

The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46-52

Mark 10:46-11:1

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." 50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. 51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." 52 "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road. NIV

Mark planted a flag here which signals to the church how the Lord Jesus works in the lives of people for their ultimate good with this one proviso - to pick up the good we must put down the hindrance

The Final Part of the Journey to Jerusalem

Jesus was on the last lap of his journey on earth and it took Him through Jericho. There's something about coasting home on the last lap. The downhill run! Factories run down just before holidays. Workers tend to slow down late Friday afternoon when they finish for the weekend.

God was different here. By going to Jerusalem via Jericho Jesus faced a pull uphill to Jerusalem - the final destination. We are created in the image of God

but spoiled by the fall and are different from God in many ways. One difference is the way in which humans tend to want the easy way wherever possible. That's why many who think they are saved are not. They've come to God an easy way without sincere repentance. They have never put down an old life to take up the new. Meanwhile they are like tares among the wheat, hard to tell from the true Christian until judgment day when the truth will be known.

The Christian Life is Not a Coast Home

Also, the Christian life is not a coast home. It means taking up a cross and enduring trials. It may even mean experiencing suffering and trouble. Much of what we encounter is placed in our path by God's instruction or permission to test us. Not to enable God to see what we're like - He already knows - but to enable us see the way in which God will care for us and love us through such difficult times.

I know from my own experience that the Christian walk can often involve a day to day battle with temptations towards ways which are contrary to the way the Holy Spirit wants to lead. I conclude that the Christian life is not for the faint hearted and no amount of prayer ministry will remove the obligation God places upon us to endure such things. Like they say in the world "If you don't like the heat, get out of the kitchen". Sadly, though, some do. Only a few nights ago Jean and I were discussing with friends the number of people we knew years ago who seemed to be so enthusiastic for God but who now, apparently, "Walk with Him no more".

Also, the Christian life does not necessary become easier with the passing of time even though one gains more wisdom along the way. I read recently of one man who had concluded that to the level we repent, to the same level God will use us and to the level that we empty ourselves, to the same level God will fill us with His anointing. It's an interesting concept and, to me, is an example of wisdom gained along the way. In the world of espionage, the most valuable defectors are those who hold the most information. Similarly, the bigger prize for Satan are Christians who are very experienced - and experienced Christians find that there is a battle which shows no sign of ending soon against Satan's attempts to pull them away from following after God.

Jesus was on His Way Out of Jericho

Then they *came to Jericho*. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, *were leaving the city*, a blind man.....,

This was "Jericho new town" having a population of about one hundred thousand people. It was a rich and flourishing town, having a considerable trade and many palm trees. It had been rebuilt some years before some distance to the south east of Jericho old town which had been destroyed in the days of Joshua. It seems Jericho new town was not place to stay! They came to Jericho and then left. There are places we don't like to stay. Dentist, School, work, in the rain. Do you ever have the experience of going to visit a town that you don't know very well? You park the car, stand at the pay and display machine and decide that you probably need two hours. Then, twenty minutes later, there you are back at the car saying "Well there's not much to see here

and so we might as well go somewhere else”. However, you can’t get your parking fee back.

Who do we like to spend time with? Those who like us and understand us and those who enjoy our company. Those who love us. Some years ago I heard Gerald Coates tell about how he was bored in a church service at one time and he said to the Lord something like “Lord, this is boring, I’m going home” to which the Lord replied “Its ok for you Gerald, I have to stay.” I wonder how long the Lord would *really* want to stay here today?

What a pity when the Lord *has* to stay simply because He has promised to. Here’s the promise:-

Matt 18:20

20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

(NIV)

How much more will God feel welcome and want to stay among those who love Him.

Bartimaeus at the Roadside

Actually, we do know that Jesus called on Zacchaeus during His brief visit but He still didn’t seem to stay long. As Jesus was leaving Jericho, Bartimeaus sat at the side of the road. He was blind but we don’t know much else. He might have had lots of friends but no one led him to Jesus. He might have rich relations. If he did I guess they weren’t generous to him. He obviously had no

job and all he could do was beg. If he lacked self esteem it wouldn't be surprising but, strangely enough people with such disabilities often cope amazingly well. He was a thinker though. He could hear, and he had heard of Jesus.

Today he was going to meet the man whom he had only heard about until now and he was going to find that Jesus doesn't value a person on the basis of their worth to society or their usefulness in the Kingdom or their social class or good manners or good education. He just values people. People tend not to value themselves on the basis of their worth in God's estimation but on their worth when compared to other people - and they live according to an equation which looks like this:-

My worth = my performance + other people's opinions of me.

