

Healing a Blind Beggar -- Mark 10:46-52

by Travis Dean
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Please bow your heads with me for prayer:

Lord, we are about to open Your Word. As we continue this journey through the book of Mark, may Your Spirit speak a relevant and convicting message to our hearts. Because of the time we spend in Your Word today, may we leave here as examples of healthy Christians, in Jesus' name, amen.

As we begin this morning, I invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Luke. We're going to read chapter 1 verses 26 to 33. It's a very familiar passage. In fact, it's part of the Christmas story. Being that it is December now, it seems a fitting way to begin our journey today. And we'll discover that our story from the book of Mark is connected to the Christmas story by a common expression. That expression is "Son of David". Let's read now Luke 1:26-33. (Read) The angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she would give birth to a Son. What was she supposed to name Him? Jesus. But notice in verse 32 that He would be called something else. Did you catch it? He would be called the Son of the Highest. And yet Gabriel says that He would rule on the throne of His father... who? David. He would also be known as the Son of David. All God's promises to David that His kingdom would last forever were to be fulfilled through this Son of Mary, the Son of the Highest, who would also be known as the Son of David. As we will see, a blind beggar in our story today came to understand this. He came to realize that this Jesus from Nazareth was the promised Messiah, the Christ, the Son of David.

Let's now consider a summary of our story today:

As Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus heard of Him and began calling out to Him. Many people tried in vain to silence him. Jesus told them to call for him to come. The blind man came, asking to have his sight restored. Jesus told him to go, assuring him that his faith had saved him. Upon receiving immediate healing, the man followed Jesus along the road.

Often this story is referred to as the story of Bartimaeus. But Mark recorded this story not so much that we might get to know Bartimaeus, but so that we might get to know our Savior Jesus Christ. And so I invite you to join me in considering what Jesus experienced in this story. This story is recorded in Mark 10:46-52. I encourage you to follow along in your own Bibles. First of all, Jesus experienced hearing a cry for compassion. Mark 10:46 mentions that Jesus and His disciples came to the town of Jericho. Now most of us have probably heard how Joshua fought the battle of Jericho. What happened to Jericho in that story? The walls came tumbling down, right? It was completely destroyed. So how is it that Jesus and His disciples entered this city over a thousand years later? (Incidentally, Joshua and Jesus are the same name. Jesus is a Greek translation of the Hebrew name Joshua. Interestingly, both entered the city of Jericho.) Jericho has been rebuilt several times throughout history. There is archaeological evidence that the city of Jericho is the oldest inhabited city in the world, as even today it is inhabited by some 20,000 people. Jericho is also significant in that it has the lowest elevation of any city on earth, being close to 2,500 feet below sea level. It was located between Jerusalem and the Jordan River. In our story today, Jesus arrived at Jericho after having crossing the Jordan River some five miles to the east. Here the Jordan Valley ended and a path began the uphill ascent to Jerusalem.

Mark 10:46 mentions that as Jesus and His disciples left the city of Jericho, there was a crowd that followed them. The Passover festival was only a short time away, so many people were taking this route to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Out of all these people Mark calls attention to one person. This man was not on his way to Jerusalem. In fact, he was sitting on the side of the road. The order of the words Mark uses to describe this man is a bit different in the original Greek language than in our English translations. In the Greek it describes this man as follows: "son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, blind, begging". In Greek the most significant characteristic is listed first. So this man's significance is found in his father, Timaeus. From this point, this man's identity is described in increasing lower terms. His second identity is found in his name, Bartimaeus. Next we learn that he was blind. And last of all he was begging. In the eyes of the Jews he was a despicable

sight. In spite of all the counts against him, this man could still hear. In fact, he had probably come to hear quite well. He listened to every word that was spoken by those who walked by. And this day he heard the people talking about a man named Jesus, the Nazarene. It became apparent to Bartimaeus that Jesus was in the crowd that was then passing by.

So, in verse 47 of Mark 10, Bartimaeus began to call out – “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many people tried to make him stop, but it only made him yell even louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” This is the first time in the book of Mark that the expression, “Son of David”, has been used. It was an expression used by the Jews in Jesus’ day to refer the promised Messiah, who would arise out of the lineage of the great King David. Somehow, even though this man was unable see, he realized that this Jesus from Nazareth was the Christ. Mark 10:49 says that his cries for compassion got Jesus’ attention. He stopped and stood still.

Second, Jesus experienced providing a personal audience. Blind Bartimaeus was crying out to Him for mercy. Jesus heard His cries and stopped on the road. He gave this man an opportunity to say what was really on his mind. Mark 10:49 says that Jesus commanded him to be called. Everyone had been trying to get him to be quiet, but Jesus told them to summon him. They were no doubt surprised that Jesus would take the time for this blind beggar. But they responded by changing their tune and tone of voice. Instead of rebuking him they said, “Cheer up! Today’s your lucky day! He’s calling for you!” This man wasted no time in his response. Mark 10:50 says that after throwing aside his garment and getting up, he came to Jesus. Now that he had been invited he would let nothing stand in the way. He would do whatever it took to get to the Son of David. When Bartimaeus was at last standing in front of Him, Jesus asked him a rather pointed question: “What do you want me to do for you?” In other words, “You’ve been crying out for mercy. But tell Me. What exactly do you want Me to do for you?” Now was Bartimaeus’ chance to be specific. His response was immediate: “I want to see again.”

