

Since we're celebrating our octogenarians and nonagenarians today, I thought I'd start with a little story that came across the internet some time ago. It seems an old geezer became very bored in retirement and he decided to open a medical clinic with all the information he learned on-line. So he put a sign up outside that said: "Dr. Geezer's clinic. Get your treatment for \$500; if not cured, get back \$1,000."

Doctor Young, a real doctor, was positive that this old geezer didn't know beans about medicine, and thought this would be a great opportunity to get \$1,000. So he went to Dr. Geezer's clinic, and this is what happened.

Dr. Geezer: "What do you want me to do for you, young man?"

Dr. Young: "Dr. Geezer, I have lost all taste in my mouth. Can you please help me?"

Dr. Geezer: "Nurse, please bring the medicine from box 22 and put 3 drops in Dr. Young's mouth."

Dr. Young: "Aaagh !! This is Gasoline!"

Dr. Geezer: "Congratulations! You've got your taste back. That will be \$500."

Dr. Young gets annoyed, but goes back after a couple of days figuring to recover his money.

Dr. Geezer: "Well, young, man, this time, what do you want me to do for you?"

Dr. Young: "I've lost my memory, I can't remember anything."

Dr. Geezer: "Nurse, please bring medicine from box 22 and put 3 drops in the patient's mouth."

Dr. Young: "Oh, no you don't, -- that is Gasoline!"

Dr. Geezer: "Congratulations! You've got your memory back. That will be \$500."

Dr. Young now, after having lost \$1000, leaves angrily but still comes back after several more days, determined to get his money back.

Dr. Geezer: "It's good to see you again! What do you want me to do for you?"

Dr. Young: "My eyesight has become weak --- I can hardly see anything!!!!"

Dr. Geezer: "Well, I don't think I have any medicine for that, so here's your \$1000 back." But he gives him only a \$10 bill.

Dr. Young: "But this is only \$10!"

Dr. Geezer: "Congratulations! You got your vision back! That will be \$500."

The moral of story – just because you're "young" doesn't mean that you can ever outsmart an "old geezer." So, again – thank you to all our “Super Seniors for all you've done for John Wesley over the years!”

Now I thought this little anecdote would be the perfect introduction for today's message. Because in it, we find the exact question Jesus asked in today's scripture: "What do you want me to do for you?"

What do you want me to do for you? Let's look at the scripture a little further. A blind man is sitting by the side of the road. In Mark's Gospel, we learn his name is Bartimaeus, and he is begging, as he has to do every day just to survive. He hears a great commotion, and asks what's happening, and people in the crowd tell him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And despite his lowly state, Bartimaeus begins to shout out to Jesus, "Jesus, have mercy on me!" He is persistent, and passionately calls out – "Have mercy on me," again, and again, and again! People sternly tell him to keep quiet, but he ignores their demands, and continues, "Jesus, have mercy on me!" Finally, his appeal reaches Jesus' ears, and Jesus stops and asks him a direct question, "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus answers, "Lord, let me see again." And Jesus says to him, "Receive your sight. Your faith has made you well." And immediately Bartimaeus regained his sight and began following Jesus, praising God.

Now I'm quite certain every one of us here can empathize with Bartimaeus. Because every one of us is in need of Jesus to do something in our lives. Like Bartimaeus, it may be a physical healing - for ourselves or a loved one. We all know the pain, sorrow and fear caused by physical diseases such as cancer, heart problems, diabetes, Alzheimer's and more. Or, maybe we need another kind of healing. The healing of a 'dis'-ease in our hearts and souls, an emotional or spiritual brokenness we feel within. It could be that we need healing for a broken relationship, a broken heart, broken dreams, a broken spirit. We may be feeling the 'dis'-ease of worry or anxiousness over a child or a grandchild, a job, the future. Whatever it is, the burden of our 'dis'-ease weighs heavily on us, and like Bartimaeus, we too want to cry out to Jesus, "Have mercy on me, Lord! Please, help me!"

And we see in the scripture that Jesus does help Bartimaeus – he gives him his sight. And so what can we learn from Bartimaeus? What makes him so special that Jesus would help him? Why does he stand out in a crowd of so many people? I mean, wouldn't it be safe to assume there were others, perhaps many, many others, in need of help and Jesus' healing. So why Bartimaeus? Why Bartimaeus?