(with acknowledgement to "The Search for Significance" by Robert McGee)

People living to that equation will rarely perform to their expectations and will not easily accept the favorable opinions of others. Hence there is a risk that such people will live with low self-esteem for much of the time. God doesn't value us on the basis of such an equation – He just loved us enough to send Jesus to die for us and His love for us never fails whatever other people's opinions of us may be.

Jesus Son of David

Bartimeaus sensed a group of people approaching. Once he was told who it was, he began to shout. But he didn't shout *Jesus of Nazareth* have mercy on me. When he heard it was Jesus of Nazareth he shouts *Jesus Son of David* have mercy on me.

As soon as Bartimeaus began to shout, some told him to stop. Why? Didn't they like the noise?

My feeling is that they told him to stop not because he was shouting but because of WHAT he was shouting.

What was it again ? Jesus *Son of David* have mercy on me.

Why? Jesus had a reputation. He healed the blind.

Matt 12:22-23

22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.

23 All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" (NIV)

Isa 35:4-6

4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."

5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

**6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.
(NIV)**

Later on in Mark 12:35-36 Jesus Himself talks of Christ (The Messiah) being the son of David.

There is a difference between Jesus *of Nazareth* and Jesus the *Son of David*. Jesus of Nazareth is the carpenters son, a good man, a teacher, a friend of sinners a human being who rubbed shoulders with all and sundry. People could have a horizontal friendly relationship with Him. But Jesus of Nazareth is also Son of David. God himself, One to be revered, one who is awesome, the creator of the universe, the One that makes Satan tremble, the Almighty and all powerful. He is one who has the highest name and who deserves the highest place in our lives, the greatest respect.

Maybe the people in Jericho had been warned in synagogue meetings not to recognize Jesus as the Son of David and those who heard Bartimaeus shouting out those words were afraid of what the consequences might be if they weren't seen trying to put a stop to it.

One of the problems in the wider church is that many have a relationship with Jesus of Nazareth yet do not honour Him as Jesus the Son of David. Happy to be friends with Jesus but little time to worship with a heart filled with love and

respect for a holy God. Yes Jesus is our friend, we can have a brotherly relationship with Him, but He is God and also deserves the greatest respect. He is our Lord and our God

Bartimaeus Rebuked

Going back to Bartimaeus, note who it was who rebuked him

Luke 18:39

39 Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (NIV)

There is a lesson here for leaders. God loves it when those who love Him are enthusiastic in worship and prayer. Therefore, if any leader decides to quench Holy Spirit-driven enthusiasm, or enthusiastic worship coming from someone deeply in love with Jesus, God is unlikely to be supportive of such a leadership decision. God doesn't seem to object to His people showing exuberant love for Jesus.

To his credit, Bartimaeus would not be put off. He shouted all the more. It seems that God loves it if we don't fall at the first fence when seeking Him and don't easily give up when praying. Ask, seek and knock was a principle taught by Jesus early on in His ministry

Matt 7:7-8

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. NIV

and He also taught that principle in the story of the widow and the judge where the widow kept asking for justice until in the end the judge says.

Luke 18:4-5

“Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!” NIV

So we need to keep on asking. Don't give up. Don't easily be put off.

Jesus Hears Bartimaeus and Hears us too

Over all the noise of the crowd, Jesus heard Bartimaeus. If he was shouting, its likely that many others would be doing the same but Jesus heard Bartimaues. Jesus stopped - and Bartimaeus was still shouting.

Do you ever wonder how God can hear your prayer when millions more must be praying at the same time? And surely, when you take a good look at yourself you can think of reasons why God might well hear the prayers of other Christians but why should He listen to you? Well, however He does it, He does hear and however you might feel about yourself, you are no less worthy of God's attention than any of the other Christians who are praying.

Jesus said “Call him”. Bartimaeus probably didn't even hear Jesus say that, he was too busy shouting. Even when those around told him it was his lucky day he was probably still shouting. He just wouldn't give up.

Putting Down the Hindrance

Bartimaeus threw down his cloak because his cloak would be a hindrance. He was blind and the last thing he wanted was get entangled on something he was holding on to and couldn't see and risk falling flat on his face. We can learn from Bartimaeus here. There are entanglements in life summed up in Heb 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. NIV

There are hindrances which we encounter and which can bog us down if we let them. I know from praying for others that there is sometimes one particular issue which seems to hold a person back and which needs to be laid down sometimes after repentance depending on what it is. Sometimes Jean and I have actually suggested to someone receiving prayer ministry that they go through the motion of putting the thing on the floor as we are praying to symbolize the laying down talked about in Hebrews 12. Once that has been done, it's then a matter of getting into the habit of not picking it up again and not letting the thing become a hindrance once more when walking with God.

