

Accessibility

Mark 10:46-52

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Introduction:

Today we will continue our sermon series in the Gospel of Mark.

We have come to Mark 10:46-52, the climax of all that Jesus has been teaching His disciples after they confessed Him to be the Messiah back in chapter 8.

- Ever since that confession was made, we have seen Him telling them over and over what kind of Messiah He is, because, like their contemporaries, their expectations were all wrong.
 - Their notion was that He would be the Messiah of a righteous church, a pure and holy nation that He could come to reward for their righteousness and raise to rule over the whole world.
 - The problem was that the church was not righteous and holy—it was sinful and guilty and corrupt.
 - He came to be the Messiah of a church made up of people who, like everyone else, ate the forbidden fruit—a church of sinners in desperate need of forgiveness and new life, who would officially reject Him and deliver Him to the Gentiles to be killed.
- His calling as the Messiah of such a people meant that it would not be appropriate for Him to take a high seat of honour and dignity—to wear fine clothing and go about with an entourage of men in fine apparel.
 - It meant that He would be rejected and despised, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, a Messiah associated with their shame and sin who would be rejected and cursed upon a cross—a lamb to be slaughtered on account of their sin.
 - His disciples would not be, as they dreamed, men who were given honourable seats of dignity and pomp, but men whose lives would be poured out as a drink offering, the off-scouring of the world, men with a Messiah who would die a shameful death and be rejected by the establishment.

Jesus' teaching about this began as soon as the day came in Caesarea Philippi when they finally confessed that He was the Christ.

- This was recorded for us in Mark 8:29.
- They confessed Him to be the Christ (which means the Messiah), but their notions about Him were still entirely mistaken.
 - Jesus' response to their confession was that it was true, but that they must not tell anyone—He knew that if they did, they and the crowds would want to make Him the kind of Messiah that they were looking for.
 - He told them that as Messiah, that He must “suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again (Mark 8:31).”
- Peter took him aside and began to rebuke Him—that was not what the Messiah was supposed to do... “God forbid!”

- But Jesus turned and rebuked Peter, saying: “Get behind me Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

And from this point on, we see Jesus on the way to Jerusalem with His disciples, teaching them that He did not come to elevate a righteous church but to bear the sins of a sinful church.

- Again and again He tells them of His suffering at Jerusalem at the hands of His own people, and again and again He exposes the inordinate pride of the Twelve and rebukes them for their vain expectations of worldly honour and acclaim.
 - He teaches them that in His kingdom, you pour out your life for the lowly instead of trying to advance your own status with the high and mighty.
 - That as the chief among them, He has come not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.
- He teaches them that the ones who inherit the kingdom are not the ones who present their great gifts and noble characters to Him, but those who come as little children to receive His blessing with no merit of their own.
 - Again and again, He tells them to drop their dreams of their own dignity and merit and to follow Him to the cross.

It is pathetic to see men who feel that they are entitled to honour when in fact they are called to follow the Messiah who goes to the cross for their sins.

- They need to see that access to God is only through Him who is crucified—not through putting forth something of their own.

Even as Jesus draws near to Jerusalem, the Twelve continue to be blind to all of this.

- But in Mark 10:46-52, as Jesus sets out from Jericho on the one day journey to Jerusalem, this section of Mark wraps up with the story of a blind man who does see.
 - He stands in contrast to Jesus’ blind disciples who still cannot see.
 - He is a harbinger of hope.
 - Remarkably, he too confesses that Jesus is the Messiah; but unlike the Twelve, he cries out for mercy instead of for honour.
 - What a contrast between him and the Twelve!
 - What a contrast between him and the rich young ruler who came asking what else he needed to do to inherit eternal life.
 - The man in our text comes looking for all from Jesus. He presents himself as a man in need, instead of as a man who has something to offer.
 - We meet him as a beggar beside the road, and at the end of the story he is a disciple who is on the road with Jesus to the city of God.
 - Soon the Twelve—all but one of them—will be like him—
 - When Jesus goes to the cross, they will see that it is for their sins and their people’s sins, and they will become beggars who follow Jesus the crucified One and gladly bear His reproach in the world.

That is exactly where you all ought to be.

- Jesus tells us not be surprised if the world hates us because it hated Him—not to be surprised that yoga studios and protestors are given preference to the church.

- We come to Jesus as beggars beside the road that we might by His mercy become disciples of Jesus on the road to the city of God.

Listen as I read our text from Mark 10:46-52:

- May the Lord grant to you eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit has to say.

Mark 10:46-52: Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.
⁴⁷ **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!”**⁴⁸
Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”⁴⁹
So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, “Be of

good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.”⁵⁰
And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.⁵¹
So Jesus answered and said to him, “What do you want Me to do for you?”
The blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.”⁵²
Then Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.”
And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.”

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His infallible Word.

