

Jesus Receives the Blind

Matthew 20:29-34

Halifax: 23 July 2006

Introduction:

For some time now, Matthew has been speaking of Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem where He will be crucified and then raised again on the third day.

- As He journeys along,
 - He continues to speak about what will befall Him—even as we saw last week in Matthew 20:17-18...
 - Yet, He also continues to minister to the lowly...
 - We have seen just lately that:
 - He gladly ministered to little children who were brought to Him by their parents, though the disciples tried to hinder them...
 - refused to minister to a rich young ruler who came to him in pride...
 - told a parable teaching that the first will be last and the last first...
 - declared that He had come to serve rather than to be served...
 - And now this week we find Him ministering to two poor blind men whom the multitude tried to silence.
- This is the final event that Matthew has recorded for us in his gospel before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem...
 - There were other things that our Lord did, but this act of tender compassion was the last that Matthew chose to record.
 - For that reason, it ought to make a strong impression on us of the fact that our Lord came to minister to the poor and needy.
 - Here are two men, opposed by the crowds, but gladly received by our gracious Lord.

Just think what a tremendous blessing it must have been for these blind men to hear that our blessed Saviour was coming near!

- He was making His way down the 10 km road that passed from the Old Jericho that Joshua had destroyed to the beautiful new Jericho that Elisha had blessed and that Herod had adorned.
- They could not see Him, but it was enough for them to **hear** that He was near!
 - They had heard about the great things He had done all over Palestine, and now He was coming down the very street where they sat, begging.
 - They know just what to do when He comes near!

- They cry out to Him for mercy.

But let me ask you a question, my brothers and sisters...

- Have you heard that He is near to you today?
 - I know that you cannot see Him,
 - but have you heard (like these men) that He is near?
 - I don't mean that He is physically present as He was when He passed through Jericho...
 - But I speak of His presence with us through the Holy Spirit...
 - Did He not tell His disciples just before His death it would be better for them for Him to go away because then He would send His Spirit to be with them forever?
 - While on earth, He could only be in one place at a time...
 - But now, though He is reigning in heaven, He is also with us spiritually...
 - The Bible teaches that He is near to all who call upon Him in truth...
 - God promises that if you seek Him, you are sure to find Him.
 - He is not far from any of us because in Him we live and move and have our being.
 - But know for sure that if you do not call upon Him while He is near,
 - the time will come when the opportunity will be lost...
 - One day, you will die and then it will be too late to find Him...
 - If these two blind men had ignored the report that He was near,
 - He would have passed on from Jericho and they would have remained in their wretched condition.
 - Like these two blind men,
 - You do not have to see Him to know that He is near...
 - It is enough to be told that He is...
 - You can not say that you have never **heard** that He is near...
 - I have just told you that it is so.
 - Now, at least, whether or not you believe, you have heard.

But I have another question for you...

- I said before that these blind men knew what to do when He came near...

- The question is,
 - Do you?
 - God’s word tells you that the Lord is near...
 - but do you know what to do while He is near?
- This morning I want to show you what to do from our text...
 - I implore you to let these blind men be your guides to show you what to do while the Lord is near.
 - I know it may seem strange to follow the blind,
 - but these men were only physically blind...
 - They could see much more clearly than many of their contemporaries who had eyes.
 - If we are wise, we will let them be our guides to show us what to do when Jesus is near, for they obtained mercy from Him.

I. First of all, while Jesus is near, confess Him.

- These two blind men confess two things about Him.
 - You can see it in their request when they say,
 - v. 30: “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David.”
- A. You see here, first of all, that they call Him “Lord.”
 1. There is good reason to call Him Lord...
 - a. Because He is!
 - They had the testimony of the Old Testament scriptures declaring that **the Lord** would suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the Covenant.
 - They had the testimony of John the Baptist who said that he was unworthy to loose the shoes of Jesus—
 - that he (John) was the one who had come to prepare the way of **the Lord...**
 - As these words were quoted from Isaiah, it should be understood that the word “Lord” refers to Jehovah Himself!
 - b. And today you have even more reason to call Him Lord than these blind men had...
 - For by apostolic authority,
 - we are told that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ...
 - that He has put all things under His feet...

