

The Memoirs of Peter

Kyrie Eleison

Mark 10:46-52

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*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas*

I want you to take your Bibles tonight and turn to Mark 10, back to this wonderful journey through our Lord's life, and specifically the very last days before He arrives in the city of Jerusalem.

Before we get started with our message tonight, I just want to mention one thing to you that I think is important for you to know. Rocky came up and told me that we have, just on the other side of the south building down there, we have a swarm of thousands of bees. Now, we've marked it off and keeping the kids away from it. But I mention that just so you don't go through there, and particularly for those of you who may have some severe allergies, just stay away from that side of the campus. It's that time of year, and there's nothing we can do really to prevent that, but we don't want you to get in the middle of it and be any way harmed by that. So, I'll just mention that before we get started tonight.

By the time we come to the end of Mark 10, it is already become clear to any reader of Mark's Gospel who Jesus is. It was clear really at the very beginning, and then he simply set out to prove who Jesus is. It really reaches its high point, so far anyway, in 8:29, when Jesus questions the twelve, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter, speaking for the rest of the twelve, answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ," and as Matthew includes, "... the Son of the living God." "You are the Messiah, the Son of God." That's who He is.

Last week, as we looked at Mark 10:45 we discovered why it is that the Messiah, the Son of the living God, came. He came to die. He's already told us that on three separate occasions with three separate predictions. But in verse 45 of chapter 10, He explains why He came and specifically why He came to die. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom ... [in the place of] many."

It's also become clear as we've made our way through this gospel, that there are those who are clearly Jesus' friends and confidants to whom He discloses Himself, and there are those who are

His enemies. There are those who will benefit directly and specifically from His approaching death for sin, and there are those who will not benefit. So, the question arises then, how can the person reading Mark's Gospel, how can anyone; how can you come to personally benefit from what He is going to Jerusalem to do?

The two gospels that record Jesus' precise statement of His mission that we saw in verse 45, Matthew also records that statement, the two gospels that do, also record what came next. And in both cases, it's clear that it was the account of a blind beggar. We've already witnessed Jesus healed the blind before, back in chapter 8, but this healing is different. It's different for a couple of reasons. It's the only time that Mark gives us the name (in his entire gospel), it's the only time he gives us the name of someone who's healed. We've heard the name of a relative, but we've never heard the name of the person healed. It's the last act of miracle that Mark records, in his gospel, and there is a much greater focus (in this particular miracle), on the man who's healed, and in his responses, than in the earlier miracles that are recorded.

This one's unique, because this true story of a blind beggar is also a kind of real-life parable. A true story of a real beggar whom Jesus actually healed, but a story that serves at the same time to show us our true condition; and to show us how we can experience the benefits of what Jesus is about to do in Jerusalem. How we can be spiritually rescued. We see ourselves and our lives reflected in the mirror of this poor, blind beggar.

Let me read the account for you, Mark 10, beginning in verse 46,

Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar *named* Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him *here*." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you." Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, *I want*

to regain my sight!” And Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.”

Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him on the road.

The theme of this paragraph really comes in this poor man’s cry, the Greek words of the parallel passage in Matthew reads, “Kyrie Eleison!” “Lord have mercy!” “Lord have mercy!” This is the historical record of real, desperate, human need met by a personal act of divine mercy, and in it we see Jesus’ response to anyone who cries out like this to Him.

The story begins with a desperate need for Christ’s mercy, a desperate need. Verse 46, “Then they came to Jericho.” Here we have the context set, and let me just remind you, this is Jesus’ only recorded visit to Jericho, but He probably traveled through it before on His way to the city of Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples this time were on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover, when they come upon the ancient city of Jericho. And there’s a reason for that, it was right in the middle of their path. That’s interesting. Let’s see if we can get it to do something different this time. No, we can’t, alright, well you get the idea, on the north end you see the Sea of Galilee. You’ll have to imagine this, alright, that’s very strange. But the Sea of Galilee, running down from there where the red circle is, is the Jordon Rift Valley. At the bottom of that valley, is the Dead Sea.

Just before you get to the Dead Sea, if you were going south, down the Jordon Rift Valley, down the Jordan River, just before you get to the Dead Sea, on your right would be Jericho, the plains of Jericho. The travelers coming from Galilee would take that rift, that river road, if you will. But the river road ran down the west, the east side rather, away from the Mediterranean. And so, they would come down the road that way because it was more passable, more easily traveled than the other side. And then they would come to a place where they needed to pass over to the side where Jerusalem was.