Accessibility.

- That is a word we hear a lot today, and it is good thing.
- It speaks of giving someone who would otherwise be shut out access to the things that other people enjoy.
 - It has to do with providing wheelchair ramps and special busses, it has to do with providing braille or sign language or hearing devices or corrective lenses so that people are not shut out.
 - What a grand thing it is when someone who was shut out is given access.

I. Bartimaeus the blind knew what a blessing it would be to have access to Jesus.

A. As a blind man, he knew well what it was to be shut out from many things... to have much that was inaccessible to him.

1. Mark presents him to us vividly as “blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, who sat by the road begging.”
 - People were starting to make their way to Jerusalem for the Passover, but Bartimaeus did not have a way to get there—he did not have access.
 - Being blind, he was unable to find employment. He lived in a day when there were few opportunities for a blind man.
 - He was unable to see the beauty of faces and of the fertility of the city of Jericho which Herod had rebuilt and chosen as the site for his magnificent winter palace.
 - He knew what it was like to be without access to many things.

- Though now, you can be sure, that as a beggar in Jericho, he was pleased to have access to the multitudes that were passing through on their way to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, in festive a mood, for many of them would have something for a poor blind beggar like him as they went to worship.
2. No doubt, he had heard about Jesus of Nazareth.
 - Surely he had heard stories of how He cast out demons, healed the sick, made the lame to walk, cleansed lepers.
 - But you can be sure that the stories that captured his attention the most were the stories of how He gave sight to the blind!
 - Could it really be so?
 - As he thought on all this, he must have also heard the talk about who Jesus was—perhaps he engaged in the debate.
 - In any case, it is quite clear that on this day when Jesus came through Jericho, Bartimaeus had formed his own ideas about this One who could give sight to the blind.
- B. Bartimaeus wanted access to Jesus.
1. If he could get access to Him, he could obtain his sight!
 - How he longed for this!
 - As he thought more and more on it, how his yearning must have grown and how his thoughts of the greatness of the One who could give sight to the blind must have increased!
 - I say all of this because we see the proof of it in our text.
 2. In Mark 10:47, we see how highly he had come to regard Jesus.
 - a. He see how he calls Him *the Son of David*.
 - He hears a great crowd coming—as Jesus made His way to Jerusalem, many pilgrims had joined the band of His followers.
 - As soon as Bartimaeus hears that it is Jesus of Nazareth, he begins to cry out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”
 - Mark has not told us of anyone calling Jesus *the Son of David* up until this point!
 - *Son of David* was a title for the Messiah—and it was only very recently that Jesus’ own disciples had confessed Him to be the Messiah—after which Jesus shushed them because of the gross misunderstanding of what it meant in their minds for Him to be the Messiah.
 - But remarkably, this blind man had figured that out.
 - In a way, it was not so remarkable—for Jesus had gone around healing the sick and making the deaf hear and the lame walk, raising the dead and preaching the gospel to the poor—all things that were prophecied of the Messiah.

- It should have been obvious to anyone that had... eyes...
 - Indeed, this blind man had better eyes than those that could see.
- b. And look at what he asks for—
 - so different than the rich young ruler who wanted to know what other great things he needed to add to all that he had done to complete his merit.
 - so different than James and John who asked that they might sit on His right and left when He set up His glorious throne at Jerusalem.
 - Bartimaeus asks for mercy... the beautiful prayer: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”
 - He did not try to impress Jesus or expect Jesus to be impressed.
 - He did not come for reward, but for mercy—like a little child—with nothing to offer... just the way Jesus told His disciples that people must come if they wished to enter His kingdom.
 - Bartimaeus knew that Jesus coming near was his only hope.
 - Right now he had access to Him.
 - He could not follow Him to Jerusalem and look for Him there—he must get to Him now or all would be lost. He must have access.
- 3. Look at his marvellous persistence (v. 48)—persistence fuelled by faith...
 - **Then many** [not just one or two—many] **warned him** [they rebuked him—that’s the word they use] **to be quiet...**
 - Who was this beggar? crying out for alms like this?—disturbing the Master?
 - What did he have to offer to Jesus?
 - They looked on him the same as they had looked on those children that the parents were bringing to Jesus...
 - He was just a nuisance... they would dissuade him and quiet him.
 - His response is grand—but **he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me.”**
 - Their efforts to stop him were like a boomerang.
 - It only caused his cries to be magnified—it only drew even more attention to him—it made his cry all the more conspicuous.
 - That is what happens when people try to stop a needy sinner from getting to Jesus.
 - The more they try to stop him, the more they see how earnest he is—and the more their indifference is exposed.
 - It keeps coming back on them.
 - If doesn’t matter if they are well-meaning friends saying, “Don’t go too far with your service to Jesus. Don’t be a fanatic,” or if they are bitter enemies who persecute... the more they oppose you, the more they see your commitment.

