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Swift Creek Baptist Church (swiftcreekbaptistchurch.com)
18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834
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Mark 10:46-52 “Blind Bartimaeus”

Intro. Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover. They had traveled from Galilee, [through Perea¹,] and down the eastern side of the Jordan valley. That main road ran back across the Jordan River and right through Jericho. From there they would go up the mountain road to Jerusalem. At that time of the year there would be large crowds of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for Passover, so we are not surprised that a “great multitude” was following Jesus, hundreds or even thousands of people. Many sought the opportunity to see Him and even hear Him teach and answer questions as He traveled that road.

On the way out of the city of Jericho something significant happened. Just over a week before His death on the cross, Jesus performed another great miracle. A man named Bartimaeus was healed of his blindness. According to Matthew 20:30, there were actually two blind beggars sitting by the road that day, one of whom was Bartimaeus. Mark does not mention the other blind man, because he had a reason to focus on Bartimaeus, who was probably the chief spokesman. Evidently, he was known to the early church because Mark is the only gospel writer who identifies this man by name.² So since Mark focuses on just one of the blind beggars, that is what we will do this morning.

Even though this is a great story of Jesus’ power to heal, there are also some important spiritual lessons from this story that I do not want you to miss, including some lessons about prayer. Do you want to improve your prayer life? I hope you will listen this morning. Now the first lesson is this:

I. YOU SHOULD RECOGNIZE YOUR NEED

Before Jesus Christ can help you, you need to recognize that you have a need. Here was a man who certainly had a need. We read in v.46, “As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.” Here we see two big problems that Bartimaeus had. First:

A. He Was Blind – I’m sure he was totally blind through disease or injury, and not just legally blind by today’s definition.

Not only was he blind, but furthermore:

B. He Was a Poor Beggar – The two circumstances often went hand in hand. There was nothing unfamiliar about this sight in that day. For many people with serious disabilities, that was the only means of making a living. After all, they did not have disability benefits in those days. Unless a wealthy family could support him, someone like Bartimaeus had to depend on the pity and generosity of the people. So he was sitting by the busy roadside which led up to Jerusalem,

¹ On the east side of the Jordan River.

² Bartimaeus means “son of Timaeus.” He probably gave that explanation for the benefit of Roman readers who were not familiar with the Aramaic word *bar*, which means son (of). See other examples of Mark explaining Aramaic words (5:41; 7:34; 14:36).

begging. With so many pilgrims passing by for the Passover, it was an opportune time to beg for money (see Dt. 15:7). By the way, to this day even in America we see beggars by the side of the road.

So here was a man who had a great need and he knew it. What kind of need do you have today? What problem are you facing? You may think everyone recognizes their need, but the Bible says the unbeliever is spiritually blind (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:18). You need the Lord to show you the seriousness of your sinful condition, including your guilt before God and your destiny to face God's judgment. Jesus said to the professing Christians of Laodicea that you "do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind..." (Rev. 3:17). Too many fail to recognize the depth of their spiritual need. People must be brought under conviction of sin before they will seek forgiveness in Jesus. God needs to open your eyes to the One who can.

If you are already saved, you probably have other needs. Do you need healing today? Do you need reconciliation of an important relationship? Do you have a financial need? Do you need to renew your walk with Christ? Well, the first step is to recognize and acknowledge your need. As we shall see, Jesus required Bartimaeus to acknowledge his need in v.51. Will you do so today?

Next, when you realize you have a need, we see from our text that you should:

II. CRY OUT TO JESUS IN PRAYER

That's what Bartimaeus did. Though he was blind, he was not deaf. He could hear the sound of a larger than usual crowd passing by. So Luke says he inquired what this may be. They said, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by" (Luke 18:36-37). So in v.47 we read, "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!'" He must have heard about Jesus before, how He had healed others, including other blind people (8:22-25; Mt. 11:5; 12:22; 15:30-31). So when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he immediately cried out to Him, for he knew he had a need and Jesus could help him.

We today cannot see Jesus either. Yet I'm going to show you that we should cry out to Jesus in prayer when we have a need. And there are several truths about prayer that we see illustrated here. For example:

A. Our Prayer Should Express Faith – In the next chapter Jesus will say, "...whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive [them], and you will have [them]" (11:24). Bartimaeus was blind in body, but not in soul. He called out to Jesus because he believed in Jesus.

