

Mark 10:46-52 Seeing Our Need for Mercy Falls Church AM 3/26/2023

In the Gospel of Mark, the disciples were slow to understand what Jesus was teaching. After feeding the 5,000, in chapter 8:21, Jesus asked them, “Do you not yet understand?” And then Jesus healed a blind man.

Here again, in chapter 10, Jesus healed another blind man, and so the miracle of healing a blind man book-ended at the start and end of Jesus’ ministry on discipleship – and therefore is symbolic of the spiritual blindness of each disciple. Just before Jesus arrived at Jerusalem for Palm Sunday, the question became – what are the disciples able to see?

**When we see our need for mercy, we see our need for Christ.**

**1. Aware of our need – not blind to our blindness. (v.46)**

Remember the rich young man back in verses 17-31? When Jesus told him to sell all he had to follow Jesus, instead the man “...*went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*” (v.22)

In contrast, now this blind man about whom Mark tells us in verse 46 has nothing to lose, nothing to sell. This blind man was a poor beggar, and it is for one reason, because he was blind.

Since we learned previously the measure of greatness is serving, will Jesus the great one serve this blind man?

Yes, Jesus will serve the blind man.

The question becomes, will the blind man receive what Jesus has to give?

Yes, the blind man is an example of how we should receive Jesus and the giving of His own life as a ransom for many of us.

How do we do so? We start by seeing our need.

The awareness of this blind man was also a contrast to the awareness of James and John in the previous passage. James and John were asking for a favor from Jesus, so in verse 36, Jesus asked what do you want me to do for you? James and John wanted to be granted privileged seats next to Jesus in heaven’s glory, they thought that they could drink the cup of suffering, they thought that they could withstand the baptism of difficulty of following Jesus. Actually, James and John were blind to their spiritual blindness.

The contrast is this blind man. He was not asking for privileges. He was not assuming his own greatness. He had no over-confidence in his own abilities. He knew he desperately needed mercy from Jesus.

We have a desperate need for mercy. The question is – are we aware of that? We are meant to identify with the blind man! Looking at my spiritual life, I have no resources. I am a blind beggar. The only thing I can do is beg for mercy.

**2. Aware of the source of mercy – not blind to Christ. (v.47-51)**

Verse 47, the blind man is again symbolic of you and me, for the blind man knew where to get mercy - he began to cry out “*Jesus, Son of David...*” There was

nothing previous to this verse, in these ten chapters of the Gospel of Mark that prepared us for the blind man's use of this specific title for Jesus! For Jewish people, the title is functionally equivalent to Christ or Messiah, but saying the name David to a group of people on a journey to Jerusalem, increases the load of meaning. Saying the name David brings in the whole story of David, with all of his history and loyalty God and to the nation. It was a royal name, and so the title son of David was a royal title. It was a patriotic title, spoken respectfully by those who were supportive. But Jesus allowed it, which is surprising.

The last time Jesus was referred to by such a high title, it was back in chapter 8:30, when Peter called Jesus 'the Christ,' and right away Jesus banned Peter and the disciples from saying that in public! The disciples had been observing that ban. Jesus was not being referred to in public as the Christ. So, with that as a backdrop, here came a blind man who became the first to publicly refer to Jesus in such a way. At this man was not a disciple, he was blind, and yet he was repeatedly shouting out in the middle of "*a great crowd*" that Jesus is the Son of David! This blind man could see something that the crowds could not see!

Mark our author tells us it was time for someone to shout it. Mark here is telling us that it was about time. It was high time. Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem, the city of David, and it was appropriate for the messianic aspect of His ministry to become more publicly announced and publicly understood. This occurred just before Jesus approached Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. In just a few days, this sort of language about Jesus will be on everyone's lips. For example, consider Mark 11:9, when the crowds shouted, "*Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*"

Jesus did not stop the crowds from shouting that.

Another Gospel writer Luke wrote in Luke 19 how the Pharisees told Jesus to quiet everyone, and Jesus responded that if the people keep silent, the rocks will cry out to identify Jesus.

Back to our story, on this day, when the blind man was the first to start shouting, Jesus did not stop the blind man from shouting Son of David. Instead, Jesus granted the request of the blind man. The request is for mercy. Yes, Jesus will give mercy.

