

**“When you re-write your sermon early Sunday morning  
because of a National Tragedy.”**

The Rev. Dr. Barbara Edema, Bridge pastor  
Sunday, October 28, 2018

Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52

Today God grieves. The shooting of innocent victims at the Tree of Life Synagogue has rocked our nation. Once again, brutal violence has occurred due to racism, in this case anti-Semitism, no gun laws, and a President who incites hatred and violence every single day. Eleven people are dead, families are in shock and mourning. And anyone in our country with a drop of empathy and compassion is bereft.

Today God grieves.

Today, Jesus walks. He walks in the neighborhood of the Tree of Life. He walks hospital hallways and the mortuary. He walks with police and detectives who have witnessed a horrific crime scene. He walks with each family member who has a burial to plan and a hole in the rest of their lives.

The sermon I wrote for today fell apart after yesterday's events. The bomb threats on Wednesday seemed scary enough, but who could have known what would happen yesterday at a baby's bris.

Today God grieves.

Today Jesus walks. He walks with the immigrants in the caravan. He walks with anyone on the receiving end of hatred, bigotry, and abuse. He walks with the immigrant children and parents already in this country and separated living in refugee camps.

Jesus is busy caring for those with so much pain, outrage, despair, and grief.

When Jesus met Bartimaeus in Jericho, he met a blind man, like other blind men on his journey of ministry. A man who had never seen anything. He didn't know he lived in darkness because he had nothing to compare it to.

Bartimaeus heard Jesus was walking through town. And so, from his dirty corner near the gates, wearing his dirty cloak, he called out, "Son of David have mercy on me!" The people around him tried to shut him up. "Be quiet!" But blind Bartimaeus would not be quiet. He yelled again with all the breath and strength he had.

Jesus heard him. Jesus heard Bartimaeus call him and unknown name, "Son of David." Jesus said, "Bring him to me."

The people who had tried to shut him up, stopped yelling at him and became his encouragers. "Take heart! Cheer up! Get up! He is calling you!"

Bartimaeus threw off his cloak. His filthy cloak. The cloak that held his blind body when he slept. His cloak that held the scraps of food given to him by neighbors in his daily begging. He threw off what was old and worn and dirty, and made his way to Jesus Christ who was walking through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem to die.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked blind Bartimaeus.

He let Bartimaeus have the dignity to ask for what he wanted, instead of telling him.

Because Jesus wanted to listen.

“My teacher, my Rabbi, let me see again.”

And Jesus said, “Go, your faith has made you well.”

“Immediately he regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way.”

The old life was gone and new life, new hope, new energy, and a whole lot of good news belonged to Bartimaeus.

Today God grieves.

Today Jesus is walking through towns, villages, cities, long dusty roads, hospital hallways, mortuaries, police stations, churches, synagogues, mosques, refugee camps, jail cells. He is walking endlessly.

And we cry out, “Jesus Christ, have mercy on us!”

There are people in our world who try to shut us up and shut us down. The people who don’t want things to change. The people who walk in their own darkness and hate-filled lives. The people who want to kill and destroy human lives. They try to quiet our voices. They want to fill us with their cancerous hate.

And we cry out again, “Jesus Christ, have mercy on us!” We are living in such dark times.

And today Jesus says, “Come here.”

And we will not be silenced, but we will encourage one another, “Take heart, cheer up! He is calling us! He is calling us! He is calling us!

And we get up, but first we must throw off the things of our life that keep us in the mud, that keep us in the mess, that keep us wanting to hate the haters.

And Jesus asks, “What do you want me to do for you?”

“What do you want me to do for YOU?”

We each need to answer that question. What will restore your sight of a fair and just world? What will restore your sight of kindness, generosity, and hospitality to others? What will restore your sight to see the goodness and give you the energy to spread goodness, inclusion, and the love of God everywhere you walk this week and all your weeks?

Ask him.

Yes, today God grieves. We all do.

And today Jesus is still walking. He is the healer of every ill. He is the one who makes the blind see. He is the one who saves wretches who take the lives of others. He is the LIGHT. And he tirelessly walks this earth in the saddest and cruelest of places, searching for those who want to follow him.

Even if your faith is shaky today, it has made you well.

The amazing grace of Jesus Christ will heal our hearts and this world that he came to save. And we will remember that we walk with him on every road, and we are the ones who say to the downtrodden, the despairing and the lost, “Take heart, cheer up, get up, he is calling YOU. Throw off what binds you and be healed.”

Amen.