

To Seek and To Save the Lost

Jesus Heals a Blind Beggar

Luke 18:35-43

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Scripture

When Pierre-Paul Thomas was growing up in Montreal, Canada in the 1940s he couldn't play hockey with his brothers, and it broke his heart.

Thomas was born blind – long before a cure for his particular condition was available. So, for most of his life he could only imagine the world that people often described to him. For years he walked with a white cane to avoid obstacles in front of him.

But at the age of sixty-six, Thomas fell down the stairs in an apartment building and fractured the bones of his face. He was rushed to the hospital with severe swelling around his eyes. A team of doctors went to work to repair the bones.

Months later he went to be examined by a plastic surgeon for a consultation about repairing his scalp.

The surgeon casually asked Thomas, “Oh, while we’re at it, do you want us to fix your eyes too?”

Thomas did not understand. Nor did he know at first how to respond. It was only then that he learned that his particular form of blindness was curable. Not long after that, Thomas had surgery and he could truly see for the first time.

Suddenly his world consisted of bright colors he had never fathomed before. He spoke of being awestruck by flowers blossoming and trees blooming.

As beautiful as this story of a sixty-year-old man who was able to see for the first time is, there is a sad reality. He could have had the same surgery at a much younger age and been able to see much earlier. Thomas had assumed such a possibility was impossible and had resigned himself to a life of blindness when, in reality, he could have experienced the gift of

sight decades earlier.¹

We live in a world of brokenness and suffering. Some of it is self-inflicted, I suppose. Ultimately, however, all brokenness and suffering is the result of the Fall of Adam into sin. By his Fall all humanity has been plunged into sin, brokenness, and suffering. All people experience the effects of the Fall in numerous ways. Blindness is one of the effects of the Fall.

During his ministry on earth, Jesus healed people of all kinds of diseases, including blindness. In today's lesson, we shall learn about Jesus healing a blind beggar near Jericho. However, unlike Pierre-Paul Thomas of Montreal, who could have been healed decades earlier, this blind beggar of Jericho turned to Jesus immediately for healing as soon as he heard that Jesus was passing by. Moreover, as we shall learn, the blind beggar had far more than just his eyesight restored.

Let's read about Jesus healing a blind beggar in Luke 18:35-43:

³⁵ As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. ³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." ³⁸ And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹ And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁰ And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight." ⁴² And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³ And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. (Luke 18:35-43)

¹ Adapted from Kyle Idleman, *AHA: The God Moment That Changes Everything* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishers, 2014), 76; original source: Aaron Derfel, "Blind No More," *Montreal Gazette* (7-27-13).

Introduction

Jesus was on his final trip to Jerusalem. He was days away from entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. While traveling to Jerusalem, he had to pass through the city of Jericho. Darrell Bock notes, “Jericho is located about six miles from the Jordan River, just north of the Dead Sea, and served as a tax collection center (Luke 19:1-2) on the major highway to Jerusalem, eighteen miles away (Luke 10:30).”²

By this time a crowd was traveling with Jesus. They knew that Jesus was a truly remarkable person. His preaching was profound. It touched a deep chord in their hearts as he taught them about God, how to enter the kingdom of God, and receive the gift of eternal life. They were drawn to God’s mercy and grace that he offered to all sinners. The crowd was also astonished by all the miraculous deeds that Jesus performed by demonstrating his power over nature, demons, disease, and even death itself. Jesus was no magician, because the people he healed were completely transformed.

So, there was an air of expectancy and excitement. Jesus was going to Jerusalem, they thought, to set up his Messianic kingdom. They believed that Jesus was coming as the Conquering Messiah. Of course, they misunderstood that Jesus first had to come as the Suffering Messiah. Only at his Second Coming would he come as the Conquering Messiah.

It was in this context that Jesus healed the blind beggar outside Jericho. This was Jesus’ last miracle recorded by Luke.

Lesson

The analysis of Jesus healing a blind beggar in Luke 18:35-43 teaches us about the mercy of Jesus.

² Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51–24:53*, vol. 2, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 1505.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Condition of the Blind Man (18:35)
2. The Vision of the Blind Man (18:36-38)
3. The Determination of the Blind Man (18:39)
4. The Healing of the Blind Man (18:40-42)
5. The Response of the Seeing Man (18:43)

I. The Condition of the Blind Man (18:35)

First, let's look at the condition of the blind man.

Luke said in verse 35 that **as Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.**

There are two things to note about this man that Jesus encountered **as he drew near to Jericho**. First, he was **blind**. Luke did not say how long he had been blind. Perhaps he had been blind since birth, or perhaps he had become blind later in life. Regardless, he was blind.