- That He is head over all things, and that the fullness of the God head dwells in Him bodily...
- that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father...
- The Father has declared that He is Lord by raising Him from the dead.

TRANS> Clearly, He is Lord!

2. But you must not make this confession with mere words...
 - Proper confession includes understanding what it means to call Him Lord...
 - a. It means that He is God over all!
 - It means that He has the power and authority to bless and to curse...to kill and to make alive...
 - It means that your entire destiny depends upon His will.
 - b. It means that He is your Master and you are His servant...
 - That it is for you to obey Him and to submit to Him in all things as the angels do in Heaven.
 - It means that keeping His commandments and statutes is your obligation and cannot justly be jettisoned.
 - c. It also means that He can do whatsoever He pleases...
 - He can do, as scripture says, exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we ask or even think...
 - There are no limits to His power but His holy will because He is Lord!
 - He will fulfill all His pleasure.
3. For you this is either a wonderful thought or a dreadful thought...
 - a. If you are on His side—in league with Him,
 - there is no better news than to hear that He has all authority over all things...
 - It means that you are joined in purpose and destiny with the One who will have His way...
 - It means that His mighty power is at work in you and for you because you have made given yourself to do His will and to receive His help.
 - b. But if you are yet fighting against Him and refusing to yield to Him...
 - You do not want to accept that He is Lord...

- It is a dreadful thought that the One who has all authority and power in heaven and earth is your adversary...
- As long as you refuse to submit to Him, I doubt that you will accept it...
 - You will not be found confessing Him as Lord—
 - at least not with true understanding.

TRANS> But this is first thing our two blind guides teach us to confess...they confess that He is Lord...

B. Secondly, you see here that they confess Him to be the **Son of David**.

- “Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David.”
1. **Son of David** is the name that was used in their day to refer to the Messiah...
 - To say that someone was the Son of David was to say that He was the Messiah that God had promised through the prophets.
 - It was to say that He was much more than a mere prophet...
 - that He was the One God had promised to be the Author of Salvation.
 - As the Son of David, it was His office to help and to save!
 - In the Old Testament, so many things were declared about His tenderness and compassion, especially to the poor and needy...
 - How He would not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax...
 - How He would give sight to the blind and release the prisoners from their chains.
 - But above all, that He would save His people from their sins.
 2. And now that He had come into the world, the exhibition of His saving mercies followed Him everywhere...
 - Compassion continually poured forth from Him as He went about in the Land of Israel...
 - Even in this very account, we see His compassion extended to these poor blind men...
 - The word **compassion** used in verse 34 means that He was deeply moved within when He saw these men in their need.
 - Here, as in all other places He went, His compassion changes the miserable condition of sinners...

- The healing of these blind men is but one more expression of His character as our dear Saviour, the Son of David, who came to seek and to save what was lost.
3. And for us who live after His final visit to Jerusalem—in these NT times...
- We know that His compassion drove Him all the way to the cross for His sheep.
 - We know how He willingly bore the wrath and curse of God for us in order that we might have the forgiveness of sin...
 - The Son of David suffered the pains of eternal Hell so that we could be saved who have fled to Him for mercy.
 - Our Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep.

TRANS> Brothers and sisters, Let us join these blind men in their confession that Jesus is Lord and Saviour.

- Do you know Him in this way?
 - Do you confess Him as your Lord and Saviour?
 - Have you been baptised in His name and are you a member of His church?
- Confess Him as Lord and Saviour.
- That is the first thing to do while He is near...
 - Now let's look at the second...