Notice the other evidences of his faith. Others in the crowd just called Him "Jesus of Nazareth," but *he* called Him "son of David,"³ a reference to the Davidic Messiah spoken of in the holy Scriptures long ago.⁴ He saw things which the leaders of Israel refused to see. While they would soon accuse Him of being a blasphemer and deceiver, Bartimaeus called Jesus "the Son of David," a messianic term. Since he believed that Jesus was the Messiah, he knew that Jesus could open his eyes. Furthermore, down in last of v.51, notice how he addressed Jesus. "Rabboni" was the title of a master teacher,⁵ and equivalent to the title Matthew and Luke used in reporting this story, "Lord". Why did he call Him Messiah and Lord? No doubt he had heard the report of our Lord's mighty works and, hearing, had believed. He had a distinct insight into Christ's dignity, power, and will, to which seeing multitudes were blind. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by

³ This is the only place in Mark's gospel where Jesus is called "son of David."

⁴ See 2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; and Psalm 89:29-37.

⁵ This title is found in only one other place in the Gospels (John 20:16), spoken by Mary Magdalene.

hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” The fact that Bartimaeus believed in Jesus was confirmed by Jesus Himself in v.52.

Here we see an example of the kind of faith we must have today. Bartimaeus had never *seen* Jesus perform a miracle, and yet He believed the reports that He had. Even so, we have never seen Jesus perform a miracle. We have only read and heard the reports about the miracles of Jesus. Yet most or all of us believe that He did these miracles! We have the kind of faith that the apostle Peter talked about, “Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice ...” (I Peter 1:8).

Do you have faith in Jesus? That is absolutely essential for answered prayer (Jas. 1:6-7).

B. Our Prayer Should Acknowledge God’s Mercy – In the last of v.47 he asked Jesus to “have mercy on me!” Bartimaeus was not one to say that his blindness was unfair and unjust. Instead of asking for justice, he asked for mercy! He knew he was not worthy to ask anything of Jesus. His petition was based on His mercy.

Would to God that we had more crying out to God like that! Multitudes of souls are lost and on the road to a devil’s hell, and yet they are careless when it comes to their soul. They should be saying to God with Bartimaeus, “Have mercy on me!” Don’t go to God in prayer making demands as if you deserve anything from Him. Plead with God based on His great mercy. When you are going through a great trial, remember that God is not indifferent to your suffering.

C. Our Prayer Should Be Persistent – We see this illustrated in v.48 where we read, “Then many warned him to be quiet....” Just why the crowd did this we do not know. Perhaps they were listening to Jesus speak as He walked, and he disturbed and interrupted their ability to hear him. Or perhaps since beggars were a common sight in those days, they just considered him to be an annoyance. Bartimaeus was too bold and unrelenting and shameless in his crying out, as his critics thought. If someone interrupted my preaching, I would tend to consider that person to be an annoyance! Perhaps some thought that Jesus was too important a person to be bothered by beggar.⁶ Unfortunately, the crowd clearly lacked compassion for someone in need. Let us not make the same mistake!

But though the crowd rebuked him, he was not to be deterred. This could be his one and only opportunity for healing. So the last of v.48 says, “he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’” He was persistent in his prayer to Jesus. He would not stop until Jesus stopped to hear his request.

Why was he so persistent? He had a sense of need, desperation and urgency, which was stronger than any desire to be at peace with the multitude. He was blind, and he knew it. He could hardly support himself and was reduced to being a beggar. Desperate people do not permit the crowd to keep them from Jesus. Furthermore, he realized that if help was going to come from any source, it would have to come from the Son of David, the Messiah. Jesus was passing by, and he knew this could be his only opportunity for healing. It was now or never! Indeed, if he had stayed quiet, he would have remained blind.

We have seen such dogged determination in the stories of other healings in the gospel. The Syrophenician woman did not give up even when Jesus initially rebuffed her because he was a Gentile (7:24-23). The leper and the woman with the flow of blood disregarded Levitical laws that

⁶ Since Mark identifies the blind beggar as the son of Timaeus, meaning "worthy of honor," he may be underscoring the way he was treated so shabbily (Garland, p.420).

prevented them from having contact with Jesus in order to receive His help (1:40-45; 5:25-34).⁷ Desperate needs call for desperate determination and persistence.

