

Sermon — 10/24/21

Text – Mark 10:46-52

Theme – “What Do You Want?”

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So, Jesus is on a journey. His final journey. To Jerusalem and the cross. For nearly three years He has been preaching and teaching, doing miracles and signs. Telling parables. Pointing out man’s sin and need for a Savior. Making clear that HE is that very Savior, the Son of God. Then proving it by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, casting out demons, even raising the dead. Because of all this, Jesus has become quite famous. Huge crowds flocked to Him. To hear His words and to seek His healing of their ills and needs. And now Jesus — and the crowd of followers — are at Jericho. And as they pass through that great and ancient city, a blind beggar calls out to Jesus: *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*

At first the poor man is simply ignored. But when he continues his plea, he is told to be quiet and leave Jesus alone. You see, the crowds do not want to share Jesus with him — they want Christ’s attention all for themselves; His healing only for their needs. And the disciples want to spare Jesus another encounter with a supplicant — they think Jesus has better things to do, more important people to help. Everyone, it seems, wants poor blind Bartimaeus to shut up and go away. Everyone, that is, except for Jesus.

He stops — so the whole crowd stops. He calls for the blind man. And then He asks Bartimaeus just one question: *“What do you want Me to do for you?”* *“I want to see,”* the man says. And Jesus simply says: *“Go your way; your faith has made you well.”* And immediately the man CAN

see. Perfectly. He can see the crowds. He can see the trees and fields. He can see the sun and sky. He can see colors and details and faces. But best of all, he can see Jesus. His Savior. (pause)

There are a lot of interesting details in St. Mark's account of this event and miracle. Let's start with the setting: Jericho. Jericho is one of the oldest — if not THE oldest — of all the cities in the world. Known as “The City of Palm Trees”, Jericho was an oasis in the middle of a desert. Those two details (an oasis and the age of Jericho) remind us of the Gospel — the oasis in the middle of the desert of our sinful and fallen world. The oldest promise — made by God at the beginning of time, immediately after Adam's sin.

Or you could look at the name of that blind beggar: Bartimaeus. It is exceedingly rare for the Gospels to tell us the name of one of those healed by Jesus. Other than Lazarus (who was raised from the dead), I can't think of another off the top of my head. But St. Mark DOES tell us this name. Perhaps because this name — Bartimaeus — is a unique name. The first part (“Bar-”) is Hebrew, meaning “son of”. The second part (“-Timaeus”), though, is Greek and means “honor”. How did this man come to have such an unusual name, one that combines two languages and cultures (let alone religions)? Was he of mixed ancestry: one parent Jewish and the other Gentile? We do not know. But that strange combination reminds us that Jesus has come for ALL people; He is the Savior for everyone. And it reminds us that He comes to make us God's children again — sons of honor, just as that name Bartimaeus says.

Or perhaps we might focus on the fact that this is a BLIND man that Jesus heals. Over and over again, the Bible refers to our sin as blinding us, making us unable to see God aright. Just think of Adam and Eve. Before their sin, they saw God perfectly. Literally and figuratively. He came to them, face-to-face, to visit in the cool of the day. And they had no fear or terror at His coming because they

were His sinless children. But once they sinned, they became blinded. They hid from seeing Him. But, even more, they did not see their loving Father anymore — instead, they saw only an angry, vengeful, damning Judge. And it is only when they hear that Gospel promise of a Savior that they can begin to recover their sight and see God as He truly is: their loving AND forgiving Father.

Or you might consider how this blind man was apparently the only one that day who could see Jesus for who and what He truly is — calling Him “Son of David”, a reference to the coming Messiah. Others in that crowd saw Jesus merely as a prophet, a teacher, a miracle-worker. The disciples (like Peter), it is true, HAD called Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the Promised One — but they were only thinking in earthly terms. One who would grant them power and riches and freedom here and now. Still others — such as the religious elites — saw Jesus merely as a danger and threat to their positions and power. But it is this blind man who knows and confesses — who SEES — Jesus to be the Savior, come from David’s line. The true King of Kings, who is not only human but also God. And so, he cries out to Him for mercy. Bartimaeus knows he has no right, no standing, no merit that would cause God to heal him. Instead, he relies on God’s goodness and grace. His mercy, His undeserved love and favor. Bartimaeus knows who he is; he knows who God is; he knows who his Savior is. And so the blind sees, while the seeing are blind.

Or we might talk about how so many wanted to segregate Jesus, and keep Him all to themselves. The crowd did not want to share His miracles. The disciples were jealous of His time and attention too. Others thought Jesus could not be bothered with this one poor beggar. He had bigger and better things (and people) to consider. But not so with our Lord. No, He hears and He answers. He calls the beggar to Himself. Because He cares. About everyone, including nobodies and nothings like this blind beggar on the side of the road.