- Bartimaeus is like Jacob at Penuel—"I will not let You go unless you bless me."

C. The outcome of all of this is most excellent. Something remarkable happens.

1. He obtains access.

a. Verse 49: **"So Jesus stood still."**

- Think of it.
 - The cry of this poor and powerless beggar caused the Son of God Himself who made the earth and the sea to stand still.
 - Jesus, who had His face set like a flint to go to Jerusalem—who was surrounded by a great multitude—stops for one poor beggar.
- That is the way of Jesus!
 - He promises that none who come to Him will be cast out.
 - He is the Lord of glory and He stops for beggars.

b. Verse 49: **So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called.**

- The crowd changes their tune. **Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you."**
- Such wonderful words—He is calling for you!
 - Do you know this? Have you heard His call for you?
 - Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden?
 - Look unto me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved.

➤ Access to the Son of David: granted!

2. See the beggar's delight.

- Mark alone tells us how he throws his garment aside...
 - probably the garment he had in front of him to collect alms.
 - What need did he have of these?
 - He had access the Son of David!
 - Alan Cole calls it a joyous extravagance and reckless response.
- He rose and went to Jesus—perhaps swimming through the crowd to the voice that called him...the way only a blind man could.

D. With access to Jesus, Bartimaeus gets what he wants.

1. Our dear Messiah greets him like a human—not like another case.

- He asks him (v. 51): **"What do you want Me to do for you?"**
- It is such a personal question—person to person—with the Son of David.
 - He allows him to express himself in a personal way.

2. There is no hesitation on the part of Bartimaeus.

- Verse 51: **The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."**
 - He knows that the Son of David can do this.
 - He has access—that is all he needed... he knows that Jesus will do this.
- See how he calls Jesus *Rabboni*.

- James Edwards informs us that this title, *Rabboni*, is seldom used with reference to humanity, and practically never as a form of address. Most often, it was used to address God in prayer.
 - Bartimaeus is sure of Him.
 - His confidence is not in what he has brought to Jesus, but in Jesus.
 - He is here for mercy.
3. Jesus gives him all that he wants.
- a. Verse 52: **Jesus said to him “Go your way; your faith has made you well.”**
 - I could wish that it was translated, “your faith has saved you.”
 - The word in the original is the word that refers to salvation.
 - Calvin says, “The word *saved* is not limited to an outward cure, but includes also the health and safety of the soul.”
 - b. Look at the outcome... in the rest of verse 52: **And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.**
 - This man went from being a blind beggar beside the road to Jerusalem to being on the road with Jesus, his eyes now opened.
 - This is the very thing that Jesus has been teaching His blind disciples—
 - Don’t worry—they will see soon—
 - He did not come to give out rewards to the righteous—He came to show mercy to sinners. He came to a church lost in sin.
 - Real discipleship is not coming to Jesus with what you have, it is coming to Jesus to obtain what you need.

TRANS> Do you see, my brothers and sisters? I hope you do!

II. Access by mercy is the blessing we have as sinners.

A. Solomon understood this in 2 Chronicles 6 when he dedicated the temple.

1. That’s the passage we read in our Old Testament reading today.
 - The temple had been built.
 - In his prayer, Solomon does not say,
 - “Now we have this temple and we can come here and present ourselves to you. You can see how wonderful we are. You can see our dedication. We can bring you our offerings and you will be so impressed with us.”
 - That is not his focus at all.
 - Look at it with me again.
 - In 6:18-21, he speaks of how this house that he has built cannot contain God—it is not a palace to impress God, but a temple to obtain mercy from God as sinners.
 - In verse 21 he says: **“And may You hear the supplications of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive.”**

- It is a portrait of what it is to come to God in Jesus' name as the one who was crucified for us.
 - To Solomon, the temple is about access to God for mercy!
 - You don't come up with your offering like the rich young ruler and say, "What else do I need to do to be complete?"
 - You don't come and present yourself and say, "Can I have a place at your right hand and my brother at your left?"
 - But you come say, "Lord have mercy on me and forgive me."
 - You want access by mercy, not by merit.
 - That's the reason that Solomon offered 22,000 bulls and 120,000 sheep—because they were sinners pleading for mercy, not righteous persons looking for favours.
2. Look how Solomon looks for mercy in his prayer in all things...
- a. In verse 22-23, he asks God to hear and forgive us when we have sinned against each other.
 - b. In verse 24-25, to hear and bring us back when our enemies have taken us because of our sins against God.
 - c. In verse 26-27, that when God has closed up the heavens so that it does not rain because of our sins, that He would hear our confession and restore us when we pray toward the temple.
 - d. In verse 28-31—so relevant to us right now with the coronavirus:
 - ²⁸ **“When there is famine in the land, pestilence or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers; when their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness *there is*; ²⁹ whatever prayer, whatever supplication is *made* by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows his own burden and his own grief, and spreads out his hands to this temple: ³⁰ then hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of the sons of men), ³¹ that they may fear You, to walk in Your ways as long as they live in the land which You gave to our fathers.”**
 - Always a cry for forgiveness, always a cry for mercy that not only brings relief and pardon, but also for mercy that turns us back to God to walk with Him—like Bartimaeus.
 - e. Solomon goes on to ask for mercy when foreigners come to pray at the temple, for mercy in times of battle when they turn to the temple to pray, and for restoration when they sin and are driven out of land, but turn back.
3. You see how in every case, sin is the problem that has caused their problem and the remedy is by coming toward the temple to confess their sins and plead for mercy.
- That is what we do not see—that sin is the problem.
 - How many people see Covid-19 and say, “We need to repent and plead with God for mercy and forgiveness?”