Jesus asks Bartimaeus a simple question

Mark 10:51-52

51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

It's at this point where we need to refocus on what must be the most important message of this story.

Although we can learn some principles of the Christian life from the story of Bartimaeus, Bartimaeus wasn't calling on Jesus because he wanted to learn about such principles. He wasn't seeking some help in trying to understand the theological basis for faith under Mosaic law. Neither was he trying to decide if God responds best to those who ask, to those who ask and seek or to those who ask seek and knock and neither did Bartimaeus ask Jesus to explain the principles of laying down sins which so easily beset us.

Bartimaeus was blind, he believed Jesus could heal him like He had healed others, he asked and Jesus did it. Healing it was a major part of the ministry of Jesus then

.... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. Acts 10:38 NIV

and still is a major part of the ministry of Jesus now. It's just that He isn't walking the streets *personally* doing it - He does it through Christians who pray in His Name and who are anointed with the same Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus.

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. John 14:12 NIV

We should be continuing that ministry and, actually, most of us are doing it quite a bit of the time and we shouldn't give up. Even if we don't see instant results when we pray we still shouldn't give up.

So whilst it is possible to relate the story almost as if it's a parable illustrating aspects of the Christian life, it's really about the ability and willingness of Jesus to heal blindness.

When Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted, Bartimaeus didn't have to scratch around for some theologically correct form of words to respond to the Master, he went straight to the point. He just put things simply to the Lord and we can do the same. We can't see Him, we may not hear His voice with our human ears but we come to Jesus in faith and say simply what it is we want Him to do.

Simplicity of Prayer

A friend of mine used to speak at many different churches and often started out early on Sunday mornings to travel long distances to a church. One day, on a very frosty morning, he traveled around a bend in the road on a hill and as he did so, his car skidded and then rolled over. He later said "As that was happening, I didn't begin to pray for missionaries in Africa or pray for my home church or begin going through a recommended prayer pattern, I just

cried out ‘Lord help me’”. Sometimes, that’s all we need to pray and God responds to our simplicity as he did with Bartimaeus.

52 "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road. (NIV)

Prayer is not a complex exercise involving hard-to-remember incantations and technical methods of approach. The Lord put it quite simply and said “Ask and it shall be given to you”. That’s not hard to understand – though we sometimes make heavy weather of it. Often it’s because we feel that God is more interested in hearing prayers from others rather than prayers from ourselves. All Bartimaeus did was ask. In fact, he shouted what he wanted and that didn’t seem to bother the Lord either. So if we whisper our prayers God hears them - and if we shout He still listens. He’s not scared!

Praying to One We Have Never Seen

Bartimaeus could never see Jesus before. We can’t be sure if he’d ever heard Jesus teaching but, as far as we know, it seems that he had only heard about Jesus from others. In Jericho, even though Jesus was near he couldn’t see Him and couldn’t hear him. Others had to tell him Jesus was calling him. Even when Jesus spoke, it could have been anyone. The whole thing could be a deception to play a cruel trick and Bartimaeus wouldn’t have known. Fortunately for Bartimaeus, it wasn’t a cruel trick, it really was his “Lucky day” as put by The Message bible.

I have never seen God with my physical eyes or heard God with physical, ears. Just about everything that I know I has been learned from the Bible or from teaching in church, from friends, books, tapes, videos and conferences and from Holy Spirit inspired experiences. But I've still to see and hear Jesus with physical eyes and ears.

I think Jesus finds it very special when we come to Him not having seen Him and yet being prepared to make known to Him what we want Him to do. That is the first step of faith He is looking for and we should look for opportunities to take that step. Bartimaeus just asked the once and his prayer was answered. That may happen for us but we may need to ask and keep on asking and not give up.

We don't know about Bartimaeus after that. The last thing we read about him is that Bartimaeus followed Jesus after he got healed. That's a good lesson. Some get what they pray for and then kiss the Lord goodbye. That could be because he was no more than Jesus of Nazareth to them. Jesus the friend and buddy. God old matey (not God Almighty) But to the one who loves and honours Jesus, Son of David, Son of God, they will want to continue to follow the one who loves and cares for them like the Darlene Zschech song says:-

My Jesus my Saviour Lord there is none like You.

All of my days I want to praise the wonders of Your mighty love.

And, besides, the Lord gives good things again and again to those who follow Him along life's road.