II. The second thing to do while Jesus is near is to ask for His mercy.

A. What else can you do (besides ask for mercy) if you acknowledge Him to be Lord and Saviour!

1. If you truly believe that He has all authority in heaven and earth and that He has come with compassion to save...
 - You surely want all that power and compassion directed toward you!
 - All of your happiness depends upon it!
 - To have His mercy is to have everything...
 - To be without it is eternal death and misery.
2. These men ask for **mercy** because they have a certain self awareness...
 - a. They know that they do not deserve anything from Him.
 - Like Jacob of old, they realise that they are not worthy of the least of His mercies.
 - They do not ask Him to deal fairly and justly with them,

- but they ask Him to show mercy.
 - The request for mercy is the request of a condemned man...
 - Of a man who knows He has no claim to make...
 - Of a man whose only hope is that His judge will take pity on Him.
 - b. The Bible is full of cries for mercy,
 - but it is one of the most deplorable characteristics of our day that so few—even in the church—ask for mercy.
 - So few today have any sense of the true character of the living God who has justly charged all the descendents of Adam with sin...
 - and has justly sentenced them to punishment in the Lake of Fire forever and ever.
 - c. My friends, you must read the Bible! All of it!
 - Yes, it has much to say about God’s grace and compassion...
 - but it also has much to say about His wrath and judgement!
 - And it says it in both the Old and New Testaments.
 - It is not for you to only receive the parts that please you and ignore the rest...
 - The scriptures are God’s divine revelation to us and we must receive it all if we would know the truth.
3. And I tell you that it is the truth that sets you free!
- a. The Bible does not hesitate to tell us how bad we are...
 - but neither does it hesitate to tell us how merciful God is toward all those that call upon Him!
 - How sad it is that there are so many that have no knowledge of God’s mercy because they have no knowledge of their own wickedness.
 - The mercy they know is not the mercy of the glorious God...
 - It is the mercy of a grandfather that doesn’t care that wrong is done.
 - b. But when you frankly acknowledge your own demerit,
 - I tell you that there is no mercy so sweet as God’s mercy!
 - There is nothing like it—it is glorious beyond all measure!
 - c. These blind men did not ask for fairness—that they be as other men...
 - They ask for nothing but mercy!

- I don't mean to say that we may not ask for justice as those who are in Christ crucified...
 - You can ask God to forgive you in justice because Christ has already paid the penalty of your sin...
 - or you can ask Him to grant you justice in human courts...
 - but you dare not ask for justice on the basis of your own merit before God.
 - To receive justice would be your ruin.
- Too often, there is a nasty edge about us in our sufferings and our trials...
 - an underlying attitude that God has not dealt fairly with us...
 - There is an unsavoury tone in our petitions that God someone owes something to us!
 - That unsavoury note is deplorable and it needs to be banished forever from our petitions.

TRANS> Let us learn to ask for mercy from our blind guides!

- And having done that...

B. See in our text how they ask for mercy in a proper manner...

- There are three characteristics to be imitated about the way in which they ask for mercy...
 1. First, learn that it is proper to **cry out** for mercy.
 - a. In the original the word **cry** is *krázw* which speaks of a harsh cry...
 - It is used of the shriek of the unclean spirits that Jesus casts out...
 - It is used of the cry of the disciples in the storm at sea...
 - It is used of the angry shout of the Jews to crucify Jesus...
 - It is used of Jesus' shout of anguish on the cross...
 - b. The blind men cried out because they knew that Jesus was their only hope for salvation.
 - If He did not deliver them, nobody else could.
 - They were in great earnest to be heard...
 - They were desperate.
 - The Bible teaches that we ought to be desperate also...
 - James 5:16: The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

- c. Such earnest cries to God for mercy on our part show that we understand our true condition...
 - Not artificial cries, but sincere cries that rise out of the sense that you are in desperate need of God's salvation.
 - If you truly consider that your life is out of sync with your Creator—
 - and that this is such an offensive thing that justice demands eternal vengeance upon you...
 - What else can you do but cry out to Him for mercy?
 - Such cries are cries that honour God's Son who paid such a high price to take away our sins...
 - Is it a small thing to you to obtain deliverance that cost Him so dearly?
 - I don't mean to say that we must always put on a certain intensity,
 - but I mean that prayer ought to be to you a matter of extreme urgency!
 - If it seems that the Saviour has not heard you,
 - there needs to be a spirit of earnest crying that arises from deep within...
 - You must realise that obtaining His mercy is your only hope.
 - If He does not hear, you are altogether undone!