There was the spring rains that pass over time; there was the snow melt from the north’ it would have made the Jordan River almost impossible to ford on your own. So just a few miles north of Jericho, on the Jordan River, there was an ancient ferry, been there since the time of David. And that’s undoubtedly how Jesus and His disciples made it across the Jordan River, the swollen river, at the time of the Passover. Then they came to Jericho, the last stop on the way to Jerusalem. Jesus probably spent the night in Jericho before taking the final leg of the journey the

next day. From Jericho, Jerusalem was only about a day's journey, about 17 miles southwest, but it was a world away. It's down there.

The city of Jericho sits in an eight-mile-wide flat plain on the west of the Jordan River in that Jordan Rift Valley. It has two great distinctions, this city does. One is that along with Damascus, it is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities on earth. The other distinction it holds alone. At 825 feet below sea level, it is the lowest city in elevation on the planet. Jerusalem, on the other hand, is on the crest of the central mountain range there, so in the 17 miles from Jericho to Jerusalem, you travel up some 3,300 feet in altitude or in elevation. Now, the Jericho of Jesus' day was really two cities. This, by the way, gives you an aerial view. You can see that over to the left is Jericho, and then that central area running through is the Jordan River. This would be the Jordan River through here. Jericho over on this side, we're looking north here.

Here's a picture looking south -you can see that there are mountains toward Jerusalem on the right-hand side as you're looking at it. And you can see the sort of fertile plain that it is in the middle of a lot of arid desert and mountains and hills.

Here's another photo of Jericho. Let me go back to this one; I want to show you one other thing here. I'm not sure you can make it out well in this picture. But here is the ancient city of Jericho, and both of these, by the way, existed in Jesus' time. There were really two cities of Jericho in Jesus' time, and that figures into the story, it's important. Here is the ancient city, down on the lower end of the slide there. And then you see up toward the top of the middle an area that's marked Herod's palaces. That was the new city that Herod had built.

The lower city, the ancient city, was where the perennial fountain that fed the oasis was. Still is, pumps out about 1,000 gallons of water a minute. It was said to be the fountain that Elisha cleansed in his day. About a mile from that, a mile south from that, and you see here we're looking south, so up at the top of the slide was the city that Herod built. Herod the Great built a Roman city, and his son improved it.

So, there were these two cities on this great, flat plain. You say why would anyone want to build out here? Well, it's kind of like the Middle East version of Palm Springs. It was hot and unbearable in the summer, but in the winter, it was wonderfully mild. Josephus said they were

wearing linen in Jericho when there was snow on the ground in Jerusalem, even though it was only 17 miles apart. It was known for its roses, its almonds, its balsam trees, its date palms, and it was so lush and beautiful that according to the Greek historian and geographer Strabo, Mark Antony gave Jericho to Cleopatra as a gift. It was a little oasis in the middle of a desert.

So, in the Roman city, on the north side here, or in the south side rather, on the top of the slide, there was everything Roman. There were theaters, there was a hippodrome. These have been uncovered, there were Roman baths, there were two Olympic-sized pools, and the two palaces that Herod built. And he built a bridge between the two palaces over a huge wadi, a huge dry riverbed, so that when it rained in the spring in the hill country, they would all be treated to a great show when the wadi filled with a torrent of raging water.

Here are some other pictures from Jericho. This is looking east; you can see a little bit of the oasis. Here's a sycamore tree, by the way, in Jericho, undoubtedly not the one that Zacchaeus climbed, but it gives you a feel for what that was like. And here are some of the pools in Herod's palace that they've uncovered and excavated. And there's his palace; there's the wadi, you see, we're on the one side of the palace, or one palace, I should say, is on this side, then the wadi, and then on the other side another palace, and there was a bridge across this span so the guests could watch the raging waters flow beneath them. This was a playground for the rich and famous of Herod's day. And don't forget that Jesus Himself had family history in Jericho. One of his ancestors, a woman named Rahab, you remember, centuries before was saved in Israel's defeat of the city of Jericho. Rahab the harlot, who became truly converted and who became one of the ancestors of Jesus Christ.

