

PRAISE BY EXPECTING AND FOLLOWING

DEVOTIONAL READING: Mark 10:46-52

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:46-52

I. The Blind Beggar

Mark 10:46-48

⁴⁶ Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “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!”

46a. Jesus' encounter with Bartimaeus took place during Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem for Passover. He left Galilee and crossed the Jordan River to the east side, a region now referred to as Transjordan.

Moving south, down the valley, Jesus and his disciples re-crossed the river near *Jericho*. From there they were poised to begin the uphill trek to Jerusalem, a trip of about 15 miles with a rise in elevation exceeding 3,300 feet.

Jericho shows up a few times in the New Testament (Matthew 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43). The city is mentioned much more frequently in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 34:1; 2 Kings 2:4; Jeremiah 39:5). This is especially true of the days when Israel's wanderings in the desert were ending. While the Israelites were camped

across from Jericho, King Balak of Moab called Balaam to curse the people. This backfired spectacularly. The walls of Jericho fell gloriously because of God's help.

The city wasn't rebuilt until the time of Ahab's reign (874–853 BC). And in fulfillment of the curse that Joshua pronounced (Joshua 6:26), King Hiel's first-born and youngest sons both died when the king rebuilt the city (1 Kings 16:34).

46b. As usual, *Jesus* was accompanied by *his disciples*. The *large crowd* consisted of Jewish residents of Galilee making the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover (Mark 10:32).

All would leave Jericho via the western road. This made for a high-traffic area that was an ideal site for someone *begging*. Matthew's telling of this encounter features two unnamed blind men *sitting by the roadside* (Matthew 20:30). Mark focuses on the one whose identity is known, *Bartimaeus*. The prefix “Bar” is Aramaic for the phrase “*son of*.” The verse before us simply clarifies that his father's name was in fact *Timaeus*.

47a. Jesus' reputation clearly had preceded him; Bartimaeus was aware of Jesus' reputation as a miracle worker and healer. Hearing that this was *Jesus of Nazareth* made a difference, since the name Jesus (Hebrew: Joshua) was not uncommon. Though Jesus had been born in Bethlehem, his parents lived in Nazareth and had returned to that

town when Jesus was very young. Throughout his life, therefore, Jesus was known as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Mark 1:24; 10:47).

47b. Bartimaeus was not concerned with social decorum, for he knew this opportunity may never come again. Rather than be quietly content with the city’s enjoyment of a celebrity rabbi passing through, Bartimaeus *began to shout*. As he did, he focused on a very different aspect of Jesus’ heritage by using the phrase *Son of David*.

This address acknowledged *Jesus* to be a descendant of the greatest king in Israel’s history (Matthew 1:1, 6). More importantly, this is a messianic title. The same acclamation was repeated few days later when Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem to the excitement of a great crowd (21:9).

The words of Bartimaeus reveal a heart that entertained a glimmer of hope that the one who had *mercy* on other blind people, expressed in their healing, might choose to heal him also.

Luke teaches that the capacity for restoring sight was a fulfillment of prophecy concerning the Messiah, marking Jesus as that person (Luke 4:18-21). Furthermore, Luke singles out curing blindness specifically in his listing of the mighty works of Jesus, showing how impressive such a cure was considered to be (7:21).

48. A few in the crowd thought Bartimaeus was rude, aggressive, or otherwise socially inept. But before we judge the crowd and put ourselves in a position of superiority, let us think about what we feel when an otherwise peaceful walk around the block is interrupted by a loud homeless person requesting help. The Passover pilgrims were on a spiritual high, perhaps ready to sing some of the joyous “psalms of ascent”—songs that celebrated the long climb to the temple.

But Bartimaeus would not *be quiet* as *many* thought he should. Rather than accommodate, he yelled even louder, shouting directly at Jesus. He didn’t change his plea

but repeated exactly what he’d already been shouting, as though he was never interrupted: *Son of David, have mercy on me!*

II. The Merciful Master

Mark 10:49-52

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.

49a. Jesus’ actions and words quickly changed the tone of the crowd (Mark 10:48). Rather than view *the blind man* as a nuisance to be silenced, *they* changed their reaction to him to one of kindness. They apparently realized that by the man’s securing Jesus’ attention, a potential blessing awaited him.

The Greek imperative translated *cheer up* occurs seven times in the New Testament. The contexts are always those of boldness in terms of doing something.

49b. The first imperative is immediately followed by a second. Telling Bartimaeus to get *on your feet* reveals his seated or prone position as a beggar. The man had not been standing and amplifying his voice. Rather, he had been sitting or lying on the ground, forcing his voice to cut upwards through the noise of the crowd walking past. His cry to Jesus must have been loud indeed!

