the Chinese and were to grow to know individual Chinese people, no longer would they all look the same to us. We would see them as individuals, just as we see our friends and family as individuals. God knows

every one of the Chinese, the Israelis, and the Palestinians.
He knows each boy and girl in Zambia, in South Africa, in Russia. ⁶

The more you know about something, the less you think in terms of the universal, and the more you think in terms of the individual. God, who is the source of all knowledge and truth, does not see simply as sea of humanity. He sees, cares, and loves each individual.

Jesus saw B. and cared about his blindness. He called B. to him. B. responded eagerly. He cast off his garment and came to Jesus "What would you ask of me" Jesus asked him. "Restore my sight" replies B. Jesus says, "Your faith has made you well"

Now, those of us who are sitting on the side of the road - our faith can make us well, too. Will you cast off your garment and come to Jesus? Can you believe that the God of this vast universe cares about your need and will see you thru whatever crisis you may be confronting. There is healing in such a faith.

When Jesus wanted to illustrate the love of the Father, he pointed to a tiny sparrow and asked: "Are you not of more value than they?" We are of infinite value to the Father. He cares about us as individuals. All that is required is that we open our hearts and his love dwell within.