So, they came to Jericho. Notice verse 46 says, "And as He was leaving Jericho...." Compare that to Matthew and Matthew says essentially the same thing in his account, as they were going out from Jericho. For many years, critics of the Bible have loved these two statements because they appear on face value to contradict Luke. In Luke 18:35, in Luke's account, he says all of this happened with Bartimaeus as they were approaching Jericho.

Now, there are reasonable solutions to this problem. The one that appears the most likely to me has to do with those two cities. You remember? On the bottom end here, we have the ancient city, and up in the middle of the slide, up toward the top, you have the Roman city that Herod

built. It seems likely that Matthew and Mark are referring to Jesus leaving the ancient city, and they're about a mile apart. So, Luke is referring to His approaching the Roman city that was just recently built. So, between the two Jerichos is probably where this story occurs. And when you think about it, it made great sense. Not only did this beggar get travelers passing through Jericho, but by being between the two Jerichos, he even got those permanent residents of Jericho that were going back and forth between the two cities to do business, to get water, and so forth.

Verse 46 says, "And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd...." Now, who's this large crowd? Well, it's a caravan; obviously, there's Jesus and the twelve. There are also the other disciples from Galilee. We already met some of them, or were reminded of some of them back earlier in 10:32, those who were fearful for Jesus as He struck out for Jerusalem. We're told a little more about them over in chapter 15. Look back in 15:40.

At the crucifixion we read,

"There were ... *some* women looking on from a distance, among whom *were* Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and *there were* many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem."

So, there was a group of disciples beside the twelve who traveled with Jesus, and they're included here as well. So, Jesus and the twelve, these other disciples from Galilee are traveling with them. In addition, they were accompanied by pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for Passover. And in addition to that (as they went through the old city of Jericho), they probably picked up some stragglers, some curious people from the old city who just were wondering what was going on and were at least going to stay with them through the new city, the Roman city of Jericho. So that's the crowd.

Verse 46 says, as they were "... leaving, Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar *named* Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road." Matthew tells us there were two beggars, but both Mark and Luke focus on one of them, probably the more vocal of the two. So, two beggars, sitting by the road, begging. It's pretty matter of fact, pretty pedestrian in

the ancient world. Sadly, it was an all-too-common sight in those times. Being totally blind is hard in any era, but being blind in the first century was a truly desperate situation.

It's true that the Old Testament law had made provisions for the blind. It had commanded that they not be taken advantage of, Leviticus 19 said, "You shall not curse a deaf man, nor [should you] place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall ... [fear] ... your God; I am ... [Yahweh]." You don't take advantage of those disabilities. In Deuteronomy 27 one of the curses is, "'Cursed is he who misleads a blind *person* on the road.' And all the people ... [together were to] ... say, 'Amen.'"

God took very seriously the limitations of those who were blind. But even with this provision, even with this demand, there were still in the ancient world very few jobs that a blind person could do. So, most of the blind in the first century were reduced to begging, a life of begging. Sometimes there was even more than that involved, because there was a darker side to being blind in the first century. There were several Old Testament texts that the rabbis had misunderstood (had misinterpreted), and from those texts they had concluded that all blindness was the judgment of God.

And so, they taught that, and it became absolutely pervasive. So pervasive that even Jesus' disciples, you remember in John 9 about six months before this, when they were in Jerusalem and they saw the blind man, they asked Jesus, so who sinned, this man or his parents? Obvious to them, somebody sinned, and this is God's judgment for him to be blind. And Jesus said, neither; this man is blind to demonstrate the glory of God. And He later, of course, healed him.

So, that was the idea - that was what their thinking was like. But it certainly wasn't Jesus' thinking. Jesus had great compassion for the blind. In Luke 7:21 we read this general summary of His ministry, "... He cured many *people* of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many *who were* blind." These two blind beggars were locked into a life of desperation in the first century. Mark focuses on just one of them, and he even tells us his name. It was Bartimaeus, and his father's name, he's the son of Timaeus, which is really what the Aramaic word "Bartimaeus" means. Apparently, Bartimaeus (because he's mentioned by name), was known to Peter and to others in the early church. We'll talk more about that in a little bit.

But every day, poor Bartimaeus would pull on his cloak, and tap his cane along, finding his way down the familiar street out to the gate of Jericho, or somewhere there between the two cities, find his place with the others who were begging, sit down for a day to simply plead for compassion from those who walked past. That was his life.