TRANS> And this leads to the second characteristic of proper asking...

- 2. Second, learn that it is proper to **keep crying** out for mercy.
 - a. Our blind friends met with opposition when they began to cry out to Jesus...
 - 1) Jesus did not respond to them immediately...
 - And there was a crowd present,
 - and some in that crowd began to warn them (or literally, to rebuke them) and tell them to be quiet!
 - We don't know who these were—
 - It may have even been some of the twelve...
 - Had they not only a short time before rebuked parents who brought their children to Jesus to be blessed?
 - Nor do we know the reason for the rebuke...
 - Did they feel that their cries were inappropriate?

- Were they concerned that they were calling Jesus the Son of David?
- Did they think they were only asking for alms?

TRANS> We do not know all the particulars, but it is enough to know that they were opposed.

2) Now I have to wonder,

- What kind of opposition do you meet with when you cry out to the Lord for mercy?
 - a) Do you have relatives or friends that oppose you, show their offense with you, when you have family worship?
 - Do they try to make you quiet?
 - Do they tell you that you are just too intense?
 - Do they mock you and discourage you that it is a poor use of your time—that you should be watching television or something?
 - Do they even rebuke you that it is offense to them?
 - b) Perhaps it is just the general pull of the world that draws you away...
 - Does the fact that going to church to call on the name of the Lord is not considered very important discourage you from doing so—or at least doing so with fervency?
 - Does it seem to you that there are better things to do than to pray?
 - Is prayer or church or family worship the thing that gets crowded out first when you are busy?
 - There is the deception that prayer won't accomplish much—
 - This is a flat denial of God's promise in James that the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man will accomplish much...
 - Going through empty rituals of prayer won't accomplish much, but real crying out to God for mercy will reap precious dividends!
 - c) Or maybe you find that your own lusts oppose prayer...
 - Covetousness will drive out true prayer sooner than anything...
 - Even the desire for what is good and lawful can drive out your desire to seek God's mercy...

- If you are consumed with the purchase of a new couch or a new tool, your prayers can dry up.
 - Too often, no sooner do you start to pray and your mind begins to go to work planning your day or solving a problem...
- TRANS> Truly, you will meet with all sorts of opposition whenever you cry out for mercy, but do as our blind guides show us...
- b. We are told that when they were opposed, they **cried out all the more!**
- Do you see that in verse 31?
 - v. 31: “The multitude warned them that they should be quiet, but they cried out all the more.”
- 1) Isn't that marvellous?
 - When the opposition comes, let it stir you up all the more to cry out!
 - Matthew Henry compares fervent prayer to a stream...
 - If you try to stop it up, it only swells and rises higher!
 - That's the way fervency in prayer should be...
 - 2) Does it seem that the Lord is answering?
 - Are other people and your own lusts telling you to be quiet?
 - That is no reason to stop!
 - That is a reason to pray more than ever!
- c. And look at the wonderful result of their perseverance!
- 1) The Saviour stops and calls them to bring their request to Him!
 - Let every humble sinner who thinks he will not be heard take heart!
 - Though Christians and the world and your own desires may oppose you and tell you its no use...
 - Jesus will receive every humble sinner who comes to Him for mercy.
 - You can be sure of it—
 - He has promised
 - 2) Do not be beaten down poor sinner...
 - He is full of compassion for the needy who look to Him.
 - Though He is going to Jerusalem with the cross on His mind,
 - still he stops for these poor blind beggars that the world rejects...

- He comes with compassion to all who call upon Him.
- 3) Did we not see a short time ago how the Gentile woman from Tyre and Sidon prevailed with Him through He at first turned her away?
 - You must learn to pray like an Israelite...
 - You must not let go until you are blessed.

TRANS> That is what you must learn from these blind men.

