



Speaker:  
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## The Call of God

Series: The Gospel of Mark · 37 of 37

2/21/2021 (SUN) | Bible: **Mark 10:46-52**

And they came to Jericho. And as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” And many charged him that he should hold his peace, but he cried the more a great deal, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, “Be of good comfort. Rise; he calleth thee.” And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” The blind man said unto him, “Lord, that I might receive my sight.” And Jesus said unto him, “Go thy way. Thy faith hath made thee whole.” And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.

Today’s is quite a well-known incident. The giving of sight to blind Bartimaeus.

I’ve spoken about miracles performed by Jesus numerous times. Often, I’ve used the healing as a launchpad for the gospel. You remember I said to you these healings were only secondarily to do with the immediate needs of the people who were healed. Instead, each healing miracle was to picture for us the spiritual healing that take place when God saves eternally.

Since I’ve already used Jesus’s healings as pictures of spiritual salvation, you may wonder why we’d linger here. It’s true: before I began to meditate on this short section, my initial thought was to mention it in passing only.

But this healing is important for a few reasons, and so warrants spending some time on it today.

- Firstly, this is the last healing miracle recorded in Mark’s Gospel.
- Secondly, it marks the end of an important section in Mark’s account. Because we’re going into such detail each week, it’s very easy to neglect the bigger picture. But the last three chapters have been about Jesus revealing his true identity and true destiny and getting the disciples to understand it. This whole section began with the healing of a blind man in Bethsaida. And here, we see the section brought to a close with the healing of another blind man.
- Thirdly, this healing is notable because it names the person: Bartimaeus, meaning “son of Timaeus. This is unusual because the gospel writers don’t normally use names for the people Jesus healed.

- And fourthly, central to this whole episode is this marvellous phrase, *He calleth thee*. Jesus, they tell the blind man, is calling for him. This has an application both to those who have experienced the call of God to salvation and all those who understand their lost condition and seek God's face in prayer. If you, listener, are conscious of your sinfulness, understand the consequences of it, accept you deserve those consequences and want to get right with God, we say to you today: *He calleth thee*. Go to him. Go to him today.

So there are some reasons why this passage is unique and worth spending time in.

As I describe various aspects of that process by which someone's converted to Jesus Christ, I want you to just be aware of the details of the healing of Bartimaeus. How much he understood isn't entirely clear, but his words and actions provide us with ample material to describe the way God deals with someone when he means to save them from sin.

#### The sinner coming to God DESIRES SIGHT

This poor man had been begging. He had to live, after all. He placed himself on a busy road, and his survival depended on the charity of those that passed by. He had to see to those necessities of life. **But he dreamed of sight**. He wanted to see faces, daffodils, eagles, sunsets and the myriad of things we take for granted.

This then was a very special day. It's clear he did understand some very important things. In many ways, he understood Jesus better than the disciples! I came across this quote in one of the commentaries:

"What Bartimaeus lacks in eyesight he makes up for in insight." (Edwards, J. R. The Gospel according to Mark)

And so it is with the person whose heart God is working on. They want to *see*. They want to see *God*. That is, they want to perceive God clearly in whatever way's possible. And in this present world, the Christian doesn't see God face to face; but through a relationship with Jesus Christ and a commitment to understanding God through his word the Bible, they can have a relationship with him that is almost as good as if he were visible to them. The convert soon understands what it means for a believer to see God now.

#### The sinner coming to God ACKNOWLEDGES JESUS AS SAVIOUR

The name *Jesus* means "saviour". The Old Testament name *Joshua* means the same thing. Many people would've been given the name Jesus in those days. But I suspect Bartimaeus knew not only this man's name *meant* "saviour", but this man WAS the saviour. Such was his confidence that this man had power unlike any man who ever lived. He knew this man Jesus could restore his sight with a click of his fingers. **But I believe he also knew this was the man who could save him eternally.**

Any man or woman who wants to get right with God understands Jesus is saviour. Not just one of many, but *the* saviour. The saviour of the world—that is, the only real saviour this world has.

They understand they need saving. Having become aware of their sinfulness, they know they need rescuing. And by God's people explaining the gospel to them, they learn about Jesus Christ— that he doesn't merely *arrange* their salvation, but he *IS* their salvation. He became the saviour by offering up his own self on the cross.