Well, it all comes down to the issue of faith. How much or how little faith we have. You know, even in his blindness, his darkness, Bartimaeus 'sees' that Jesus Christ is the one he must turn to for help, for hope, for wholeness. Do we have that kind of faith? Because consider, Bartimaeus will let nothing stop him from going to Jesus. He shouts and the crowd tries to quiet him. But he shouts all the louder, even

more insistent “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” His main concern is to get to Jesus. To have Jesus touch his life. He is vocal, persistent, passionate, “in your face,” so to speak. His attitude is one that says, “I’m not going to just sit here and hope for the best, I am going to take an active role in seeking out God and asking for His help – again and again and again.” And this is the kind of attitude that makes Jesus take notice. He stops in his tracks and calls Bartimaeus to him. Now I wonder, in our physical and emotional brokenness, do we, you and I, come to Jesus with that same kind of passion and persistence? With that same kind of conviction and certainty that Jesus will help us, make us whole, with the power that only he can give?

Because the depth of our faith and trust in Jesus does matter when we face problems and dis-ease in our lives. Master preacher Fred Craddock tells of a personal experience he once had. “I went to see a lady from our church who was ill and facing surgery. I went to see her in the hospital. Now, she had never been in the hospital before and this was major surgery. I walked in and there she was – a nervous wreck, and she started crying. She wanted me to pray with her, which of course I did. (And I noticed) by her bed there was a stack of books and magazines. (*People, Cosmopolitan, Oprah Magazine*), stuff about celebrities and silly things like that. She just had a stack of them there, and she was a wreck. And it occurred to me, there was not one calorie in that whole stack of reading to help her through this experience. She had no place to dip down into a reservoir and come up with something that might reinforce her faith. Not a word, a phrase, a thought, an idea, a memory, nothing. Just empty. On the other hand, how marvelous is the life of the person who, like a wise homemaker, when the berries and fruits are ripe, puts them away in jars and stores them in the pantry. Then when the ground outside is cold, icy, and barren and nothing seems alive, she can go into the pantry and bring out what’s she’s saved. And it’s summertime, even in the winter, at her family’s table. How blessed is that person.” And shouldn’t we be asking ourselves the obvious question, “Am I like that woman in the hospital? Or do I have a reservoir of faith like the suffering, blind Bartimaeus that I can draw on when times get tough?”

For you see, when times get tough, and they will, we will need that healing power that only Jesus Christ can give. Because certainly there is science, technology, medications, procedures to help in physical healing. There is counseling and therapy to help in emotional healing. But more often than not, there is something deeper, something more in our lives that human effort alone cannot fully remedy. That’s why, in most healing stories of Jesus, he is more concerned about the faith of individuals than about their physical condition. I think that’s why Jesus specifically asks Bartimaeus, “What do you want me

to do for you?" I'm pretty sure Jesus was smart enough to guess that Bartimaeus wanted to see. But to Jesus, it was important for Bartimaeus to say it, for it conveys a personal touch, a direct conversation, a relationship. And biblically, wholeness and healing have more to do with our relationship with God than it does with our health. Because often times the real sickness in our lives that needs Jesus' healing touch are those things that separate us from God – bitterness about our situation, guilt over our past, the anger or resentment we feel towards someone, worry about what's going to happen, lack of discipline, lack of direction, lack of faith. And these dis-eases often have an adverse affect on us both physically and emotionally. And only Jesus Christ has the power to heal us of these inner dis-eases. For only Jesus Christ offers forgiveness – that whatever we have done, whatever guilt we are carrying, is absolved, forgiven, done away. Only Jesus Christ can change us from the inside out, and give us a new heart, a new attitude, a new outlook on life. Only Jesus Christ can help us release our anger, or overcome our bitterness, or find the strength and courage to move on. Only Jesus Christ can assure us of God's great love for us – that God knows the number of hairs on our head, that God formed us in our mother's womb, that God says to each one of us, "I have called you by name and I love you." I love you. Yes, only Jesus Christ can give us the peace and assurance that indeed, "God will cause all things to work together for good to those who love God." These are sources of healing and wholeness you will not find anywhere else.

And so, have faith in Jesus Christ, and listen for those words, "What do you want me to do for you?"
Amen.