- But why the temple?
 - Because this was where the ministry of atonement was found.
 - It was here that sacrifices were offered for sin.
 - It was here that sinners gained access to God through sacrifices for sin!

TRANS> The temple presented Christ as a Messiah for sinners in its ministry, oracles, and ordinances.

B. Today it is in the church that presents Christ the crucified in its ministry, oracles, and ordinances.

- The temple was Christ presented in shadows for mercy to sinners; the gospel is the good news of Christ crucified to give sinners access to mercy.
1. No longer do we have the ministry, oracles, and ordinances in a temple.
 - The church is not a building.
 - The church is God's people gathered to Jesus Christ who was crucified.
 - His blood is the blood of the new covenant, shed for the remission of sins.
 2. Christ comes to us today through the church's ministry, oracles, and ordinances.
 - a. The ministry is the shepherds that He has appointed to shepherd His people.
 - Through them, Jesus leads His people and protects them from their enemies.
 - He has appointed them to heal up the wounded and to feed His lambs.
 - b. And the food that He gives to them is His word... the oracles of God.
 - The Gospel that tells us of His mercy to sinners, of how He was crucified to atone for our sins and raised for our justification.
 - That in His covenant He promises to receive all that come for Him for mercy.
 3. And He conveys His blessing of grace to us through church's ordinances.
 - Primarily, through the preaching of the word—which He has commanded to continue to the end of age—the gospel proclaimed to His people—telling them to come to Him as sinners for mercy.
 - And then there is prayer by which we do cry out to Him for mercy like Bartimaeus.
 - And to strengthen our faith and our assurance, there are the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper by which He visibly conveys Himself to pleading souls in mercy for cleansing and renewal.
 4. We don't have to wait until Jesus comes by our town like Bartimaeus did.
 - Jesus has sent His church into all the world to minister in His name and He goes with us to bring His mercy to sinners.
 - But there is a sense in which we do have to wait—those whom God has prepared have to wait for someone to bring the gospel to them—or rather for Jesus to send someone to do that—someone to bring the word, sacraments, and prayer to their land.
 - It is by these that sinners all over the world gain access to Him.
 - Let us not neglect the church and her ordinances, but neither let us suppose that we are shut up to public ordinances.

- He has provided them to us and we must use them, but we receive the word not only in our called assemblies, but also through one another.

III. Our gracious God has made Himself accessible.

- All three persons of the Trinity are involved.
- A. Our welcoming Father appointed the way by which sinners might have access to Him.
- It is our loving Father to whom we come.
 - He has planned the way for sinners like us to obtain mercy.
 - He has sent His righteous Son to die for us so that we might have access to Him, the forgiveness of sin and the blessing of eternal life.
- B. His Son came to open the way for us, and He has opened the way.
- He is the one who became flesh and dwelt among us, and we behold His glory through His ministry here.
 - He did not come to us so He could see our virtues, but so that He could die for our sins on the cross to atone for them and so that He could be our virtue and our righteousness.
 - The ministry, oracles, and ordinances of the church all point us to Him for forgiveness and eternal life so that we can be restored to God and made whole.
- C. His Spirit brings us into the way.
- It is by His work that we take interest in coming to God for mercy... that we, like Bartimaeus, see how much we need Him so that we come to Him...
 - So that even though many try to discourage us, we must come because we see that it is only in Christ that we can find mercy.
 - It is the Spirit's work to give us yearnings for mercy that can only be quenched by the Lord Jesus, and comfort and assurance that in Him there is plenteous mercy.

Conclusion

How kind our Lord is to give us access to Him!

- We are sinners, but He has opened the way for us to come and find mercy.
- All praise is due to Him alone!

Have you learned these basic lessons of discipleship?

- Do you see what Jesus had been teaching on the way to Jerusalem?
- We are to go with Him not because we are worthy but because we need Him and because He is merciful.