

"I've fallen and I can't get up!" More than likely you have probably seen the cheesy commercial that contains these famous words – it aired years ago, but still exists in the form of a popular catchphrase still used today on occasion. You know what I'm talking about right? It's from an 80's advertisement featuring a push-button device that you wear around your neck that is supposed to summon help if you can't get to the phone. And although it was aimed primarily at the elderly and disabled, the senior lady on the floor in the commercial utters her call for help with such campy melodrama, that we find it pretty hilarious, even though the situations the buttons are designed to address are no laughing matter.

Yeah, it is a pretty bad commercial, but maybe our laughter goes a little bit deeper than just making fun of horrible acting. Perhaps the reason that we find it amusing is because, in general, Americans think of asking for help as something one does only in the most dire of circumstances. Our fiercely individualistic and bootstrap-pulling ethics make it hard to cry out for assistance, even though we now have a myriad of devices that enable us to call for help whenever we need it, including our cell phones that we carry around with us everywhere.

"Asking for help is a universally dreaded endeavor," writes M. Nora Klaver in her book, *Mayday: Asking for Help in Times of Need*. Whether we're struggling with getting that heavy bag in the overhead bin on the airplane, or fixing a flat tire by the side of the road, Americans are much more likely to say, "I'm good" instead of "Can you help?" unless it's an emergency that involves calling in professional helpers like police or firefighters.

If we fall and can't get up, we'd generally rather crawl out to the street, and get in the car than inconvenience someone else, and thus reveal our problem or weakness. "I've got this," we'd prefer to say. In her research, Klaver suggests a number of reasons we Americans don't ask for help, and try, instead, to do it on our own:

For example- **We were never taught how to ask for help, and we have few role models.** Our grandparents were part of a generation that valued hard work and self-sufficiency. Asking for help was only in play if one was, say, drowning at sea. That ethic of self-sufficiency has been passed down to us.

Klaver also believes that- **We don't think to ask.** She says that we have been so brainwashed by the American ethic of self-sufficiency that asking for help just never comes to mind. We're so focused on caring for ourselves that we don't even realize when we need help. Furthermore, Klaver points out that - **It's often easier to do it ourselves.** "If you want something done right, do it yourself" is a popular American idiom. We don't want to be indebted to anyone or be in a position of having to reciprocate someday.

The final example I will share from Klaver is one I think most of us can relate to, **We're afraid to ask.** We're afraid of what asking for help might say about us. We'd rather die a thousand deaths than have someone else think that we can't do things on our own. In short, we're very good at trying to do it ourselves, achieving modest results, instead of getting real help and making real progress. And in doing so we miss out on certain gifts that others can give us.

Thankfully, Bartimaeus, in our Gospel story this morning had no such qualms about asking for help, and the results for him in doing so were nothing less than miraculous. He is an example of the kind of richness and blessing that can come to us if we're willing to set aside our self-sufficiency for a moment, and seek out real help and healing from someone else.

There he was sitting by the roadside at the exact moment a crowd of people followed Jesus and his disciples out of Jericho on the way up to Jerusalem. When he heard that Jesus was about to pass by, without hesitation, and without any sense of embarrassment, the blind man began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Even the crowd around him thought this was scandalous and "sternly

ordered him to be quiet," much like we'd be mortified to let anyone in public know that we have a problem. But Bartimaeus continued to not only ask for help, but to cry out for it, and it's through his story that we learn some important principles that can help us, if and when, we need to call for help.

For example, one thing that we can learn is that there are times when we need to **name our need**, and vow to remain open to possible resolutions.

Bartimaeus was a blind beggar, which meant that his only hope for a productive life was to regain his sight. He knows his need, but isn't it interesting that he doesn't lead with his need for sight, but rather his need to be seen by Jesus.

He shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, a sinner!" instead of crying out, "Have mercy on me, a blind man." Bartimaeus seemed to understand that his vision was not only clouded by cataracts, but by his own need of spiritual healing. He opens himself to the possibility that his needed healing might be either physical or spiritual, with an outside chance that it might be both.

Asking for help begins when we acknowledge that we have a problem, while also realizing that there may be underlying ones that go along with it. While we may appear fine on the surface, we know that other needs are always lurking underneath. Thus, the more we try to hide our need for help, the more insidious it becomes. There are certain things over which we are powerless, and sin is certainly one of them. To get help, be it physical or spiritual, we first have to name it.

Bartimaeus knows that, regardless of what's going on with his eyes, he's got even bigger problems. He prays the original sinner's prayer. He knows that Jesus can do something about the things that bind him, rather than the things that blind him. He is eager for whatever help Jesus can give him. Which begs the question, are we as open to the possibility that we can be healed by Jesus, or by others whom he might send to help us?

Another principle we can learn when we are in need of assistance is **to take a leap of faith and ask**. We have to believe that we qualify for help before we can ask for help. Bartimaeus believed that he was worthy of help, not because he was a great person, but because he was one of God's children -- a Jew who had been looking for the arrival of the Son of David, the Messiah. So, when Jesus heard his cries, and said, "Call him here," Bartimaeus responded by throwing off his cloak, and leaping up to meet the one who could help him. He puts himself in a position to receive help, and risks further embarrassment, in order to get close to Jesus. It's an act of faith.

Bartimaeus thinks to ask, and asking is the key to receiving most anything we need. Jesus, in fact, would tell his disciples, "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." The book of James, however, says that we "do not have because [we] do not ask." Asking God for what we need in prayer, and asking others for what we need in person, opens the door to healing and wholeness. Jesus' response to Bartimaeus is a question of invitation: "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus is ready with a reply: "My teacher, let me see again."

"What do you want me to do for you?" Can you imagine Jesus asking you that question? What would your response be? More importantly, what are your deepest needs that you haven't asked Jesus, or anyone else, to help you with? How might you take a leap of faith and ask, believing that you can receive all that you need and more? Jesus tells Bartimaeus, "Go; your faith has made you well!" Our faith can make us well, too. We may not receive precisely what we want, but we can be assured that Jesus is ready to supply for our needs, in a manner he sees fit. Faith is the catalyst for asking, and asking is the key to healing!

The third and final thing for us to learn when we ask for help is that we should **be grateful**. One of the keys to asking for, and receiving help, is gratitude.

When we have an attitude of gratitude, it tends to shake us out of our self-sufficiency, and allows us to celebrate what others have done for us. In a way, giving thanks is the substance that unfreezes the wheels that drive community, and enables us to acknowledge our dependence on God and one another.

When Bartimaeus received his sight, his first action was to follow Jesus up the road toward Jerusalem. Although we know where Jesus is going (to his confrontation with the powers of evil on the cross), Bartimaeus is happy to go along, grateful to Jesus for all that he has done for him. His gratitude is not merely words, but the actions of a follower who is thankful for the help he has just received. And although he cannot reciprocate what Jesus has done for him, he can give his life in response.

Of Course, we know how good it feels to receive gratitude when we've done a service for others. It can feel just as good to give gratitude when someone has done something for us. It's not about *quid pro quo*, but rather about the simple act of saying, "Thank you." When we develop the discipline of gratitude, asking for and giving help becomes a lot easier.

We live in a world that has fallen, and it can't get up on its own. We've fallen, too, and there are times that we need help in order to stand again. So...let us not be afraid to ask, let us have faith, let us be grateful to our God, who supplies all of our needs, and let us be thankful for the people who are willing and ready to help us on God's behalf!