It was especially important for him to be there at this time of the year because he was sitting by the road to Jerusalem as pilgrims headed to Passover. This was the best time of year for a beggar. So, here is a man living in quiet desperation. His desperation is measured by the fact that he's doomed to sit here and to do this every day for the rest of his life. And his desperation may be measured by the very fact that he was in Jericho. You know it's possible that Bartimaeus was born and lived in Jericho.

It's also possible that at some point in his life he had traveled to Jericho in hopes of finding there a cure for his blindness. Why do I say that? Because Strabo, the Greek historian, refers to the balsam trees that were in Jericho. And he mentions that those balsam trees had medicinal properties, and specifically, he says this, the balsam was "a wonderful remedy for incipient cataract and dimness of vision." That was what was believed in the ancient world. It's very possible that Bartimaeus came to Jericho in the desperate hopes of finding there some cure for his blindness. But there was none to be found in the balsam trees, and so he sat by the side of the road and begged. Regardless of why he came to Jericho, there he is in desperate need of divine mercy.

And that brings us, secondly, to a desperate cry for Christ's mercy. Bartimaeus was just sitting there with his blind friend by the side of the road between the two Jerichos, begging. But then he heard a huge crowd coming toward him. Luke tells us, "Now hearing a crowd going by, he *began* to inquire what this was." You can just see him in the quizzical expression on his face as he hears all of this happening. A larger crowd than has come by in recent memory - all of these we've just described, together. He hears the hubbub; he hears children run past, as they've been caught up in all of this in the old city of Jericho. And somebody brushes past him, and he reaches out and grabs their garment, and he says, "wait a minute, tell me, what is all this? What does it mean?" He inquires what this was. They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

Now look at verse 47, “When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’” *Cry out*, it’s a loud, urgent call. Bartimaeus had no way to work his way through the crowd to Jesus, so he determined to be heard over the crowd. But what he yells; what he cries out, is truly remarkable. In the Greek text, the order is somewhat reversed. He says, “Son of David, Jesus, Kyrie Elieson!” “Have mercy on me!” It’s remarkable. “Jesus, Son of David” - this was both a confession of faith in Christ, and it was a cry for, and an expectation of help from Him.

Notice the title he uses for Jesus, “Son of David.” This is the first time we’ve met this title in this gospel. It is a Messianic title; it is a title for the Messiah. If you doubt that, there’s several ways we know that. The scribes and Pharisees, even in the passage that we saw this morning, the Triumphal Entry, the scribes and Pharisees were angry when Jesus allowed the children at that point of entry to refer to Him as the Son of David, because it was a Messianic title. It really goes back to 2 Samuel. In 2 Samuel 7, God had promised David that one of his sons, one of his descendants, would sit on his throne forever. And so, they understood, the Jews certainly understood that “Son of David” was a reference to that special Son of David who was to come, the one who would sit on David’s throne forever, the Messiah.

Look back at Matthew 12, and you get a glimpse of the mindset about this title. Matthew 12:22,

Then a demon-possessed man *who was* blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and
He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. [now watch this, verse 23]
All the crowds were amazed, and [they] were saying, “This man cannot be the
Son of David, can he?”

You see what’s happening? They see Jesus’ power;, they see His healing miracles and they begin to think, “is it possible that this Man is the Messiah?” And immediately of course, the Pharisees have to put a squelch on that, so in verse 24, when ... [they] “... heard *this*, they said, “This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.” No, He’s not the Messiah, the reason He has this power is because He’s in league with the devil.

But the title, very clearly the people understood to be Messianic. You see the same thing in Mark 12. Look back with me in Mark's Gospel. Mark 12:35. Jesus is in the temple during the Passion Week, Tuesday of the Passion Week.

... [He] ... *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, "How *is it that* the scribes say that the ... [Messiah] ... is the son of David? [They understood this] David himself said in the Holy Spirit, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I ... [MAKE] ... YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET. David himself calls, ... [the Messiah] ... 'Lord'; so in what sense is ... [Messiah] ... David's ... son?"

He is, of course, is highlighting the true nature of Himself, that He is divine, He's not simply a descendent of David, He is over David, He transcends David. But you get the point again that the title, Son of David, was linked to the Messiah.