And second, as a result of his blindness, he was reduced to **sitting by the roadside begging**. Darrell Bock says, "His blindness had made him totally destitute; his life was dependent on the mercy of others."³

II. The Vision of the Blind Man (18:36-38)

Second, notice the vision of the blind man.

And hearing a crowd going by as he was sitting by the roadside begging, the blind man **inquired what this meant** (18:36). The blind man was sitting at a strategic location on the side of the road in order to beg from people. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem had lots of travelers, and it was a great spot to beg people for help. But, now there was a large surge of people **going by** him, and he wondered what was going on.

And so, **they told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by"**

³ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51-24:53*, 1506.

(18:37). The name **Jesus** was common in those days. It is from the Old Testament name of Joshua. So, this **Jesus** was identified as coming from **Nazareth**. By this time Jesus was well known, and calling him **Jesus of Nazareth** was instantly enough for the blind man to know exactly which Jesus was passing by.

And he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (18:38). Though the blind man could not see physically, there are several things that he could see.

First, he could see who Jesus was. The blind man did not call him, “Jesus of Nazareth,” as the crowd did. No, the blind man called him, **“Jesus, Son of David.”** The title **“Son of David”** was familiar to any Jew who knew the Old Testament. The Jews believed that God would send a **Son of David** to be the Savior of his people. By calling Jesus the **“Son of David,”** the blind man acknowledged him as the Savior whom God had promised to send. Undoubtedly, the blind man had heard of Jesus’ preaching about the kingdom of God, as well as all the miracles that Jesus had done, including the countless healing miracles. But, while many might have seen Jesus only as a preacher and miracle worker, the blind man saw Jesus as the **Son of David**, the Savior of sinners.

How do you see Jesus? Do you see Jesus as only a preacher and miracle worker? Do you see Jesus as a great teacher of morality? Do you see Jesus as a religious leader who started a world religion? Or, do you see Jesus as the Son of David, the Savior of sinners?

And second, the blind man could see his own need. He cried out to Jesus, **“Have mercy on me!”** The Greek word for **mercy** (*eleoo*) means, “to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need.”⁴ The blind man had several needs. First, it is likely that the blind man wanted physical healing. He was blind, and he wanted to see. He had heard of Jesus healing

⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 750.

blind people, and he wanted Jesus to show mercy to him and heal him too.

Moreover, the blind man needed money. Because of his blindness, he was so poor that he had to beg people to help him financially. And so it is possible that he wanted Jesus to help him financially.

But, the man's greatest need was not physical or financial. His greatest need was spiritual. Because he called Jesus the Son of David, and because he asked for mercy, it is clear that the blind man was keenly aware of his own spiritual need. He knew that he was a sinner in need of a Savior. So, when the blind man asked for mercy, he was asking not merely for physical healing or financial assistance, he was asking for spiritual help. Philip Ryken says, "In its fullest sense, mercy is the love of God for sinners, the grace by which he rescues us from our lost and sorry condition."⁵ Mercy is what David asked for when he prayed in Psalm 51:1, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions." So, Ryken concludes, "When the blind man asked for mercy he was asking Jesus for something more than his sight; he was begging for his salvation."⁶

How do you see your own need? Do you see your need as physical? Do you want healing for some ailment? Do you see your need as financial? Do you want help with your finances? Or do you see your greatest need as spiritual? Do you see yourself as a sinner in need of a Savior?

III. The Determination of the Blind Man (18:39)

Third, observe the determination of the blind man.

The blind man's cry to Jesus, the Son of David, for mercy

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 293.

⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 294.

was met with disapproval. Luke said that **those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent** (18:39a). Luke did not tell us why **those who were in front rebuked him**. Perhaps they did not approve of him calling Jesus “Son of David.” Or, they thought that it was not proper to stop such an exalted person. Or, they considered it to be impertinence.⁷ Or, as Darrell Bock speculates, “The reason, however, may be more mundane: perhaps they thought that Jesus did not need to be bothered by a blind beggar – like the disciples’ reaction to the children who approached Jesus (Luke 18:15-17).”⁸

Whatever the reason for their rebuke, the efforts of those in front to silence the blind man failed. With great determination **he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”** (18:39b). This man was determined for the Savior of sinners to have mercy on him.

What about you? Are you determined for the Savior of sinners to have mercy on you?