- Several of you have come to me over the last several months and told me that you were beginning to pray more...
 - I was very glad to hear it...
 - But I wonder—have you kept it up?
 - I am sure you have been opposed!
 - The real question is,
 - Did the opposition cause you to stop or did it cause you to cry out all the more?
 - So then, the first characteristic of proper asking is fervency and the second is perseverance...
 - What is the third?
3. Third, learn that it is proper to be specific about the mercy we are seeking.
 - a. At first the blind men asked for mercy in general:
 - “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us.”
 - 1) There was nothing wrong with that general request,
 - but Jesus draws out of them a more specific request...
 - He says, “What do you want me to do for you?”
 - 2) Now if you look at this,
 - you might say,
 - “Why does Jesus ask this? They are blind. Isn’t it obvious what they want?”
 - 3) Perhaps its not...
 - These men were blind beggars...
 - Perhaps they only wanted some food or a bit of money.

b. You see, it is our Lord's policy to ask us to make **specific** as well as general requests.

1) In this way, He is all the more glorified when the answer comes...

- If the request is general—say for him to bless you financially—you may not as readily see His hand as if, for example,
 - You ask for the sum of \$5,000 to give to a missionary and receive a cheque in the mail from some uncle that you haven't seen in years or something...
- But perhaps even more to the point,
 - we should pray for specific things that God has promised...
- These men prayed specifically for sight because it was promised that when the Messiah came, He would give sight to the blind.
 - What are some things He has promised us?
 - He has promised to bless our children and our children's children with salvation, so let us pray specifically and without wavering for that...
 - He has promised to keep us in His way, so let us pray for that...and specifically for deliverance from certain temptations or sins that we find in our lives
 - He has promised that we will grow in the grace and knowledge of Himself, so let us pray for that without faltering...

TRANS> Then, when the answer comes, we will know that it was His doing.

- In having us make specific requests,
 - He not only causes us to more readily acknowledge Him, but
- 2) In this way, He also tests us to see what we will ask for—how great is our faith...
 - Do you remember the time when Elisha told Joash the king to strike the ground with his arrows when Joash was worried about the threat of the Syrians?
 - And do you remember how Elisha then became angry with Joash because he only struck the ground three times instead of five or six...
 - The problem was that he did not expect much from the Lord.
 - The Lord wants to draw out our faith to ask him for great things.
 - These blind men had asked many men for alms,

- but this was probably the first time they ask anyone to give them sight!
- Jesus drew out their faith by having them ask this great request of Him.

3) Finally, by having us make specific requests,

- He causes us to be made aware and to consider what we really need.
- It is a sad thing that these men were so clear about their need of vision,
 - but so often we are clueless about our true spiritual needs and the needs of the people around us...
- Our Lord wants us to think about what we need and then to ask Him for it specifically...
 - If you don't know what to ask for,
 - why not start with that as your request—
 - that He would show you what you need to ask for.
 - that He would show you specifically what you need from Him.

TRANS> So let us learn from these blind men what to do when our Lord is near...

- First, to confess Him as Lord and Saviour,
- Second, to ask for His mercy in an appropriate manner...
- And then learn the third thing—

III. When He is near, follow Him.

A. Those who truly find Him stick with Him.

1. That's right, if He has opened your eyes to salvation,
 - you will show that by following Him.
2. The best evidence that He is your Saviour is that you cannot depart from Him...
 - That means that you cannot depart from the means of grace...
 - That you continue in His word, in prayer, in the sacraments, and so on...
 - You are always about His business...
3. Verse 34 tells us that after these blind men confessed the Lord and asked the Lord for mercy,
 - They then followed Him...
 - They had begun to confess Him and to seek His mercy...