So, this blind man is yelling out, "Messiah, have mercy on me!" Now, don't miss the irony of this. A blind man, and in this case two blind men, sitting by the side of the road begging, can see what most of the people with sight in Israel can't see. That Jesus of Nazareth is, in fact, the Messiah. Peter and the rest of the twelve had begun to see this, only slowly. That's what led to Peter's great confession back in chapter 8. But no one else in Mark's Gospel has seen this, it's remarkable!

Helen Keller, who was both blind and deaf, was once asked if it was terrible to be blind. Her response was, "Better to be blind and see with your heart, than to have two good eyes and see nothing." That was true of all the people around Jesus. But here are two blind men who see, they understand.

So, here's Bartimaeus, yelling out his confidence that Jesus is Israel's long-awaited Messiah, and he's asking Him for mercy. The Greek word for *mercy*, by the way, means to be greatly concerned about someone in need, to have compassion, to show pity. He was asking Jesus, whom he believed to be Messiah, to look on his helpless, hopeless condition, and to be concerned about him, to show pity on him, to have compassion on him. And by the way, he had every reason to expect this. Isaiah 61 had predicted that the Messiah would open the eyes of the blind, both spiritual blindness and physical blindness. And that was his great hope. "Messiah,

Jesus, have mercy on me!” By the way, Jesus never corrects his view of Him, but He lets the title, the Messianic title, Son of David, stand.

So, he’s yelling out at Jesus. You can just see the scene, can’t you? You can see the drama, the pathos of it. This is his one chance, and by the way, it was his one chance. Jesus would never pass this way again. And he realizes the crowd is pressing, it’s huge, he needs to be heard, and you can just see the pathos in this man who cannot get himself to Jesus. Don’t miss that point. He cannot get himself from where he is to Jesus. And so, all he can do is cry out, and he continues to cry out.

And then something very unexpected, totally unexpected happens. Verse 48, “Many were sternly telling him to be quiet ...” Literally, “be silent!” Now, who are these people, these “many” people? Well, Luke tells us that they were those who led the way, in Luke’s Gospel he says that. We can’t be sure, who for sure they are, but probably these are people from Jericho who heard Jesus was passing through, and they’re out in front, sort of gathering with the crowd, announcing, “Yeah, Jesus is here, someone famous is here in Jericho.” It’s possible they even knew Bartimaeus, since beggars, and especially blind beggars, were considered to be the lowest on the social scale, perhaps they thought it was just below Jesus’ notice.

Regardless of why, they simply rebuked him, the word is, and told him to be silent.

“Bartimaeus, just shut up. He doesn’t have time for you. He doesn’t want to see you. He’s too important a figure to mess with you.” Verse 48, I love this. They’re telling him to be silent. But he kept crying out all the more, “Son of David, Messiah, have mercy on me!” He would not be silenced. Here is a man with a desperate need, making a desperate cry for Jesus’ mercy because he can’t get to Jesus. All he can hope for is that Jesus will reach out to him. And absolutely nothing was going to stand in his way of making Jesus hear that cry of desperation.

Now that brings us to the third part of this great story, not only a desperate need for Christ’s mercy, a desperate cry for Christ’s mercy, but thirdly, a personal experience of Christ’s mercy. He was heard.

Look at verse 49, “And Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him *here*.’” You know as I read this passage over and over again this week, as I studied it, as I thought on it, meditated through it, I

really can't begin to tell you how that phrase stirs my own heart, and it should stir yours as well. Do you remember how determined Jesus has been to get to Jerusalem? Do you remember how He set His face like flint, determined to fulfill His mission on behalf of all who will believe? Here we see Jesus isn't just thinking of us as one big crowd. Instead, He sees those on whom He set His love; those whom the Father has given Him. He sees them individually; He sees their need. Because when He hears one desperate cry, it immediately brings Him to a stop. Have you ever wondered if your Lord hears you when you cry out to Him in your moment of desperation? Here's proof that He does.

When a sinner cries out of his desperation, it's as if Jesus orders the angels of heaven to stop their praises, the instruments of heaven come to silence, and He leans, as it were, over the battlements of heaven to hear that cry. And you see it here. What could have been more important than what Jesus was doing? And yet when He hears that voice, that desperate cry for help, for mercy, from a genuine heart that sees its need; He stops; He listens; He stands still. The whole huge procession quickly grinds to a halt, and Jesus says, "Call him *here*." Luke adds this in Luke 18:40, "... Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him...."