His persistence paid off. It was only after he *kept* crying out that Jesus and the crowd stopped, and Jesus called out to him.

Of course, there is a lesson here about being persistent in prayer. If you do not receive the answer to your prayer the first time you ask, keep praying. Keep asking. Jesus said in Matthew 7:7, “Keep on⁸ asking, and it will be given to you; Keep on seeking, and you will find; Keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you.” Persistence is an indication of faith, and God is more pleased with much prayer than little prayer.

So you need to recognize your need, and call out to Jesus in prayer. Let me show you why:

III. JESUS IS CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR PRAYER

I’m glad to report that when you have a need, and when you call upon Jesus, He cares for you! 1 Peter 5:7 says, “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” Peter saw firsthand evidence of that truth many times during the ministry of Jesus. In fact, Matthew’s account says that Jesus was moved with compassion when He heard of this man’s need and desire (20:34). Notice what happened here that indicates the concern of Jesus. In v.49 we see that:

A. He Stood Still - Keep in mind that Jesus had been traveling a long distance from Galilee, through Jericho, and was on His way to Jerusalem. He would not rest until He had accomplished His mission of getting to Jerusalem. He had important work to do there, including dying on the cross for our sins. And though an indescribably heavy burden was resting upon His own heart, He has not lost His sympathy with the needs of others. Though he was on His way to the cross, yet He stops and takes time to serve a blind beggar! What love, what mercy, what grace! He stops to give him opportunity to catch up to Him.

The living Christ is busy in heaven, but He is as ready to help today, as He was when outside the gate of Jericho; and every one of us may lift our voice, and it will go straight up to the throne. Jesus Christ will listen to your cry for help. He has time for you. He cares for you.

So after Jesus stood still:

B. He Called for the Blind Man – Notice in v.49 that He “commanded him to be called.” Jesus orders the people to call the man away from the roadside where he was sitting. He was to be led to *His* side. Then, in the last of v.49 we read, “Then they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling⁹ you.’” Oh, I’m sure his heart was filled with joy when he heard that Jesus was calling for *him*.

How it should bring joy to a heart to know that Jesus is interested in you! Who is He calling out to today? 2 Thess. 2:14 says that “He called you by our gospel.” Right now, through this gospel sermon, He is calling someone to be saved. Is that someone you? Or He may be calling upon you to renew your walk with Him, to get right with Him. Is that someone you? Or out of love and compassion He sees a heart that is breaking because of some trial you are going through, and He is calling out to you in order to comfort, to cheer, and even to heal and restore. Jesus is concerned

⁷ Garland, p.423.

⁸ That is the sense of the present imperative. The present tense in Greek denotes continual action.

⁹ Note that the word "call" is found three times in this one verse, so the concept of a “call” is important here.

about your soul and well-being. He is calling out to souls today. Will you hear and respond to His call?

Notice the response of Bartimaeus in v.50, “And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.” Here was the opportunity of a lifetime. His heart leaps with joy as he came to Jesus with anticipation. That garment probably was used as a pallet to sit upon or to collect donations but he was anticipating he would no longer need it for such purposes, so we cast it aside. Then we see that:

C. He Invites Petition – In v.51 Jesus asked him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Bartimaeus had already expressed his need in general, when he cried out, “Have mercy on me.” But now Jesus wants Bartimaeus to express specifically what he wanted Him to do. And notice how tenderly Jesus asks this question. It was the implicit pledge that whatever he desired, he should receive. To be sure, Jesus already knew what Bartimaeus wanted, but He wanted to give this man opportunity to express himself and give evidence of his own faith. What did he really believe Jesus could do for him?

So what did the man say? To anyone else he would have said, “Alms for the poor.” But standing before the Lord Jesus and prepared to express his faith, He said in the last of v.51, “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.” He wanted to be able to see once again,¹⁰ and he believed that Jesus could perform a miracle in his life. He knew that Jesus could do the impossible by the power of God.

You have needs, and Jesus is ready and willing to meet your needs. But He is waiting on you to look to Him in faith and ask. This reinforces my second main point. We should cry out to Jesus in prayer and ask for help. James 4:2 says, “you do not have because you do not ask.” So what should you ask of Jesus today? Suppose Jesus Christ stood where I stand, and spoke to you: “What do you want Me to do for you?” What a wonderful and important question, coming from Him! So what would you say? Would your request reflect your faith in the Lord? If you are not yet a Christian, your answer should come as swiftly as the beggar’s, “Lord! Heal me of my blindness, and take away my sin, and give me Your salvation.” There is no doubt about what it is that every one of us needs most. You may have a financial need. But if you have not trusted Christ as Savior, your greatest need is not cash, but Christ! And remember what Jesus said to His disciples shortly after this incident, “And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive” (Mt. 21:22).

