

Mark 10:46-52 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.

⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." ⁵⁰ And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." ⁵² Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

I would like to start with a geography lesson. It is interesting and it gives us a much truer picture of where this amazing event happened. I have taken this directly off of John MacArthur and he has taken some of it from Eerdmans study.

“Jericho was located approximately fifteen miles northeast from Jerusalem and about five miles west from the Jordan River. The flourishing New Testament city of Jericho was not far from the ruins of the Old Testament city (destroyed during Israel’s original conquest of the land). That there were these two cities of Jericho in Jesus’ day may explain why Matthew and Mark state that the healing took place while Jesus was leaving Jericho (i.e., the ruins of the Old Testament city), while Luke states that it occurred while He was approaching Jericho (i.e., the New Testament city). Those statements could also mean simply that the blind men were healed somewhere in the general vicinity of Jericho.

The noted nineteenth-century historian Alfred Edersheim gave a vivid description of **Jericho** as it was in Jesus’ day:

The ancient City occupied not the site of the present wretched hamlet, but lay about half an hour to the north-west of it, by the so-called Elisha-Spring. A second spring rose an hour further to the north-north-west. The water of these springs, distributed by aqueducts, gave, under a tropical sky, unsurpassed fertility to the rich soil along the “plain” of Jericho, which is about twelve or fourteen miles wide ... *Josephus* describes it as the richest part of the country, and calls it a little Paradise. Antony had bestowed the revenues of its balsam-plantations as an Imperial gift upon Cleopatra, who in turn sold them to Herod. Here grew palm-trees of various kinds, sycamores, the cypress-flower, the myro-balsamum, which yielded precious oil, but especially the balsam-plant. If to these advantages of

climate, soil, and productions we add, that it was, so to speak, the key of Judæa towards the east, that it lay on the caravan-road from Damascus and Arabia, that it was a great commercial and military centre, and lastly, its nearness to Jerusalem, to which it formed the last “station” on the road of the festive pilgrims from Galilee and Peræa—it will not be difficult to understand either its importance or its prosperity.

We can picture to ourselves the scene, as our Lord on that afternoon in early spring beheld it. There it was, indeed, already summer, for, as *Josephus* tells us, even in winter the inhabitants could only bear the lightest clothing of linen. We are approaching it from the Jordan. It is protected by walls, flanked by four forts. These walls, the theatre, and the Amphitheatre, have been built by Herod; the new palace and its splendid gardens are the work of Archelaus. All around wave groves of feathery palms, rising in stately beauty; stretch gardens of roses, and especially sweet-scented balsam-plantations—the largest behind the royal gardens, of which the perfume is carried by the wind almost out to sea, and which may have given to the city its name (Jericho, “the perfumed”). It is the Eden of Palestine, the very fairyland of the old world. And how strangely is this gem set! Deep down in that hollowed valley, through which tortuous Jordan winds, to lose his waters in the slimy mass of the Sea of Judgment. The river and the Dead Sea are nearly equidistant from the town—about six miles. Far across the river rise the mountains of Moab, on which lies the purple and violet colouring. Towards Jerusalem and northwards stretch those bare limestone hills, the hiding-place of robbers along the desolate road towards the City. There, and in the neighbouring wilderness of Judæa, are also the lonely dwellings of anchorites [hermits]—while over all this strangely varied scene has been flung the many-coloured mantle of a perpetual summer. And in the streets of Jericho a motley throng meets: pilgrims from Galilee and Peræa, priests who have a “station” here, traders from all lands, who have come to purchase or to sell, or are on the great caravan-road from Arabia and Damascus—robbers and anchorites, wild fanatics, soldiers, courtiers, and busy publicans—for Jericho was the central station for the collection of tax and custom, both on native produce and on that brought from across Jordan. (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* [repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 2:349-51. Italics in original)

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Mark 9-16.

I had always envisioned Jericho as a sleepy little village close to the Jordan river. The truth is it was a booming metropolis with beautiful lush surroundings. I

suspect it would be like some of the lush valleys in California, with a similar climate.