Verse 49, "... So they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you.'" Apparently, some of the same crowd that a moment ago had been telling this blind beggar to be silent, to shut up, have changed their tune. Take courage, cheer up, stand up! And here's the motivation, "He is calling for you." You got to love this response, look at verse 50, "Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus."

Now only Mark mentions this little detail, that he threw aside his outer cloak. It may mean nothing more than this man was eager to get up and get to Jesus. That's possible. But it's possible there is something more, and I think there is. It is April in Jericho. Now I've never been in Jericho in April, but I've been in Jericho in early May, and I can tell you, it was hot, very hot. In fact, my most vivid memory of Jericho, and Sheila will tell you, is going into the little snack area there hoping desperately for something cold to drink and finding a lukewarm can of Coca-Cola. And being devastated by this, and so walking over to the counter, and I'm not making this up, walking over to the counter and bartering with the person working there for some ice. And all

the ice she had in the whole shop was a tiny little bag, a sandwich bag, sealed with a few ice cubes. And I said, I'll take it! It was hot.

So, I can promise you that Bartimaeus did not need to wear his cloak. So, it's possible, and we can't know this for sure, that he was using it in front of him, and this was a common practice in the ancient world, still is in parts of the world where there are beggars today, he was using it in front of him as a place to catch and keep the coins and money that were tossed his way.

Regardless, a poor, blind beggar would never have let his cloak and his coins get out of his hands. But he just cast them both aside, he just throws them to the side, and he jumped up, and he came to Jesus. More specifically, as Luke says, he was brought to Jesus.

Look at verse 51, "And answering him, Jesus said, 'What do you want Me to do for you?'" Now, Jesus already knew what Bartimaeus needed. After all, in response to their cries, Jesus had commanded that he and his friend be brought to Him. He knew that they couldn't come on their own. But Jesus wants Bartimaeus, who is at this point apparently the spokesman for the two of them, to ask. "What do you want me to do?" Why? Why does Jesus want Bartimaeus to say it? Because in saying it, Bartimaeus will publicly confess his faith in Jesus.

Look at verse 51, "... the blind man said to Him, 'Rabboni, *I want to regain my sight!*'" *Rabboni* is an Aramaic word that's similar to rabbi, but it's more intensive. A leading Greek lexicon says that it has the idea of "my Lord, my Master," you are my teacher, not in some detached, academic sense. You are my Lord and my Master. That's why both Matthew and Luke use the word *Kurios*, Lord. *Rabboni* is used only one other time, in the New Testament. It's in John 20 when Mary sees Jesus after the resurrection, and she turns to Him, and she says, "Rabboni." He says, "Rabboni, my Lord, my Master, my Teacher, I want to regain my sight." There may be an implication in the word *regain* that at one point this man could see, but we really can't be sure because the same Greek word was used to the man born blind in John 9. Regardless, he just says, "please Lord, please Rabboni, I want to see."

Here's a blind man who spiritually sees better than anyone around him. But he wants to see with his physical eyes. And his request is really a profession of faith in Christ, a profession of faith that Christ can do this for him if He chooses. No doubt he's heard the story that happened six months' before, just over the hill, seventeen miles away in Jerusalem, when Jesus healed a blind

man, and it made a huge stir at the Feast. Spread like wildfire, I'm sure among the blind community in Israel. He's thought about it, he's meditated on it, he's longed for a chance to meet Him, and apparently concluded that He must be the Messiah. After all, doesn't Isaiah promise that when the Messiah comes, He will have the power to heal the blind? He's waited for this his whole life.

Verse 52, "... Jesus said to him, "'Go; your faith has made you well.'" Now when you put the three gospel records together, Jesus' interaction with these two blind men, Bartimaeus being the spokesman, goes something like this: Matthew tells us Jesus was moved with compassion in response to their request. And then He touched their eyes, just like with the blind men back in chapter 8, Jesus is communicating that He plans to answer their request. And then He spoke, "Receive your sight," according to Luke, and they were healed. The One who spoke the worlds into existence speaks sight into their blind eyes.