- They then followed Him in order that they might **continue** to confess Him and to receive His mercy.
- B. If you have truly confessed Him, then you follow Him in order that you might continue to confess Him
1. Remember what I have told you before about the OT word Yadaw that is translated “to confess.”
 - It includes the idea of praise and thanksgiving...
 - When you truly know Him and truly confess who He is,
 - you cannot but praise Him, adoring Him and telling Him how great He is...
 - And you cannot but thank Him for what He has done!
 - These are the kind of worshippers He seeks.
 - Those who worship Him in spirit and truth because they know who He is through the glorious gospel of Christ...
 - They know Him as Lord and Saviour.
 - And so you follow Him in order that you might confess Him, thank and praise Him...
 2. And in connection with this, you follow Him in order that you might strengthen your confession—
 - You want to sit at His feet and learn of Him so that your confession of Him will become more and more complete...
 - We all possess but partial knowledge of our God and of His greatness—
 - But we surely want to know more once we have begun to learn of Him.
 - We want to understand more of His holiness, more of His wisdom, more of His compassion, more of His grace, more of His divine power, more of His love...
 - And so we follow Him—we continue in the word of the apostles and prophets.
 3. And in connection with this, you follow Him in order that you might confess Him to others...
 - a. As you learn of Him, you are eager to tell others about Him...
 - of His power and love, or His mercy and pure justice.
 - You want your friends to know,
 - you want your children to know,
 - you want your parents to know...

- 1) You are eager to tell them what He has done for all...
 - How He is the One who gives us food and clothing and all good things that we enjoy in this world...
 - 2) You are eager to tell them what He has done for His elect...
 - How He suffered for their sins and rose again for their justification...
 - How He gives them the Holy Spirit...
 - How He establishes them in His church where they are nurtured and fed.
 - 3) And you are eager to tell others what He has done for you personally...
 - How He has opened your eyes, how He has kept you and preserved you, how He has fed you and nurtured you...
- b. But this testimony is only given when you follow Him...
- When you continue in the fellowship of His body, the church that He has established on earth...
 - It is in the great assembly that your confession is held up for the world to see.
 - You are to join with your brothers and sisters to declare His name.
 - I don't mean to say only in corporate worship, but I do mean to say not apart from it.

TRANS> So you follow Him that you might continue to confess Him—

- giving thanks and praise to Him
- learning of Him
- testifying of Him to others.
- Confession is the first reason you follow when you have truly come to know Him...

C. Secondly, if you have truly found His mercy, you will follow Him in order that you might continue to receive mercy from Him...

- As long as you live in this world, you will need His mercy...
1. First, you will need His provision for your physical body...
 - a. You need food and clothing and health and protection from robbers and accidents...
 - You follow him because you know that He is the only source of these things...

- b. Of course in His mercy, He gives these things to those who do not follow Him too...
 - He causes His rain to fall on the just and the unjust...
 - on those who seek these things from Him as well as those who don't...
 - But you, knowing that all this comes from Him, follow Him to seek these things from His bountiful hand.

TRANS> But you also know that as long as you live in this world,

- 2. You will need His provision for your spiritual needs...
 - a. You follow Him because you continue to need the forgiveness of sins and in His mercy He provides it...
 - b. You follow Him because you continue to need the wisdom that He provides...
 - c. You follow because you need His deliverance from temptation when it takes hold of you...
 - d. You follow because you need the grace that He provides to enable you to grow in grace—in love for God and for your neighbour...
 - e. You follow because you need the encouragement and strength He gives to persevere in His way through trials and testings...
 - You follow Him because you continue to need His mercy.

TRANS> As long as you remain in this world, you will follow Him because you will remain in need of His mercy...

- 3. And indeed, even after you leave this world and go to be with Him in heaven,
 - You will continue to need His mercy...
 - Though you will be delivered from all bodily and spiritual infirmities by His grace,
 - You will remain a creature who is ever dependent on your Creator...
 - When you come to Him for mercy here, it is only the beginning of the river of mercies that He will bestow on you for ever and ever!

Conclusion:

So my friends, I ask you in conclusion today...

- What will you do with the Lord Jesus so near to us...
 - 1. First, will you confess Him now?
 - Will you acknowledge that He alone is Lord and Saviour?
 - Will you avow that all this is true?

2. Second, will you earnestly seek His mercy now?
 - Will you cry out to Him with undaunted fervency despite whatever opposition there may be?
 - Will you ask Him for specific needs?
3. And finally, will you continue to follow Him after you leave this place?
 - Will you go and forget or will you go with Him in faith?
- Have you learned what these blind men who could see learned?
 - I hope you have—your eternal happiness depends on it.