Now we are about to witness a miracle. Jesus is about to heal a blind man. Jesus will only do 2 more healings after this point. He heals people after casting out the money changers from the temple and he heals the ear of the servant of the high priest.

Other than those healings Mark only records one more miracle. Jesus curses the fig tree.

Now Jesus had performed miracles all over Israel. He had done enough in enough places **for everyone to have heard of Him in those areas**. He gave evidence everywhere He went that He was who He said He was. Now things are winding down. He is headed to Jerusalem where He would be crucified. His ministry to the masses is nearly over. Much of the ink in scripture recording Christ's final days records the teaching that Christ did to His disciples.

So Jesus is coming down to the end of His life here in the beautiful city of Jericho. He and His disciples and other travelling companions are walking through the main thoroughfare of Jericho.

⁴⁶ **Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.**

As we learned earlier, there were two Jericho's. There was the ancient city that was in ruins. It was in ruins because God destroyed it when the Israelites first came into the promised land. Remember how the walls miraculously came tumbling down? That was here.

Then a few miles further toward Jerusalem is the new thriving metropolis of Jericho. Since some of the gospels say he was leaving Jericho and others say He was coming into Jericho, it could be that this happened between the old and new Jericho.

Wherever Christ was, there was at least one blind man, probably two, who were begging. Matthew tells us there were two in his account, and the situations were so similar in the same geography that it is likely it is describing the same event. It is also likely that Bartimaeus was the primary spokesperson, so the Mark's focus is on him.

So we have blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus begging.

It is odd that scripture tells us that Bartimaeus is the son of Timaeus, since that is what the name Bartimaeus means. Bar means "son of"

It is also interesting that Bartimaeus is referred to by Mark as blind Bartimaeus. It looks like the kind of name assigned to someone to let you know in an instant

which Bartimaues you are speaking of. It is the Bartimaus that was blind. This would make perfect sense if Bartimaues eventually became well known in church leadership. Remember that Mark was written some years after the actual events. So it is likely that people knew who blind Bartimaues was.

Now blindness, in Jesus day, was seen as God's punishment on a person.

We see that portrayed in John 9:1-5

John 9:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. ⁴ I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

You know, we are often very crafty in how we relieve ourselves from the responsibility of ministering to those who are suffering. We often look to find a reason that something about a suffering person doesn't meet the qualification of a person we should minister to. Maybe we say, well that person has not asked for my help. Maybe we say, that person is in that dilemma because they were disobedient to God. We might say, that person has chosen not to remain tightly involved in our fellowship. Often, if we were to be more truthful we ought to say, I really don't want to expend **the effort** and the **social discomfort** of trying to minister to that person. So I am finding excuses not to.

And our excuses allow us to treat those people as a bother, as an interruption, in fact, we can even blame them for their own suffering. Yes, what a wonderful ministry that is. (sarcasm)

So when we see what comes next in our story, it is no surprise. We always act according to what we most truly believe at that moment.

⁴⁷ **And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"**

It is interesting what Bartimaues yells out. He hears from others that the person passing is Jesus of Nazareth. This name describes the human, Jesus, who grew up in Nazareth. Bartimaues knew that this was not the best description of Christ. Sight would say Jesus is a human being. He is influential. He may even be special. But He is just a man. Don't expect too much. People would tend to be cynical about Jesus being anything more than that.

But Bartimaues does not call out according to sight. Bartimaues calls out to Jesus in faith. He, as a blind man, can see some things that those without sight cannot. He can see that Jesus is the Son of David that the bible prophesies.

Look what 2 Samuel says about the Son of David:

2 Samuel 7:12-17 (NKJV)

¹² "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³

He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish **the throne of his kingdom forever.** ¹⁴ **I will be his Father, and he shall be My son.** If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. ¹⁵ But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." ' ' " ¹⁷

According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

This passage is a double prophesy. It refers to the immediate son of David, Solomon, in one sense, and the eternal Son of David in another sense. The second Son of David, the one following Solomon, was understood to be the one who would save Israel.