As I said, there are plenty of details about this passage that could command and draw our attention. But the one that I wanted to focus upon this morning is Jesus' question to Bartimaeus: "*What do you want Me to do for you?*" (pause)

What a question to ask! Obviously, Bartimaeus wanted his sight back, he wanted to see. Being blind would never be easy, but it was especially so in the ancient world. Unable to work, the blind were totally dependent upon others. Either family and friends had to support him, or he must rely on the charity and pity of others. In either case, he was completely at the mercy of others' compassion, generosity, and goodness — or their lack of it. And Bartimaeus knew it. Furthermore, he knew there was nothing he could do to change it. He needed God — he needed **Jesus** — to save him.

That's why, when he heard that Jesus was passing his way, Bartimaeus raised a ruckus. Why he cried out in a loud voice — and refused to stop, despite the rebukes and threats of the crowd and of the Twelve. How could he be quiet? His only hope was right there, walking just yards and feet and inches away. How close He would be! No, Bartimaeus would not — he **could** not — stop his plea: "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*"

Jesus is near to us too. That great name — Immanuel, "God-With-Us" — is not just a reference to His coming as the Baby of Bethlehem. No, He is "God-With-Us" right here and now. As He did for Bartimaeus, so He does for us. He comes to OUR town. He comes to you and me. He comes to save.

He comes to save us from our sins. He comes to wash us clean in the waters of Baptism. He comes to tell us of His love and forgiveness in His Word. He comes to feed us with His very Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper. He comes. Here and now. To you. To save.

That's why we are here, isn't it? That's the great need we have that causes us to cry out: "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on ME!*" And He does. Even though we are nobodies and nothings. Even

though we have nothing to commend ourselves. Even though we are but beggars, who bring nothing in our hands to give Him for His grace and mercy. Every day He calls you His own. Every day He invites you to come to Him with your needs and concerns and worries. Because He loves YOU. Because He IS merciful. Even to sinners like Bartimaeus, and you and me.

Yes, Jesus came — and He still comes — to save from sin. And that is why we are here today: to receive that forgiveness. And we certainly do receive it in worship. From our beginning (*“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”* — a reference and reminder of baptism and its washing away of our sin). To the Confession/Absolution, in which we are specifically forgiven all our sins, as the pastor speaks in the stead of, and by the command of, Christ Himself. To the rest of the liturgy, with its repeat of that Good News. To the Scripture readings and sermon, which bring it home to us personally. To the hymns and prayers and offering, which are our glad response to that forgiveness. To the Lord’s Supper, where we receive into our own hands and mouth that very Body and Blood which have won that forgiveness. The whole worship service revolves around that forgiveness of sins — that MERCY shown us by Jesus, the Son of David. Our Savior.

And so, here like nowhere else, we CAN see again. We can see God as He really is: our loving and forgiving Father. Because He made us. Because He saved us. Because He keeps us. But if Jesus were standing here right now — in the flesh as He was that day in Jericho — what would YOU say to His question: *“What do you want Me to do for you?”* (pause)

*“What do you want Me to do for you?”* Well, there are really only two ways to answer that question: the way of those Jericho crowds, or the way of Bartimaeus. That is, if you look only to God for EARTHLY blessings — like those crowds — than you are not really seeing Jesus aright. But if, like Bartimaeus, you see Jesus to be your Savior from sin, then you know Him as He truly is. And you

know that ALL He gives is good and right and blessed. Even that which gives us pain and suffering and sadness now. Because we know that one day, we WILL have all things. The new heaven and earth. The perfect and restored bodies, with all those things we lack now. The pleasure of seeing God face-to-face again, as His dear children. And we certainly long for that.

But that doesn't mean we cannot — or do not — bring those other things to Him now, just as did blind, bold Bartimaeus. No, Bartimaeus knew that God loved him. He knew that Jesus was his Savior. He trusted that God would hear him and grant that which was best. And so he had no hesitation, no compunction, no fears in coming to Jesus and asking to see again. Because he could already see. He could see what really mattered: God's love and mercy in Christ.

So, today you are like Bartimaeus. As one who has already experienced God's mercy and grace in the forgiveness of sins, you are bold to bring Him your other needs too. Physical suffering, illness, diseases, and the like. Emotional pain, sadness, loneliness, and depression. Family issues and financial worries. The whole lot. Bring it to the Lord. Lay it before Him. And then, trust that He WILL give you what is best. Because you have seen that He already has, in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

OS — Offertory/Offering

FE — Offertory/Prayer