Third, Jesus experienced empowering a new journey. He encouraged and developed this man’s new journey of faith. Jesus’ response to Bartimaeus’ request revealed the fact that his new journey of faith had already started before this encounter. The statement in Mark 10:52, “your faith has made you well”, has a rich meaning in the original Greek language. The word translated, “made well” means “to save” or “to deliver”. It reveals spiritual as well as physical healing. Also significant is that this word is in the perfect tense. It describes a past, completed action that is still a present reality. Bartimaeus was presently experiencing a deliverance that was the result of a finished action. Prior to this encounter with Jesus, faith had already sprung up in Bartimaeus’ heart. His spiritual journey of salvation had already begun. And Jesus empowered that new journey by His own word, that now gave Bartimaeus his sight back. As Jesus continued down the road, Bartimaeus followed Him. His new journey continued down that road, for Jesus had won his heart.

So, this is what Jesus experienced in the story. Let’s now consider our experience today. How does this story show me how to live as a healthy Christian? The good news is that it does in fact reveal a living Example for me to follow - Jesus Himself. First, He is revealed as our Example in that He called for a specific request. Bartimaeus had been calling for mercy. But Jesus asked him to be more specific. He wanted Bartimaeus to describe what “mercy” looked like for him. And so He reveals that a healthy Christian is someone whose prayers are specific. There are times for both general and specific prayers. Usually when a crisis hits, though, our broad prayers become very specific. When the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee in their fishing boats, they may have prayed a general prayer like, “Lord, help us get to the other side safely.” But when Peter found himself sinking on a tumultuous sea, his prayer became very specific: “Lord, save me!” (Matt. 14:30) Another example is found in James 5:17-18. I invite you to turn there with me. (Read) This was a time in Israel’s history when they had walked away from the true God and followed after other gods. Elijah’s prayers may have been general up to this point – “Lord, turn our hearts back to You.” But when the moral corruption became so severe that God decided to do something drastic, Elijah’s prayers became very earnest and specific: “Don’t let it rain.” And it didn’t rain in Israel for three and a half years. At the end of the 3½ years, Elijah prayed another specific prayer – “Please send rain.” That very day a great storm poured heavy rain on the land of Israel. You can read the story in its entirety in the book of 1 Kings chapters 17 and 18. One of the families in our church recently lost their home in a fire. Now if they had simply asked for help, they would have certainly received it. But they might not have received the things they really needed at that time. But if

their requests were very specific, such as for clothes or a temporary cell phone to make calls on, it would be more likely that they would receive those specific needs. As I have the opportunity to visit patients in the hospital as a chaplain, my prayers are often general such as, "Lord, use me to be a blessing today." But when I'm in a hospital room, listening to a patient share their desperate circumstances, my general prayers become very specific: "Give me something meaningful to say!" So, it was with Bartimaeus. When Jesus summoned him, his general cries for mercy changed to a specific request that he might see again. And so it will be with us as healthy Christians.

Second, Jesus is revealed as our Example in this story in that He pictured salvation as a progressive experience. Jesus assured Bartimaeus that his faith had already brought him salvation. And yet Bartimaeus was still blind. He still needed further deliverance. When Jesus restored his sight, it was a continuation of his past salvation experience. And so He reveals that a healthy Christian is someone who continues to be saved. Often we look back on a single day in the past when God saved us. And yet we have daily struggles and failures in our Christian experience. Does our past experience of salvation help us at all in the present? Often the question is asked, "Are you saved?" And the insinuation is that if you have, that's all that matters. Or if you haven't been, then you better get saved. And yet as you read through the Bible, the biblical answer to "Are you saved?" is as follows: "Yes, in the process, and not yet." Titus 3:5 declares that when our Savior appeared, God saved us. That is a past, historical event and experience. And yet 1 Corinthians 1:18 says that while non-believers are dying, we, as believers, are being saved (present tense). Every day we are experiencing God's salvation. And last of all, Romans 5:9 says that now that God has declared us innocent, we will be saved from wrath. Here is a picture of a future salvation from destruction.

You may not be aware of this, but salvation is also described in the Bible in the perfect tense. Paul says in Ephesians 2:5, 8 that we have been saved. God has already saved us by grace through our response of faith, and that salvation continues on with each new day. In case all this discussion of salvation as a progressive experience has confused you, consider this analogy. All of us are like candles. Those who have not believed in Jesus are like a candle that is going out. But those of us who are believers are like a candle that keeps growing brighter.

What a moment it must have been when Jesus looked at blind Bartimaeus and asked him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" It was the moment of a lifetime. Well, today Jesus has summoned you. He's looking you in the eyes and asking you the same question he asked Bartimaeus: "What do you want Me to do for you?" What is your answer? This is your opportunity to be specific. Sure, you want mercy, strength, and courage. But what one thing is your greatest felt need right now? What one thing stands out above all else? More money? A better job? A happy marriage? To be completely healthy? A true friend? A happy and peaceful home? Freedom from drugs, fornication, or alcohol? Inner peace and happiness? Power to win people to Jesus?

You might start by asking Jesus for more money. But in the process He might show you that what you really need is inner peace and happiness. As you pray, God might change your mind. But the most important part is to ask. Be specific. Be willing to change your prayer. And don't stop asking. Even Elijah had to pray seven times before God sent rain. And ultimately God will give you what you need most.