

Jesus Saving Question: “*What Do You Want Me to Do for You?*”

Jesus asked a lot of questions; it was one of His favorite ways of teaching. He was not like Socrates, who asked questions because he had the concept that everybody came into this world already knowing all the answers, just not realizing it. Jesus asked questions to probe, to discomfit, to unnerve people. He also asked questions to alert people to that which is of ultimate importance.

Underlying every question from our Lord, was the one He put before the Twelve at Caesarea Philippi: “*Who do you say that I am?*” Peter rightly confessed: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” But then he proceeded to demonstrate that he had no idea what that meant.

That’s often how it is with Jesus’ questions ... on the one hand, they seem fairly easy to answer, and we are quick to respond; but perhaps too quick; because imbedded within each of Jesus’ questions is a challenge to our faith, our understanding, our response, and our lives.

This is true of Jesus’ Saving Question before us this evening: “*What Do You Want Me to Do for You?*”

This is a question that addresses our hope. Knowing Jesus as the Christ, this is the obvious next question: If He is Christ, so what? What are you looking for from Him? What should come next?

Two blind men confront Jesus in this evening’s Gospel with a specific need, and they have a specific response to this question. Their response to Jesus’ question comes out of the focal point of their lives. So compelling and obvious a need drives them to cry out for a solution: “*Lord, let our eyes be opened.*”

Central to their lives was their blindness . . . it could have been paralysis, or deafness, or a speech impediment, or an incurable disease, or poverty, or brokenness, or . . . When you are hurting, the question of need seems obvious: I need not to hurt!

Yet imbedded within such physical maladies are implications far beyond the physical. Such afflictions carried with them theological implications, as well. These two men carried in their bodies — so they thought, and so thought the crowd that was gathered around Jesus — they carried the sign of God’s judgment: They were blind — obviously (quite obviously!) they had sinned . . . every one could see it (even they in their blindness); everyone knew it.

Which meant for them sociological implications, too: they were outcasts, suspect, rejects. Those on whom God had shown His obvious displeasure were to be shunned.

So their need was not just to see — but to find wholeness in every aspect of their existence: They needed to be reconciled; they needed to be restored to community; they needed to be made whole.

The season of Lent is a time for us to recognize our blindness. The sin that dwells within us keeps us from seeing ourselves as we ought. We fail often to see our own sin as sin. We look upon our failures to live as, and to be, God’s people as something other than sin. We fail to see the hand of God at work in our lives.

Like these blind men, our blindness separates us: From God — and we do not sense the distance . . . from our own true selves — and we cannot see how far short we fall from what God designed us to be . . . from community — and we move blissfully unaware of how we impact others, or how we have failed to be the blessing to others God wants us to be. Our blindness seals us off into these tight little cocoons of self-insulated infatuation, where we think about what we want, but are shut off from what we truly need.

To be sure, we may realize some of our need when the need becomes overwhelming, when it interferes with our well-being or prevents us from doing what we wish. Physical, emotional, social problems pile up to the point where, in despair, we cry out, ***“Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!”*** because it is the only thing left to do.

Jesus' Saving Question comes to our ears when such difficulties are not inhibiting us. We hear it when life seems to be running along more or less comfortably — there is no “crunch time” on the scene; the problems we confront can be dealt with by some relatively easy solutions. In such moments, Christ also comes, asking, ***“What do you want me to do for you?”***

In such moments, that can be a tougher question answer. It has a change of force that hits us far differently than when we are “up against it.” The question becomes a beckoning, a summons to have Christ involve Himself in every aspect of our lives. When we struggle with difficulties, we want change; but how open to change are we when things are going well? Not very.

Our reply to Jesus becomes, *“I really don't want you to do much at all, except maybe keep the good things coming.”* The irony is, that in these times of peace, our sin blinds us from seeing our need for Christ's power and love in those very circumstances. These are the times that can drive us (or, perhaps, let us drift) away from Christ.

In every moment of life, Jesus is putting before us the question: ***“What do you want me to do for you?”*** If we are attuned to Him, our answer will consistently be: ***“Lord, let our eyes be opened.”*** We need them opened to the reality of sin at work in us constantly. We need them opened to the changes God has in store for us through His Spirit. We need them opened to the power God is working in our lives to shape us, mold us into the image of His Son.

If we hear Jesus' Saving Question only in times of difficulty, we miss so much: We miss the opportunities to rejoice in His life-changing grace; we miss the fullness of His power on display in us, working in us to bring that grace to the lives of others; we miss the wonderful blessings of community in which He is at work uniting His power at work in us with the power He is working in others

We would do well to pay attention to how this account in Matthew's

Gospel runs its course. Matthew tells us, “***Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes.***” What they asked Him to do, He did — but not because that’s what they wanted, because that’s what they needed. And He did ALL they asked of Him — He had mercy on them, and He gave them sight — all because he was “***moved with compassion.***”

But note their response: “***Immediately they regained their sight and followed him.***” Now they would have Jesus continually. Ongoingly, they would be positioned to receive from Him His aid — when they felt the need, and (perhaps more importantly) when they were unaware of their need.

In like manner the question is before us this evening; indeed it is before us non-stop: “***What do you want me to do for you?***” We have to cry out: “***Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!***” As we cry out, “***Lord, let our eyes be opened.***” And we must add, “***Then help us to follow You.***”

When we cry out thus, the question, “***What do you want me to do for you?***” transforms radically to become, “***Now, what do you want me to do with you?***”

Amen.