The crowds had tried to silence the blind man. But their efforts act like a boomerang. The more the crowds shushed the blind man, the more the title Son of David was repeated verbally, and even in the story in verse 47, again in verse 48.

In verse 49, Jesus stopped. Remember from verses 32-34, how Jesus had resolutely set His face toward Jerusalem, and how He was determined and fixated on proceeding toward Jerusalem? What would it take for this Jesus to stop? The cry for mercy! Jesus stopped because of the cry for mercy. What it took was a person in need, for whom Jesus could provide care! The same mercy that propelled

Jesus forward to Jerusalem to save sinners was the same mercy that propelled Jesus to stop still in order to show mercy to one sinner. True greatness is in humble service of others! Jesus had taught that in verse 45, now Jesus was living that out.

So, Jesus brought the great crowd to a halt by standing still. The royal Son of David Himself gave the order to call the blind man to come. Whoever in the crowd that had been attempting to silence the blind man, now changed their message. Now they were saying in verse 49, "*Take heart. Get up; He is calling YOU!*"

The authority of Jesus over the crowd is remarkable. The crowd has a sudden and complete change of heart. What was previously a cry to be silenced is now a cry to be acknowledged as a sad cry in need of a response to encourage him to take heart! The crowd changed from being dismissive to being nearly enthusiastic to take their part in encouraging the blind man, in announcing the King's call, and in participating together in making way and even transporting the blind man with guiding hands and words and safe passage to the place where the King stood still, poised with mercy.

The response of the blind man was yet even more enthusiastic than the crowd's response, and Mark told it to us this way in verse 50, "*And throwing off his cloak, [the blind man] sprang up and came to Jesus.*" We find ourselves rooting for this blind man, whom we just met moments ago. Are we encouraging ourselves to respond to Jesus with similar enthusiasm?

What is the purpose of our being told that the blind man threw off his cloak? He is being contrasted to the rich young man earlier in this same chapter 10. That man was asked to give away all of his possessions and follow Jesus, but the rich man refused. Here the poor man was called, and he instantly THREW off his only possession on this earth – the cloak. Whereas the rich man went away sad, the blind man sprang up and came to Jesus, with a striking air of joyful eagerness. Rather than continuing what the blind man had been pathetically doing in verse 46, "*sitting by the roadside*" we find the blind man changed instantaneously by the mere call of Jesus, for by the end of verse 50, the blind man has all at once done three new things 1) he has thrown off his cloak 2) he has sprang up, and 3) he has come to Jesus.

There is one additional purposeful action done by this man in this same eager direction. When he arrived to Jesus, the man will be so bold as to change what he called Jesus. Instead of calling Jesus Son of David, the blind man now changed to calling Jesus Rabbi, as if the blind man were himself already an accepted disciple, and as if Jesus were his own teacher, master and Rabbi! Jesus allowed the blind man to address Jesus publicly as only a historically-aware faithful citizen would do, and then when face to face, Jesus further allowed the blind man to address Jesus personally as only a disciple would be expected to do.

But let's look at what Jesus first said to the blind man. After the stopped crowd had managed to assist the blind man to make it to the place right in front of Jesus, and after the man without the aide of his own sight, who had to be pointed by someone in the correct direction, after he had finally become situated face to face with Jesus. The man who could not physically see Jesus, but could see Jesus better than anyone in that crowd. The man who had educated the crowd about just who this Jesus truly is. The man who had cried out asking for mercy, now stood in front of the most merciful man who ever lived. The blind man was no longer shouting. The crowd was no longer shushing. The man was no longer sitting and he had already thrown off his cloak. He had been brought at the summons of Jesus and now the crowd was about to witness the words of Jesus. What would Jesus say?

Look at verse 36, and compare it to the words of Jesus here in verse 51. It is the same question! Jesus had asked a question to the cheeky and prideful sons of Zebedee, who had demanded that Jesus give them a blank check. That one question from Jesus to them was, "*What do you want me to do for you?*" (v.36) Now here in verse 51, Mark reported to us that Jesus asked that exact same question to the blind man. All that was changed in the Greek was the plural question asked to both James and John, was now a singular question, asked to only one person - to the one blind man alone. Jesus spoke to one sinner with one question. The question is salient. The question is profound. There can be no question better aimed at exposing whether or not he had the right approach to Jesus, the Son of Man, Son of David, God of all mercy. Similarly, Jesus turns to each of us personally and asks, "What do you want me to do for you?"