#### The sinner coming to God UNDERSTANDS JESUS IS KING

This title Bartimaeus uses for Jesus, *Son of David*, has huge significance. Before Jesus came to this earth, the title had come to mean the same thing as "Messiah"—the one the prophets spoke of who would come to be king over Israel. The anointed one. And the Greek word equivalent to Messiah is *Christos*, from where we get the title "Christ". So his name is Jesus, but his title is Christ, Messiah, son of David.

The early readers of Mark's gospel may have been shocked by the sudden appearance of this important title. Could all those prophecies have been fulfilled in this man? Consider this one in Isaiah chapter 11:

Isaiah 11:1–5 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD. And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears, but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

This was him! And this, the final healing miracle in the gospel, is one more powerful statement about Jesus's status as Messiah.

Up till recently, Jesus had discouraged the disciples from making his true identity known. Now, the veil is slowly being lifted. As he prepares to enter Jerusalem, the time's come to reveal more of his identity. Soon, people will hear him during his trial declaring himself to be the Messiah.

Those who are being drawn to the saviour understand he is both Jesus *and* the promised Christ of God.

#### The sinner coming to God CRIES OUT FOR MERCY

The sinner who's become sensible of their lost status has no option but to go to God for mercy. They can't ask someone to approach God on their behalf, even if he's a priest, a pope or a pastor. They can't go to God half-heartedly. This is a matter of such urgency that a bold approach to God must be made—and made in person.

Bartimaeus knew Jesus had the power to apply mercy to his case. And his request for mercy means he understood he was asking for something he didn't deserve.

People in our modern society tend to think they're owed all kinds of things by society. We hear these phrases like, "Everyone has the right to food, clothing and a safe environment." "Children have the right to an education." "People have a right to equality."

Now society may give people rights under law, but it cannot be said they have a right to anything by nature. In the eyes of God, no one has the right to *anything*. Not even life itself! The mere continuation of a person's life is a gift of God. They don't have a right to even take their next breath. So Christians should have nothing to do either with the language of this world or its various causes that don't recognise every good gift a person receives is from God.

Bartimaeus didn't go to Jesus demanding a miracle. He **begged** him for it. He begs for mercy. To receive something he didn't deserve. To get something from Jesus he had no right to.

Now this is an important point. Those people who are seeking God sincerely come to him in humility. If they go to God with pleas of "This isn't fair" or, "I have a right to this thing I want", they're wasting their time. The only prayer God will accept from sinful men and women who want to get right with him is a humble one. They must think of themselves as approaching God crawling on the floor through the dust, fully confessing that's where they deserve to be.

#### [The sinner coming to God EXERCISES PERSEVERANCE IN THEIR CRIES](#)

I don't know why people were telling Bartimaeus to shut up, but I can take a few guesses. Perhaps the disciples were involved. Just as they'd told some parents to stop bothering Jesus by bringing children to him, maybe they thought because Jesus was on a mission, he didn't have time to stop for some lowly beggar.

Or perhaps it was Jesus's enemies. It could be they didn't want anyone to have any contact with Jesus. The fewer converts he got the better, as far as they were concerned. Woe unto such people! There aren't many sins more serious than trying to stop someone coming to Jesus.

Our God is sovereign in salvation as in everything else. When he calls a man, it's with the intention to bring the call to its full conclusion. And so he draws in his people in a way that can't be stopped. Just as he places the awareness of sin in the sinner's heart to begin with; just as he brings them to that knowledge they need to be saved; so he gives them the ability to persevere in their approaches to him.

It's not a faint approach to God that will get his attention. He wants a vigorous, heartfelt and bold approach. And the one who God calls will not give up. It reminds me of that fight in the Old Testament between Jacob and an angel. I believe that angel to be none other than Jesus Christ in human form. And in that wrestling match, the Angel of the Lord asks Jacob to let him go. But Jacob's response was the exact one God wanted. Jacob said "No way! I'm not letting you go until you bless me." And so it was Jacob received the blessing from God.

The crowd here couldn't shut Bartimaeus up. He knew he could get mercy from Jesus Christ and he intended to do so. When they told him to shut up, he just shouted even louder! And he would never have given up. He would have gone on to shout as loud as his lungs would allow.

God's elect, those who at some point in their lives hear the call of God, don't give up. If they don't feel God has answered their prayer of repentance, they go back to God in prayer and pray harder. And they keep at it until they get the blessing of knowing their sins are forgiven.