Jesus was a direct descendent of David on both his mother and step father's side. He was a direct descendent of God on His Father's side.

So blind Bartimeaus can see better than most of the rest of the crowd. He is calling out to the Messiah.

Now how is he calling out to Christ? The word for crying could just as easily be interpreted screaming. This is a big crowd. It would be noisy. So this man understands what it would take to be heard. This man is calling out to God with everything that he is. He is calling out and does not care what another human being thinks about it.

And the third thing we need to look at is what does he ask for? He asks for mercy. Isn't that interesting. Mercy is withholding that penalty which we deserve. So what does that tell you? This man knows himself. Somehow he has gained an understanding that he is lost in need of a savior. He needs forgiveness. He doesn't deserve anything.

This brought to mind a song written by Steve Taylor that was popular in the 80's

You don't owe me nothing

There was a time in Christendom
The road to God was hard to tread
'Til charlatans in leisure suits
Saw dollars dancing in their heads

I heard **her** say, she struck a deal
Her faith will bring in money bags
I'm heading for the mercy seat
My goodness looks like dirty rags

You don't owe me nothing
Need I even say you don't owe me nothing
Why did you give it anyway?

I know you'll give me what I need
They say I need a shopping mall
I claim the victory over greed
Lord Jesus, I surrender all

You don't owe me nothing
You don't owe me nothing

Bartimaeus got this point. He had this same attitude. God did not owe him a healing. He didn't owe him anything but punishment for sin. So the man calls out for mercy.

Oh what a wonderful example from this blind man. This man who cannot see has greater sight than those in the crowd.

He calls out to the right source for what he needs.

He calls out with everything he has to get what he needs.

And he calls out with the right attitude to get what he needs.

What do you need this morning? Are you calling out to the right source with all your heart with the right attitude?

⁴⁸ **Then many warned him to be quiet**

Here we see the ministry of the world to the Christ seeker. It is easily stated. Shut up.

Nothing has changed. The advice remains the same.

If you start talking about our sin nature and us being born in sin and needing forgiveness for sin, most people in the world are going to try to silence you. Even nice, well meaning people will tell you that you aren't that bad of a person. Stop being so hard on yourself. And if you apply these truths to them they will become defensive. How dare we insult them in such a way. Shut up about this need for mercy. Shut up in drawing attention to yourself for that need. Shut up in your pursuit for it. And especially shut up because, who are you to be asking anyway. Never trust the spiritual advice of this world. It is almost always bad. It will lead to your destruction. The world wants you to **conform to its mold**. It will not help you to **receive mercy for your need**. So ignore it's voice. Your non believing acquaintances are not going to help you get to God.

When Carla came to Christ, most in her family tried to get her to come back the way of interacting and living that she used to do. It was hard for her to make that break. She had to resist the ministry of the world. Fortunately God planned to show mercy to her whole family as well. But at first they wanted life to go on as usual.

Bartimeaus shows us the exact response we should have to the ministry of the world to Christians.

but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

When you are crying out to the right source, with the right request and the right attitude, never stop no matter how much pressure you get to do so.

Just keep it up. Don't quit. Keep calling. Ignore the dissenting voices.

⁴⁹ **So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you."**

This is how God responds to the person who cries out to Him in faith. Notice that the crowd did not sway Christ's actions at all. Isn't that a blessing? Everyone in the crowd, even in the Christian crowd may say that we don't deserve to be part of Christ's circle. Look at the poor apostle Paul. Look at the disfavor he faced.

But Christ doesn't listen to the crowd. If a person responds in faith, Christ will receive him or her, no matter what the crowd thinks.

Essentially here, Christ silences the crowd. He shows them his disfavor over their ministry. He commands that Bartimeaus be brought. He is telling them, my ways are not your ways.

It is interesting how the crowd changes its tune so quickly. It would seem to me that an apology would have been in order here. The crowd should have expressed their sorrow over treating Bartimaeus as being unwanted to Christ. But instead they act like they are simply, as always, furthering Christ's wishes. That is pretty much to be expected.

