



## SERMON RECAP

### OCTOBER 5, 2025

#### Following Christ means empowering change

Series: The Change Makers

Scripture: Mark 6:30-44

I think everyone my age or older can “do” Ed Sullivan. I never saw his program on live television. I was born a few years after The Ed Sullivan Show was cancelled, but I am still familiar with his stiff mannerisms, stilted cadence, and his pronouncement that tonight was a “really big sheew.”

Born an Irish Catholic in New York, he dreamed of being a professional baseball player. He was a high school standout in football and baseball, but when his talent fell short of the professional level, he turned to sports writing. Eventually his beat was changed to entertainment. He started writing the Broadway column for the New York Daily News.

This writing evolved in to radio shows and hosting reviews on stage and on TV. In 1948 he became the host of a new show on Sunday nights on CBS called “Toast of the Town.” The show was later named the Ed Sullivan Show. It was a top 5 TV show throughout the 50s and was a mainstay of pop culture until it was cancelled in 1971.

What was truly remarkable about Sullivan however, was not his longevity. It was the courage he had to use his platform for a greater good. His cultural impact is often remembered for groundbreaking appearances like the Beatles or Elvis Presley. But Sullivan showed his true power by combing the theaters of Harlem and other mostly black areas to find and lift up talent like Nat King Cole, Sammy Davis Jr, James Brown, Bo Diddley, Harry Belafonte, the Jackson 5, and Diana Ross.

Sullivan did not just have these black artists on the show, but defying requests from southern network affiliates, he made sure to embrace them. He shook Nat King Cole’s hand. He hugged Sammy Davis. In 1969 he danced with Pearl Bailey and they parted with a friendly kiss. In the height of McCarthy’s Red Scare, he had noted activist and self-proclaimed socialist Harry Belafonte on the show. He appeared 9 more times. Nat King Cole was such a regular guest that he was eventually given his own variety show on network television.



**On November 2nd 1969, Pearl Bailey and Ed Sullivan sang “You’re Nobody Till Somebody Loves You” as a duet. It was a delightful display of friendship and ended with a cute and groundbreaking show of affection. It can be found online and it is guaranteed to make you smile.**

**<https://www.edsullivan.com/artists/pearl-bailey>**

Sullivan used his platform to empower black artists who would otherwise be overlooked. What’s more, with subtle signs of friendship and affection, he bucked the social constraints of the time. He lost sponsors. He was threatened. Still, he understood the power that he had and he chose to use it for the betterment of others.

This is the kind of change making that we should still be doing. Our church has power. It has resources, and we are able to do more together than we could as individuals.

In today’s passage Jesus sees Bartimaeus on the side of the way. He is blind and shouts out to Jesus. When he speaks up, others are afraid of who he might upset, so Bartimaeus is quieted. Bartimaeus persists. The blind man is the one who saw most clearly. He saw Jesus for who he was, and instead of allowing him to be silenced, Jesus lifted him up. At the end of the story, Bartimaeus rises and follows Jesus on the way. Jesus did not allow Bartimaeus to simply sit on the side and worship. Instead, he empowered him to follow.

It is easy to sit on the side and worship Jesus. It is easy to shout platitudes and claim Christ. It would have been easy for Ed Sullivan to just allow his guests to perform, and let them walk off the stage. Instead he went out of his way to lift them up. It is more difficult to rise up and follow. Jesus empowers us to rise and follow, and this is what we are called to do for others.

Change making happens when we use the power we have for others. It happens when we rise up and follow instead of just shouting from the sideline. With Christ’s power and some courage, we can make a change in the world, and that would be a “really big sheew” to see.