And then He tells them, you're free to go, you've been healed. But He says something more than that; He says something much more important. Notice He says, "... your faith has made you ... [whole]." Literally, the Greek text says, your faith has saved you, exactly the same word that we see throughout the New Testament for spiritual rescue, for salvation.

When He says your faith has saved you, He doesn't mean faith has some saving capacity. He means God has saved you in response to your faith. Faith is merely the instrument by which we get that rescue. Faith is like the cup we use to drink of salvation. God is the One who gives spiritual rescue, but He does it in response to faith. He says, "... your faith has saved you." Saved in this context probably has a double meaning, physically healed, and spiritually saved. These two blind beggars get more than they bargained for that day.

By the way, whenever this expression is used, "... your faith has saved you," in the gospel records, it seems to indicate that the person got more than healing - they got spiritual rescue. These two blind beggars just wanted to be able to see and they got that, but they were also spiritually rescued from their sins, the very thing that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to accomplish. As one writer says, what was happening in this man's body was merely the outward picture of what had happened in his soul.

Now, that brings us to the fourth part of this account, a delight in Christ's mercy. Look at the second half of verse 52, "Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following ... [Jesus] ... on the road." In a moment's time, he went from seeing nothing to absolutely perfect vision. These two men had little or nothing to go back to Jericho for, and whatever was there they left it, and they began following Jesus on the road. They joined the caravan on the way to Jerusalem to worship the God Who saves; pictured in the Passover celebration and fulfilled in the coming death of the One who had just healed them. Luke adds one more detail. Luke writes, "... he regained his sight and ... [began following Him, glorifying] ... God. [And] When all the people saw it, they ... gave praise to God." What a remarkable story.

But there's a bigger point here than two blind men being healed and walking along behind Jesus on the Jericho Road. Do you remember where I began? This story is a true story. Real blindness, real healing, but it is also a kind of living parable about how anyone can benefit from what Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem to do. So, in this story then we learn how to come to Jesus to get the spiritual rescue we so much need. We see ourselves reflected in the picture of this blind beggar.

First of all, if you are going to come to Jesus, like Bartimaeus you have to recognize your truly spiritually blind, helpless, and hopeless condition. You have to recognize your situation. By calling out, "Have mercy on me," Bartimaeus was admitting that. He was acknowledging his own misery, his own unworthiness, his own helplessness. "There's nothing I can do. I am reduced to begging for everything, and I'm begging that the Messiah as He walked past the road, will come to me because I can't even come to Him." You must recognize your spiritual blindness, your spiritual helplessness, your spiritual hopelessness.

That's why in Matthew 5 the first beatitude, the first path on the way to the kingdom, is what? "Blessed are the ... [beggars] ... in spirit." Blessed, Jesus said, are those who acknowledge their spiritual poverty. That you've got nothing God wants. You have nothing to offer Him; you are helpless and hopeless, and He cannot receive you apart from grace. That's where it begins. If you want to come to Jesus, you have to start there. You've got to give up everything you think will earn you something with God. If you think someday you can stand before God, and He asks "why should I let you into My heaven?" And you say, "because I (fill in the blank)," then you aren't there yet, unless it's "because I trust solely in Jesus Christ." If you put anything else in that

blank, then you haven't gotten to step one. Bartimaeus understood this. He understood all he could do was cry out for help.

Secondly, if you're going to come to Jesus, you must acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth, the historical person who was and claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God, that He is all that He claimed to be, and that He is your only source of help. Bartimaeus got there. He got to the fact in his own mind, that Jesus of Nazareth, the one that they were telling him was passing by, was in fact the long-awaited Messiah of God, He was the One promised. He was all He claimed and that He was his only hope. If you are going to come to Jesus, you've got to give up every other hope. You've got to give up every other hope of doing anything that will earn your way into God's favor; you've got to come to Him as your only source of help.

Thirdly, then you must place your complete trust and confidence in Jesus alone. Bartimaeus had a strong confidence in Jesus. He had a confidence in Christ's willingness to help him, that's why he kept yelling even though he was rebuked. He kept yelling and yelling because he had a confidence that Christ would be willing to help him if he could just be heard above the crowd. And he also had confidence and trust in Christ's ability to help him. "If I can just be heard, He can take away my blindness. He can deal with my problem." If you're going to come to Christ, you've got to put your trust and confidence in Him alone, in the fact that He's willing to help you if you'll come, and in the fact that He's able to help you.