⁵⁰ **And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.**

The test of genuineness is congruence. This man said he really wanted Christ to show him mercy. When it is offered to him, he jumps up and takes it. He acts like he really wanted what he asked for.

What would happen if we applied this test to our lives and our prayers.

We pray like we want to have opportunities to minister to others. But what happens when the opportunities present themselves? Do we throw aside our garments and rise?

Given that our hearts are desperately wicked, we are wise to be suspicious of ourselves. How well do our **theories about ourselves** fit the **reality of our behavior**? We see ourselves as sincere, hard workers, lovers of the brethren, good mothers and fathers, good spouses. But when opportunity comes where we can live it, what comes out? Does joy come out because we have the opportunity to do the thing we love to do in service to Christ's name? Or do excuses come out for why we really shouldn't be expected to do this particular thing.

Congruence is the test for sincerity and genuineness. What do our lives say?

⁵¹ **So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?"**

Now here is a wonderful question. Jesus isn't playing a game here. He is asking a straight forward question. Bartimaeus, this is your chance. What do you want from me?

The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."

These kinds of interactions are so refreshing. There is no game here.

First Bartimaeus calls Jesus Rabboni. This means master. This blind man is congruent through and through. He **acts** like he **needs mercy**. He calls Jesus the Messiah. Now when he **addresses Jesus** he calls him his **master**. That is exactly how someone should talk if they believed what they previously said.

And next we see a beautiful thing. It is more rare in believers than it should be. Bartimaeus does not pretend to be more spiritual than he is. He doesn't say, I would like to be more useful to your kingdom Lord. He doesn't say he would like to serve his family better. He doesn't justify why he wants what he wants. He doesn't spiritualize things. He just answers honestly without pretention.

I want to see.

He isn't embarrassed. He's not worried about showing himself to be a 3rd level Christian, still wanting earthly things. He is not worried about his Christian image and perception. Here is a man who knows what he wants and trusts himself into the hands of Christ exactly as he is. I want to see.

If Christ were to ask you, what do **you** want, how would we answer that?

I for one would have a list. And some of the things might appear spiritual and some would appear fleshly. There are burdens I wish were removed. I wish I were a better person with better impulses. There are temptations I would like removed. There are people I would like fixed.

Some of the things would make me look bad. So be it. I am bad. At least that part of me that is flesh is. And some things we would regard as for our pleasure that Christ is happy to give us. Simply because it gives us pleasure does not mean that God is against it.

So you know what? I might as well be **honest with God** and **with myself** and **with you**.

This blind man was just that. He was honest with Christ. And look how Christ responds to that honest request that didn't seem to have a hint of spirituality to it?

⁵² **Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.**

It is interesting that the word Jesus used for **well** was usually used of people who were **saved**, not of people who were **healed**. I believe this word was used to show us that this man gained physical sight as a result of crying out by faith in Jesus. God had already given him a degree of **spiritual sight**. The man called out in faith and Christ responded to him. But it was his **faith in Christ** that Christ responded to. It was as a result of the man's faith that he was made well, both physically and spiritually.

It is just like when God infused faith in our hearts. We used that faith to respond to the gospel. And it is by grace we are saved through faith. We don't know exactly how and when it happens, but we can see the evidence that it did happen over time.

Well this morning Bartameaus gives us a wonderful example to follow.

First, what is our need? Bartamaues was very straight forward about his. He needed mercy and he wanted sight.

Then who are we going to with our need? Are we going to the right place? Or are we treating the symptoms with the world's remedies rather than crying out to the great physician.

Then are we going all out to get the help we need? Are we being straightforward and assuming with God in our appeal for His help?

And are we going with the attitude that God doesn't owe us anything, but He loves to give gifts to His children. We first need mercy. Then we need grace.

And lastly are we honest with ourselves and God about what we really want and why.

Then, are the actions of our lives congruent with the words of our mouths?