Listen to Philip Ryken’s comment on this verse:

The lesson is easy to apply: do not keep quiet, but cry out for deliverance until Jesus brings you to salvation. There will always be some friends and family members who try to discourage you from calling on Jesus by faith. But be persistent. Keep crying out for salvation, the way the blind man did, until by the word of God you receive your spiritual sight. Then keep crying out for anything and everything that you need. Jesus is listening by the Holy Spirit, and he loves to hear the prayers of the needy. Jesus Christ has mercy for sinners. If you pray in persistent faith, he will not pass you by. Jesus is not too busy helping others to help you; he will stop in the middle of the road to save you.⁹

⁷ Richard C. Blight, *An Exegetical Summary of Luke 12–24*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 274.

⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51–24:53*, 1509.

⁹ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 298–299.

IV. The Healing of the Blind Man (18:40-42)

Fourth, look at the healing of the blind man.

Although there was a crowd of people around him, and he was intent on reaching Jerusalem, nevertheless, **Jesus stopped and commanded** the blind man **to be brought to him** (18:40a). Here we see the mercy of Jesus. Although the crowd rebuked the blind man for wanting Jesus' time and attention, Jesus himself stopped to address the needs of the blind man. Jesus always has time for compassion.

And when the blind man **came near**, Jesus **asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?"** He said, **"Lord, let me recover my sight"** (18:40b-41). The Greek word for **recover my sight** (*anablepso*) is significant. It is the same related noun that Jesus used in Luke 4:18, when Jesus declared in the synagogue that part of his mission was "recovering of sight to the blind." Therefore, the recovering of sight, which is the last miracle of Jesus that Luke recorded in his Gospel, is significant, because it is a fulfillment of what Jesus announced that he would do at the beginning of his mission to seek and to save the lost. The miracle of healing the blind beggar makes it clear that Jesus is the promised Son of David, the Savior of sinners.

Jesus honors the blind man's request and **said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well"** (18:42). Not only did Jesus restore the man's sight, but he also saved him. Our English version says, **"Your faith has made you well."** The Greek literally says, "Your faith has saved you." As Philip Ryken notes, "The New Testament verb 'to save' (*sōzō*) can encompass physical as well as spiritual health. Depending on the context, salvation may refer to "healing, delivering, rescuing, keeping safe, [or] preserving someone."¹⁰

The blind man was physically healed. But, far more importantly, he was spiritually saved. He was healed and saved

¹⁰ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 297.

by **faith**. However, theologian B. B. Warfield was right when he said that it is not even faith, strictly speaking, that saves, “but Christ that saves through faith. The saving power resides exclusively, not in the act of faith or the attitude of faith or the nature of faith, but in the object of faith . . . Christ himself.”⁷

It is important to remember that Jesus saves through faith. That is why I so often say that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

V. The Response of the Seeing Man (18:43)

And finally, notice the response of the seeing man.

Luke said in verse 43a, “**And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God.**” The formerly blind and now-seeing man followed Jesus and glorified God, but he was not the only one. Luke said in verse 43b, “**And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.**”

Philip Ryken says,

True faith produces joy in God and a commitment to follow Jesus forever. This is a good way to test our relationship to God. Do I experience joy in the worship of God? Am I keeping the commandments of Christ? Does my life point other people to Jesus in a way that makes them want to follow Jesus too? If I say that I am trusting in Jesus, my faith should be evident in the way I worship, the way I witness, and the way I live.¹¹

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed Jesus healing a blind beggar in Luke 18:35-43, we should praise God for the mercy that Jesus shows to sinners.

⁷ Benjamin B. Warfield, “Faith,” in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952), 425.

¹¹ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 302.

John MacArthur suggests the following application:

Five lessons may be learned from this passage.

First, the Lord does not ignore the cry of those who truly call on Him (Matt. 11:28; John 6:37).

Second, the Lord is profoundly compassionate.

Third, the Lord has power over all disease.

Fourth, the Lord came for more than merely to heal disease; He came to save the lost and transform them into obedient worshippers.

Finally, the passage calls for self-examination. Those who express interest in Christ are either among the curious crowd, whose praise is shallow, superficial, and ultimately false, or they are like the blind man, whose desperation led him to abandon everything to come to Christ for salvation, and who gave evidence of that salvation by following Christ obediently and glorifying Him.¹²

What about you? Are you part of the crowd? Or, are you follower of Jesus Christ?

¹² John F. MacArthur, *Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 66.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

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PRAYER:

Our Father, thank you for the miracle of Jesus healing the blind beggar. It teaches us so much about Jesus.

We learn that he does not ignore the cry of those who truly call on him. We learn that he is profoundly compassionate. We learn that he has power over all disease. We learn that he came for more than merely to heal disease, in that he came to seek and to save the lost and transform them into obedient worshipers of you.

O God, will you grant saving faith to any person who, like the blind beggar, cries out to you for salvation.

And for this I pray in your name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!