So, what is your answer? If you had one request of God, that you knew would be granted, what would it be?

In verse 37, James and John asked to be seen. In verse 51, Bartimaeus asked to see.

James and John asked to be served. Bartimaeus asked for the opportunity to serve, the equipment to serve.

John and James asked for seats of honor and glory.

The blind man asked for eyes to see Jesus, and the opportunity to serve Jesus!

Bartimaeus could have asked for money. The fact that Bartimaeus did not simply ask for financial assistance was proof that Bartimaeus believed that Jesus could heal his eyes. Jesus asked Bartimaeus the most important question, and Bartimaeus gave the answer of a disciple, the answer of awareness of the source of mercy, the answer of faith in Christ.

**3. Aware of the price of mercy – seeing Christ and His cross. (v.52)**

There is a miracle here. Immediately, the blind man recovered his sight. But the focus should not be on the physical eyes, but on what that man spiritually could see. Did he see that he was blind in sin, and the Savior would go to the cross to save him from sin? Let's see what God's Word tells us here.

There is a contrast with the rich young ruler earlier in the chapter and the blind man here at the end of the chapter. In verse 21, the rich young man was invited to follow Jesus, but in verse 22 instead he went away sorrowful. In contrast, here in verse 52, Jesus told Bartimaeus, "*Go your way...*", but Bartimaeus did not go his own way. Instead, Bartimaeus followed Jesus on His pathway! Bartimaeus refused to leave Jesus. Bartimaeus was not yet aware of the price of the mercy that the son of David just gave him. Bartimaeus did not yet see the cross.

The way that the passage ends is with Mark's repeated watchword "immediately." Immediately the blind man, "*recovered his sight and followed [Jesus] on the way.*" The great crowd of people again set off to proceed up the Jerusalem road. Now they have one additional new member in the group. We as readers are now asked by our author Mark, "how about you - are you coming?" We might respond - coming for what? Coming to see. We used to not be able to see Jesus for who He is, but now we can see. Coming to see Jesus do what? Coming to see Jesus the Son of David enter the city of David, which is His city. Will you join Jesus in traveling on the road of mercy leading to the God of mercy? Will you receive His mercy, once He arrives in Jerusalem and pays the price for the mercy given to you? Christ the Son of Man and Son of David came into this world in order "*...to give His life as a ransom for many*" at that cross. Christ the Son of Man and Son of David came into Jerusalem in order to go to the cross and die and rise again for you. This is precisely what Jesus taught in verse 34, "*...they will mock Him and spit on Him and flog Him and kill Him. And after three days He will rise again.*" It is not just that the Christ of mercy will die for you in mercy to prevent you from getting what you deserve, but also that He will rise again for you in mercy to give you victory and blessings that you do not deserve. Mercy in His death, mercy in His resurrection!

What makes us daily thankful is remaining aware of the cost, the price, the suffering of Christ for us. Christ did this in order to help us out.

Christ Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem's suffering and cross, and He stopped in order to help one person in need.

Where was Bartimaeus at the start? by the roadside, sitting, blind, begging.

Where is Bartimaeus at the end of this passage? With sight recovered, walking with a spring in his step, following Jesus on the way to Jerusalem!

Now we move beyond this passage. Where would Bartimaeus be on Palm Sunday? Watching with his own eyes the triumphal entry of Jesus, with the palm

branches and the colt and the crowds shouting “Hosanna – Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” Can you see Bartimaeus in the crowd, shouting this too? Where would Bartimaeus be on Good Friday? Watching with his own eyes, with horror what they did to the first man he had ever seen – watching the unfolding events of the crucifixion – the price of mercy. Where would Bartimaeus be on the third day and beyond? With his own eyes, Bartimaeus could be found witnessing the resurrection of Jesus! Talk about recovering his eyesight!

It is possible that later, Bartimaeus was well-known in the early church even after the ascension of Jesus and the coming of His Spirit, and the spread of the gospel! Everywhere that the Gospel of Mark was brought, people would know the testimony of Bartimaeus, the model disciple.