If you're seeking God today, take heart. If you pray to God to save you but you don't feel in your heart he has, it may well be he's waiting for you to show more sincerity, to show more passion in prayer. To show him you're DESPERATE for his mercy. Don't give up, friend.

#### The sinner coming to God ENJOYS THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE SAINTS

Jesus commanded the disciples to bring the man to him. His cries had been heard! Whether the disciples had been involved in trying to silence the man didn't matter now. Jesus had stopped, and it was clear he meant to help this man.

It's interesting they say to Bartimaeus, "Don't be anxious". *Be of good cheer*, as it's phrased in a few other places. *Jesus is calling you*. And why this approach is interesting is it reflects so powerfully one of Isaiah's other prophecies which you can see in chapter 35:

Isaiah 35:3–6 Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

*Fear not. He will save you.*

The people who God has already saved have a mission to go and tell others. And, if God so desires, they're to if you like "escort" people to Jesus. They calm the fears of the sinner who approaches God. They tell him not to worry. They encourage him or her to go to God with courage. A courage mixed with humility, yes, but a boldness that truly believes it can go to the very throne of God and not be struck down dead but listened to.

#### The sinner coming to God RECEIVES THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST

When we see Bartimaeus here throwing his coat on the ground and going to Jesus, we're reminded of all the references in the scriptures where clothing is used to speak of righteousness.

In the time before God called us, we were said to be *filthy*. Now of course this means we were filthy in a spiritual sense; but we can think of our filthiness as dirty clothes. Before our conversion, we were walking around in these filthy clothes just like everyone else. And although now we can see unbelief in people all around us, only God can see the true filthiness of the clothes they wear.

This is one of the reasons some think it's unfair if God sends their loved ones to a lost eternity. It's because the person they love is not *known* to them properly. It may be someone's loving mother. To the best of their knowledge, their mother's love was very real. They cared for them from the womb onwards. They made sacrifices for them. And although they realise their mother has faults, the mother's love more than compensates for this.

But if we think lots of goodness can outweigh a small amount of badness, consider how God sees people. He sees them in all their filthiness. He sees the things people think and their actions **contaminated** by sin. Day in, day out, God sees sin pouring out of their heart. By God's grace, they can be loving people and helpful members of society. But even these apparently good things about them are described by the Bible as "filthy rags".

People in filthy clothes handing out filthy rags. THAT'S what God sees.

The man, woman or child approaching God for mercy experiences something quite wonderful. Picture it like this: as they approach God, their overcoat of sin, that stinking garment, falls off. And picture if you will God standing there, holding out a brand-new coat. And this coat is perfectly clean! And he holds it while they put their arms in and stand, wondering at its beauty.

This, friends, is **none other than the very righteousness of Christ itself**. The reason it's so impeccably clean is **it's the same type he wears**.

Now if you're listening today and you're inquiring after God, and you want to know more, and you want to be a Christian, can I just remind you this is all picture language. This new clothing you receive when you become a Christian is God's righteousness. His perfect holiness.

The one who God has called to himself and clothed with Christ's righteousness is obviously viewed differently by God. He sees them living their lives as people perfectly innocent. It's as if they've never committed a sin during their whole existence—*as if they've kept God's law perfectly, all the time*.

#### The sinner coming to God ACCEPTS JESUS AS LORD

The sinner approaches God for mercy. They come in the name of Jesus, the Christ. But they also come to God acknowledging Jesus Christ is *Lord*. Their *master*. God doesn't provide full and free salvation to his elect people so they can go and live their lives serving their own interests as before. He saves them to serve.

It's worth noting that Bartimaeus uses a particular word for Jesus you can't see in our version here. It's reported here Bartimaeus calls him "Lord". And that's fair translation. But the word he actually uses is "Rabboni". And why I mention this is in Jewish literature the word Rabboni was used almost exclusively in prayers to address God. So although it may be, if you like, "lost in translation" for us, the crowd here and the early readers of Mark's Gospel wouldn't have missed this point. The title affirms the divine status of Jesus Christ.

Sinners called by God confess Jesus isn't just one Lord among many. They confess Jesus is THE Lord above ALL Lords, **none other than the Lord God Almighty**. And in confessing Jesus as this Lord of Lords, they're effectively signing up to serve him forever. And what a joyful thing it is to be in the service of God!