So do you recognize your greatest need today? Have your sins been forgiven? Many in this world are too blind to see what you really need!

Next, we see in our story:

IV. JESUS CAN ANSWER YOUR PRAYER

Christ certainly did in our story today. Matthew reports that “Jesus touched [his] eyes” (Mt. 20:34). He often touched people as He healed them. Then, in the last of v.52, notice what happened, “immediately he received his sight.” What a happy day! His prayer was answered. Jesus did what no one else could do. He once again gave sight to a blind man!

So what does this miracle tell us about Jesus? He must be the promised Messiah, for He even fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah that He would heal the blind (29:18; 35:5; 42:7). He must be the Son of God. You may indeed have a need or a problem that seems overwhelming, but Jesus has

¹⁰ In this case *anablepo* means to see (*blepo*) again (*ana*). He evidently lost his sight at some point in his life.

the power and resources to meet your need, no matter what it is. This miracle also proves that Jesus is Friend, and that He cares for you.

Furthermore, notice that the cure took place “immediately.” In just a moment the blind man was brought from darkness to light!

I am here to proclaim the possibility of an immediate passage from darkness to light for any soul who looks to Christ. Sudden conversions are perfectly reasonable, as many can testify. Any man who hears this gospel message can be lost at the beginning of the message, but saved by the end of the message. He can heal spiritual blindness as well. As the great hymn, “Amazing Grace,” says, “I once was blind but now I see.”

So we see that Christ has the power to answer your prayers. Just believe and ask! Finally, we see from our text that:

V. WE SHOULD RESPOND TO ANSWERED PRAYER

Notice how Bartimaeus responded to the miracle Jesus did for him. In the last of v.52 we see that he “followed Jesus on the road.” According to Luke 18:43 he also gave glory to God along the way.¹¹ In gratitude he wanted to follow Jesus and be with Jesus. He had already believed in Jesus. Now he became a follower of Jesus. He probably followed Jesus on the road all the way to Jerusalem¹² and became one of His faithful disciples. He had a faith in Jesus that was demonstrated by his actions.

Even so when God saves your soul, and when He answers prayers, you should respond to His grace by following Jesus faithfully. Has Christ saved your soul? Then have you followed Jesus in baptism? Does your church attendance reflect that you follow Christ? Does your lifestyle show that you follow Christ? Does your Christian service show that you follow Christ?

Conclusion: Once again, imagine the scene that we began with. Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Knowing this, Bartimaeus took advantage of the opportunity and he called out to Jesus. Then Christ called out to him. In just a few moments the blind man received his sight.

Likewise, Christ is calling us all, and my business now is to say to each of you what the crowd said to the beggar, “Rise, He is calling you.” And v.50 says of Bartimaeus, “And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.” If you will acknowledge that you need His salvation, rise up from your seat in just a moment, and come forward to receive Christ as your Savior. Or if you have some other need, rise up and come forward to seek Him in prayer, either with me or at this prayer altar. I urge you to do it now! Jesus Christ is passing by. Christ and His salvation are offered to you, my brother, now. This could be your only opportunity. 2 Cor. 6:2 says, “... Behold, now [is] the accepted time; behold, now [is] the day of salvation.” You don’t know about tomorrow. Perhaps if you let Him pass by, you will never hear Him call again, and you may abide in darkness forever. Do not run the risk of such a fate. Come to Jesus today!

Sources: William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: Mark* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956); James A. Brooks, *New American Commentary: Mark* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991); Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2024; David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); H.A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Mark* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1948); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids:

¹¹ Based on the present tense of the participle.

¹² The imperfect tense indicates continual action. Thus, he probably followed Him to Jerusalem.

Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); John Phillips, *Exploring The Gospel of Matthew: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:80] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2021); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

Also, read and compare sources for Mt. 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43.

Music: "Something Good Is Going to Happen to You," 1st & last verse (*Country & Western Gospel Hymnal*, p.7). Also, "Amazing Grace."

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