Number four, if you're going to come to Jesus, you've got to cry out and keep on crying out for Him to show you mercy. Ultimately, Paul says, that for someone to be saved, they must hear the message about Christ and what? Call upon Him. That's prayer - calling out to God.

There's a lot of bad teaching about simply saying a prayer, repeating a prayer, and that's some sort of magic, and you're into the kingdom. That's wrong, that's bad, that's easy believism. But folks, ultimately salvation comes in response to the expression of faith. And where's there's faith there will be a calling upon the name of the Lord. There will be just what Bartimaeus did, 'Have mercy on me, O God!' It will be like the tax-gatherer at the temple beating on his chest saying, "God be merciful to me the sinner." And oh, and by the way, in a day of instant everything, the Puritans use to explain and teach that you just keep crying out. God will hear.

By the way, salvation consists in two calls. Do you see it here? God calling the sinner in and through the gospel, that's the effectual call, and the sinner calling out for God's mercy. There's a lesson in sovereign grace here. Because Bartimaeus couldn't come to Jesus, he didn't have the ability to come, neither do you, neither do I. All he could do was throw himself on the mercy of God and cry out, 'God, show me mercy.' Jesus came to Bartimaeus because Bartimaeus couldn't come to Him. He had Bartimaeus brought to Him. There's a powerful picture in that.

Number five, expect opposition to seeking Jesus. You get it from the crowd; you get it from friends; you'll even get it from well-meaning Christians who will tell you, 'Oh, listen, you're already a Christian, listen, don't worry about it.'

Number six, if you're going to come to Jesus, understand this: true salvation initiates a lifetime of following Jesus and seeking to bring glory to God. That's what happens to this man. He begins following Jesus and the Greek tense has the idea of, he started following, and he kept following. He followed Him on the road. James Edwards, one commentator writing on this passage, says, faith that does not lead to discipleship is not saving faith. Whoever asks of Jesus must be willing to follow Jesus even on the uphill road to the cross. If you want to come to Jesus, you're not just getting half of Him; you're not just getting Him as Savior, and oh, by the way, I'll wait for that other part, Lord. You get the full package. If you want spiritual rescue, you get "Rabboni, my Master, my Lord."

Number 7, and I love this one. Jesus welcomes all who truly come to Him. Even if others don't think He will, if they don't think He'll care. Remember there were two men saved in Jericho that day from opposite ends of the social spectrum. And nobody in the middle thought Jesus would want to have anything to do with either of them. One was a blind beggar and his friend, and the other was a wealthy tax collector named Zaccheus, recorded in Luke's Gospel. Same day, same town, same venue. Nobody thought either of them was somebody Jesus would want. One rich, one poor, one prosperous and successful, the other a beggar, one sighted and one blind, but both in desperate need of spiritual rescue, and Jesus finds them both. So, Jesus heads to Jerusalem here with another one of the many for whom He was going to die, in tow behind Him.

Here's the amazing thing, think about this. This blind beggar likely became one of the eyewitnesses of Jesus' death and resurrection the following week. It's likely, and scholars argue

that since he was known to Peter, that he was a well-known member of the Jerusalem church. Bartimaeus probably became a part of the Jerusalem church. He was there; he saw the crucifixion; he saw the resurrection; he was probably one of the 500 that Paul refers to that gathered with the other disciples in Galilee after the resurrection. His blind eyes saw alright, they saw it all. And he kept following Jesus on the road, glorifying God for his salvation.

May each of us join this helpless, blind beggar in coming to Jesus and then after coming to Jesus, following Jesus on the road glorifying God throughout the rest of our lives. Bartimaeus' faith was rewarded, his faith became sight, and the first thing he saw was the face of Jesus Christ. May we live a life of faith until someday we close our eyes in death and awaken when faith has become sight.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for this picture of true repentance, of true faith, manifested in the heart of one who was just as desperate physically and spiritually as all of us are spiritually, apart from Your grace. Father, thank you for the lesson, thank you most of all for what we see in our Lord, that in spite of the fact that His face was set for Jerusalem to do what He'd come to do, when He heard one desperate cry from one helpless, worthless sinner everything stopped. Father, thank you, thank you, that He's still the same today.

In Jesus' name. Amen.