

SERMON NOTES ON MARK 10: 46-52 – BLIND BARTIMAEUS (13/10/24)

Introduction.

Apparently, once upon a time, Bartimaeus could see. But blindness had set in, either from an accident or illness, and his life and livelihood had been stolen from him such that the only way he could survive was to sit at the gate in Jericho and beg.

Bartimaeus represents all of us before Jesus comes into our lives. We are spiritually blind and darkness rules our lives.

- Even in that state, Jesus can give us a new life and new direction just like He is about to give this poor blind man.

Bartimaeus was doing what he did every day, then Jesus showed up.

He can show up in a sermon, a song, a thought, a conversation, or in something you read. He grabs your attention, enters your world and changes your life. That's what happened to Bartimaeus.

The encounter with blind Bartimaeus stands in bold relief against the blurred vision of Christ's disciples who were quibbling over rank and status (10:37) Their request to occupy prominent positions in Christ's kingdom was not granted and by recording this Bartimaeus incident almost immediately afterwards, the gospel writer, Mark, wants to show that true discipleship does not depend on rank or status.

In this narrative, Jesus is on his last trip to Jerusalem - v46, which is about 15 miles away. But then Jesus comes to a dead halt- that is the force of verse 49. Now what could be so important to cause Jesus to come to a grinding standstill in his drive to Jerusalem?

Verses 47 says it was the cry of a blind man. This is a blind man who had 1. **FAITH ENOUGH TO ASK**, 2. **FAITH ENOUGH TO BELIEVE** AND 3. **FAITH ENOUGH TO FOLLOW**.

1. FAITH ENOUGH TO ASK

Bartimaeus was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth passing by, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Why is he so special, after all there were other blind people there? Well, he is special because although he is blind he saw what seeing people did not see. He couldn't hear Jesus because of the noise of the large crowd. He was not sure if Jesus was directly in front of him, down the road approaching him, or maybe Jesus had already walked by, **but he had faith enough to ask for mercy.** I'm sure this was annoying for the people standing near Bartimaeus and maybe even a little embarrassing. As a result, Mark says that **many of the people yelled at him.** They started shouting back at him **"Be quiet!"** But Bartimaeus kept shouting for Jesus.

Bartimaeus should represent us all. Part of your spiritual journey will be to ignore the crowds and the people around you who are saying *be quiet* and *stop*. Ignore the crowd, trust Jesus.

2. FAITH ENOUGH TO BELIEVE

So here's the irony- the blind man can "see" Jesus's identity- for him he is 'Son of David', whilst the seeing crowds are blind to his identity- for them He is just 'Jesus the Nazarene'. And as the seeing (but blind), learned Jews in the crowd, would say, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

And so they tried to bully the man into silence, **v48**, 'In what was nothing short of divine inspiration, this blind man could see that Jesus is the King whose primary characteristic is not to exercise political power but offer a royal pardon - mercy.

The pains of this fallen world can be traced back in some way to the root problem, that as a race we have made a Universal Declaration of Independence against our rightful King and we need mercy from him. Not pity, but an act of royal forgiveness and restoration.

Why did they try to shut him up? Maybe they were embarrassed. How did-point he know Jesus is the Son of David, the expected Messiah- he couldn't see beyond the end of his nose let alone Jesus ahead of the crowd? Perhaps they thought Jesus wouldn't be interested in the likes of him. But the more they told him to shut up, the louder he spoke up.

Nothing has changed all that much; there are still those who are blind to Jesus' identity and are bullying those who are not. Of course sometimes this can be up close and personal with those work colleagues or family members who pour on the ridicule, 'You don't believe that load of rubbish about being born again, do you?' But sometimes it can be a bit more sophisticated coming from the intelligentsia of the church. Bishop Shelby Spong (a liberal theologian and American bishop, (1931-2021) writes in the 6th of his 12-point Thesis that "*Atonement theology, especially in its most bizarre 'substitutionary' form, presents us with a God who is barbaric, a Jesus who is a victim and it turns human beings into little more than guilt-filled creatures.*" He regarded the belief that 'Jesus died for my sins' as not just dangerous, but absurd". A very bright theologian he was- but how blind!

3. FAITH ENOUGH TO FOLLOW

v 49, 'Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you."⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.' **Why would Mark mention that he threw aside his coat? What is so significant about that? In his eager faith, he cast away his beggar's coat, likely the only thing he possessed. His act symbolizes genuine faith, which abandons all to follow Christ.** Compare Bartimaeus' devotion in casting away his cloak with the rich young ruler, 10: 21-22, who could not bring himself to cast away anything he owned to gain what he wanted.

And then Jesus asks: 'What do you want me to do for you?' Isn't the answer obvious? The man is blind! But in asking the question, Jesus is probing to see if the man recognises his true need and Jesus' ability to supply it.

The man could have said, 'Give me some money.' And for a while that would have done him some good. But it would not have been lasting. Note that today, that is how some people treat Jesus. They simply come to Jesus for a quick fix. Remember what the man had been crying out for - 'mercy'. He knew it wasn't a matter of Jesus owing him a favour, complaining that it wasn't fair that he was a beggar and other people weren't. **He knew Jesus was the King and Kings could offer mercy to their subjects.**

The man says to Jesus, (v.51) 'Rabboni, I want to see.' Not Rabi, but Rabboni. This has intensity. It translates to My Lord and Master. That was the same word Mary used when she encountered Jesus after His resurrection (John 20:16).

This is a mirror in which we may see ourselves - in danger, present and future, from our sin. Press the question on your own conscience-'Have I any experience of such a sense of need; or am I groping in the darkness and saying, I see - weak as water, and saying I am strong?'

After Jesus granted Bartimaeus' request by saying "Go, your faith has made you well", Bartimaeus decided to 'follow'- He had **faith enough to follow Christ**. He follows Jesus along 'the way', that is, the way to Jerusalem and the way of the cross. Bartimaeus sees again but in a new way. He has a higher vision and a greater consciousness. He could see physically and spiritually. In conclusion I ask "What do you want Jesus to do for you?"

Discussion Questions:

- (1). Why do you believe God wanted to include this particular encounter with Bartimaeus in His Word?
- (2). What are some general truths we see from this encounter? (example: God hears us when we call out to Him).
- (3) What specific truth or application can you apply to your life from this encounter?
- (4) How does Bartimaeus represent people today? Does he represent you in any way?
- (5) Why do you think the crowd kept telling Bartimaeus to be quiet? How does the crowd today tell believers to be quiet when it comes to faith in Jesus?
- (6) What does following Jesus down the road look like in your life?

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