Bartimaeus had the 3 basics of a true disciple. 1) He saw Himself rightly – totally dependent and in need of help. 2) he saw Jesus rightly – the powerful merciful Son of David who can and will give mercy. 3) he responded to Jesus rightly – he instantly and eagerly left all that he had and joyfully followed Jesus on the way. Bartimaeus could witness what we all conclude – that Jesus had come to open the eyes of the blind and to lead them on the way to heaven.

Isaiah prophesied of this in Isaiah 42:16, *“I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.”*

Without Christ, we are all blind. We are born spiritually blind. 2 Corinthians 4:4, *“the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...”*

We cannot make ourselves see. But we can sit near the paths of mercy, where we know Jesus is near in the preaching of His gospel by His Spirit!

God enables spiritually blind eyes to see spiritual truth! 2 Corinthians 6:4, *“...God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

### **Conclusion:**

1. See yourself rightly. Admit that you are spiritually weak, needy, and hurting. Bartimaeus was in a world of darkness, but was surrounded with a crowd of people in a procession with Jesus. It was supposed to sound like Psalm 42:4, *“...in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.”* But not Bartimaeus. He was hurting. The name Bartimaeus means son of honor, and that is ironic because the man was not treated with honor. He was not noticed by most people. Because of his condition of blindness, he became a beggar. As a result, he was sitting by the roadside day after day, begging to survive from the mercy of the crowds. There was not much mercy to be had from the public. When this man began to shout, what was the response of the

crowd? In verse 48 Many rebuked him and told him to be silent. The crowd cancelled him. The application to you, is that this blind beggar represents you. This is your condition. You are hurting. Can you admit that? The world is filled with insensitive and harsh people. They don't care about you. No one seems to care about you. For this blind man, no one cared but Jesus. Like Bartimaeus, we were all blind until Jesus stopped and gave us sight. Like Bartimaeus, we were poor beggars until Jesus gave His life as a ransom for us. We came to Jesus with weakness and need, and He graced us with power and blessing.

## 2. See Jesus rightly.

It is faith that sees Jesus rightly. We have here a story of a man who was given strong faith in Jesus, and was the recipient of life-changing mercy from Jesus.

This man saw that the Jesus who lived for 30 years in an obscure village in Galilee was the very Son of David, the one whom prophets had long ago prophesied would come.

This man had seen none of the miracles of Jesus, and had witnessed none of His power. But hearing reports, he believed them! Hearing reports about Jesus, this man concluded that Jesus would be able to heal his blindness. This sort of faith is precious! This faith connects us to mercy that restores our lives.

The rich young man earlier in chapter 10 sadly chose wealth instead of pursuing Jesus, which is an enormous contrast to the blind man's response to Jesus in throwing off the only possession he had – a simple cloak – to spring up and go to Jesus at once.

How the blind man sprang up to come to Jesus, and refused to go away from Jesus, but rather followed Jesus on the pathway, certainly made the Twelve disciples of Jesus look tired and sluggish by contrast!

1 Peter 1:8, *“Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”*

Peter and Mark and the whole Bible emphasize that it is not about those who could see Jesus physically and be alive during those years, but rather it is all about seeing Jesus rightly – by faith. Do you believe that Jesus has what you need? Do you believe that he died and rose again in order to show you mercy?

## 3. Respond to Jesus rightly, by trusting and serving Him through serving others.

This passage paints for us a picture of the caring heart of Jesus. Nothing has changed about the heart of Jesus in these subsequent 2,000 years. The crowd around Jesus was loud and boisterous, a great crowd that was active in rebuking one man. But it is one solitary person who gained the attention of our Savior.

Remember that Jesus cares for you, and Jesus extends mercy to you.

Fastforward. Since Bartimaeus received such mercy, what sort of mercy would you imagine that Bartimaeus himself showed to others in his remaining years? Jesus stopped for Bartimaeus; would Bartimaeus stop for one person in need of mercy? Jesus stopped for you when you were in need of mercy; will you stop for one person in need of mercy?

Jesus calls us to have hearts that are tender and merciful to others, stopping to help one at a time. We pray for one at a time. We share the gospel with one at a time. We feed one at a time. We clothe one at a time. We train one at a time. We love one at a time. This is what we say to each one...

**Come, ev'ry soul by sin oppressed,  
There's mercy with the Lord,  
And he will surely give you rest,  
By trusting in his Word.**

**Come then, and join this holy band,  
And on to glory go,  
To dwell in that celestial land,  
Where joys immortal flow.**