49c. The phrase *He’s calling you* wraps up a four-fold echo. First, Bartimaeus had called out to Jesus; then the crowd had called to Bartimaeus for silence; then Jesus called for a personal audience with

Bartimaeus; and finally the crowd communicated Jesus' calling to Bartimaeus. Though at this point members of the crowd could have tried to impede not only the blind man but also Jesus, they chose instead to announce Jesus' calling as he commanded it.

Similarly, we today are called to call others to Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20). Though we hope not to stand in the way of those who seek Jesus, sometimes we can be going along our contented way and lose sight of the lost around us. At those times, we must hear Jesus' command to issue the invitation to approach him.

50. The man's garment was his outer *cloak*, perhaps what he was sitting on. It would be his most valuable possession. For him to toss it aside showed his eagerness; every action in this verse indicated faith. Bartimaeus expected *Jesus* to grant him mercy and remove his blindness.

51a. Jesus' question was not posed from lack of knowledge. Most likely, it would have been evident to everyone in the crowd that Bartimaeus, by appearance, was blind. Even if the crowd was unaware, it's impossible for *Jesus* not to have known since he had divine insight. Jesus' question was intended to prompt Bartimaeus to verbalize his need and his faith.

51b. Bartimaeus's answer was straightforward. In receiving his sight he would no longer be an object of pity, a blind man begging for small change, dependent on others to lead him.

Bartimaeus lacked physical sight but had spiritual eyes that saw clearly who Jesus was. For Bartimaeus, Jesus was the prophesied "Son of David" (Mark 10:47-48), the Messiah promised by God.

Bartimaeus's spiritual insight led him to believe that Jesus could heal him from his blindness. Others with perfect physical eyesight were spiritually blind to the true identity of Jesus (Matthew 23:13-26).

We may note that Jesus was addressed by various designations of respect in the New Testament. The most common of those was "Teacher" (John 11:28). Another common address of respect was "Lord" sometimes meaning no more than "sir" (5:7). But the translation *Rabbi* in the verse before us is not in the category of "sir"; rather, the underlying Greek is the word *Rabboni*. John 1:38 and 20:16 help us by explaining that both *Rabbi* and *Rabboni* mean "Teacher."

52a. To become *healed* may have more than physical implications, though that is often the primary sense of the word. The underlying word in the original language can also be translated "saved" (Mark 13:13). This saving can be from death (15:30) to be given new life (Luke 9:24).

Jesus was more than a healer; he came as the Savior. He can save people from physical maladies, but more importantly he also saves souls from sin (Mark 8:35). In Mark, the mocking crowd at the crucifixion challenged Jesus to come down from the cross. When he remained nailed to the wood, they scornfully shouted, "He saved others . . . but he can't save himself" (15:31), thereby revealing a complete misunderstanding of what was happening.

The pattern for Jesus' healing miracles in Mark includes the requirement for a display of *faith*. Some men believed in Jesus so strongly that they dug a hole in a roof to bring their paralyzed friend to him (Mark 2:1-5). A desperate mother approached Jesus to heal her daughter (7:24-30). The father of the demon-possessed boy, confessing his faith as well as his doubts, brought his son to Jesus for healing (9:23-24). Faith was essential in all these accounts.

52b. Although Jesus had just said "Go," Mark ends the story of Bartimaeus by having him join Jesus along the road. An interesting contrast is Mark 5:18-20. There a man healed from demonization desired to accompany Jesus, but Jesus forbade him.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

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Into the Lesson

What was a time where you experienced a harrowing “lights out” event?

Today’s lesson gives us a sense of the desperation of one person who experienced physical blindness.

Into the Word

Read Mark 10:46-52. Work in groups to (1) determine whether each statement is true or false, (2) jot a verse reference to indicate where the answer is found, and (3) write a few words that would make false statements become true.

1—Jesus was in Jerusalem when he met Bartimaeus, the man who was blind.

2—Jesus found Bartimaeus in the temple courts.

3—Bartimaeus quietly asked a friend to contact Jesus on his behalf.

4—When the crowd saw Jesus passing by and knew he could help Bartimaeus, they moved in unison to put the two in touch with one another.

5—When Jesus hesitated, the disciples convinced him to talk with Bartimaeus.

6—Jesus told Bartimaeus, “I’m healing you.”

7—Jesus knew Bartimaeus’s need and healed him without further conversation.

8—Jesus said to Bartimaeus, “The disciples will heal you.”

9—Jesus told Bartimaeus to wait 10 days to prove his faith, and then he would be healed.

Into Life

Eyes Wide Open: Summarize each Scripture and circle the passage that you find most convicting in warning of the dangers of spiritual blindness. Be ready to discuss your answer.

Proverbs 4:19	
Matthew 6:22-23	
Matthew 15:12-14	
John 3:19-21	
2 Corinthians 4:4	
Ephesians 4:17-19	
1 Thessalonians 5:1-5	
1 John 2:9-11	

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Physical blindness is temporary; spiritual blindness is eternal.