#### The sinner coming to God UNDERSTANDS THIS JESUS IS ALSO A SERVANT HIMSELF

It's quite easy to understand being in the service of a Lord or King. They tell you what to do, and you do it. Servants will cook their Lord's food—he doesn't cook theirs! They wash his

clothes—he doesn't wash theirs. You can say this is the whole *point* of lordship. In our normal understanding of what it means to be a lord or a king, the very word is *defined* **by** this imbalance. You have the ones who perform the service, and you have the one being served.

The Lordship of Christ is different. Now having just a minute ago stressed the importance of submitting yourself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we're now bringing back into our consideration the reality that Jesus is also a servant!

Cast your mind back to last week if you were with us. Jesus didn't simply remind the disciples of the Law of First Becoming Last, that to be the greatest you need to be the least among the brethren. He tells them HE came to serve. If the thought of an earthly king cooking his own food and scrubbing his own floors sounds wrong, how much more unusual is it for the King *of* Kings to become the servant of millions? He came to serve his people, and he serves them chiefly by giving his life as a ransom for them.

If you think about it, Bartimaeus was requesting that Jesus serve him. He didn't go to Jesus offering to do something for him. He went to Jesus fully hoping for Jesus to serve *him*.

It sounds almost irreverent. But all those millions of prayer requests that have gone up to God throughout history from his saints, *including all the ones from us here*, **are nothing but requests for Jesus to fulfil his role of servant.**

When God opened that channel for prayer for you and me, he was inviting you to approach him with your lists of requests. And we should take care when preparing our lists. The two disciples we thought about last week, the Sons of Thunder, asked for greatness. They didn't get the answer they were looking for. Jesus revealed to them the way to greatness was through suffering, and he made sure that the pair understood they would soon suffer.

The prayer of Bartimaeus was a humbler one. He just wanted to see again, and Jesus gave him his request. And it's like that with the one who God calls. They don't come to him asking for positions of power or riches. It's as if God's asking them the question Jesus asked Bartimaeus: *What do you want me to do for you?* And every truly repentant sinner will want this simple thing: **forgiveness of sins**. Because it's in forgiveness they escape damnation and find *salvation*. It's in forgiveness they escape the eternal violence of God and instead inherit a place in God's new world for all eternity.

#### The sinner coming to God **USES THEIR LIBERTY IN CHRIST TO FOLLOW HIM**

One of the ways we can picture God saving someone is setting them free. If we think of them as being tied up with chains in a dungeon, what God does is break the chains and show them out.

So the Christian is one who's been set free. It's as if God's saying, *You're free now. You can do whatever you want.* But **what is it the new-born Christian wants?** Why is it those who've been born again by God's Spirit don't go off and enjoy all the pleasures of life they've always done?

The fascinating thing about this liberty in Christ is everyone who he's saved chooses to exercise their freedom by becoming tied up again! They're freed from one type of slavery, but they use their liberty to voluntarily place themselves in another type of slavery!

What do I mean by that? You who are Bible students will know that to follow Christ is described as being a servant of Christ. I know I used the word "slavery", and this has unpleasant connotations. We know that *this* slavery, or service, we enter into with Christ as our master is a pleasant one, greatly to be desired.

Bartimaeus received his sight. He could've run off in a different direction and never seen Jesus again. But the last verse in our passage tells us after he received his sight, **he began to follow Jesus**. And the particular phrase "followed Jesus in the way" suggests Bartimaeus was a genuine believer on Jesus Christ. The fact Mark recorded his name might suggest the man was known to the early church.

The sinner who's come to God, received his mercy, and had an assurance of forgiveness of sins will want nothing more than to follow Jesus in the way. And this is what we're doing today! As we gather round to consider God's word together, we're showing ourselves to be on the very same path Bartimaeus was on—that narrow road that leads to eternal life.

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Bartimaeus started his day sitting by the roadside. He was marginalised because of his disability and his poverty. *But he finished the day following Jesus in the way*. He'd gone from sitting by the roadside to walking **on** the road, a disciple of Jesus.

Listener, perhaps this morning you're sitting at the side of the road. You're alive but you're not truly happy. You know there's something more. You're convinced the answer is to get right with God, and you've been told that the only way to do that is through Jesus Christ. Perhaps you're nervous about approaching a God who you've sinned against your whole life. Our message to you is *Do not fear. He calleth thee*. And all those God calls will surely come to him, and he promises all who do come to him will not be refused entry to his kingdom.

Go to him now in prayer. Let this be the day when in the morning you're on the side-lines but you finish today on the road that leads to eternal life.

May God the Father draw you to himself this day, in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.