

"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. 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!" 48 Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 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." 50 Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. 51 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!" 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road." Mark 10:46-52, NAS95.

This event in the life of Christ is well known. One of the greatest of all preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon of London, preached eight different sermons on this incident. The healing of this blind man is unique in the New Testament for the fact that this is the only person healed by Christ in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, whose actual name is recorded, 'Bartimaeus', and also, incidentally, the name of his father. This is the last miracle of healing in Mark's gospel, in fact the writer records just one more attendant kingdom sign of Jesus. We are told where it took place, in the beautiful city of Jericho, 18 miles north-east of Jerusalem.

1. THE PLIGHT OF BARTIMAEUS.

We are told that Bartimaeus was a blind man, sitting by the roadside begging (v.46). What kind of pity party are you holding today?

Bartimaeus was not partially sighted, he was blind. When his mother smiled a smile of encouragement, he could not see it; he could not glimpse the maternal love etched into his mother's face. When a pile of ox dung lay in his path he could not see to step across it. He could not see the ditch, the low-hanging branch, the angry dog. When the night sky above Jericho was bright with a million stars it was all darkness to him. The beauty of birds and butterflies and rainbows and flowers and trees and little children were all withheld from him. At night when he closed his eyes and in the morning when he opened them again it was just the same, darkness. But Bartimaeus was not only blind, he was impoverished. There have always been those born blind whom providence has put in loving homes, whose parents have cared for them, and encouraged their

education so that they have risen to positions of responsibility - the current governor of our state as an example. but this man Bartimaeus was, the blind pauper of Jericho begging for food or pennies to survive, listening for the approaching footsteps of people and crying to them for alms. He had nothing to sell; he didn't have anything to lose. He was utterly dependent on others . . .

More than that, Bartimaeus was marginalized and sidelined, "sitting by the roadside" (v.46). He was not involved in running the affairs of Jericho; he did not sit with the wise men at the gate hearing disputes and passing on his wisdom; he was an illiterate outsider.

Ms. Tenberken, a 34-year-old German woman who has been blind since the age of 12, pursued a master's degree in Tibetan studies in her hometown, Bonn. When she realized that the Braille writing system for the blind did not exist in Tibetan, she developed one - in just two weeks. Braille uses raised dots on a page to create words - users feel the dots to read the page.

Ms. Tenberken then went to Tibet to introduce this new system, knowing that there were no schools to help sightless people in the Himalayan region, which is under Chinese control.

Accompanied by three Tibetans, Ms. Tenberken rode a horse to rural villages. Although the journey was physically tough, she says the hardest part was seeing how blind children were treated. In Tibet, sightless children are often kept isolated and they rarely are educated - some are so ignored that by age four or five they still cannot walk.

"It is because people are embarrassed to have blind people in their family," she says. "They are really ashamed, they think if you are blind you are punished for something you have done in your past life."

The incidence of blindness in Tibet is double the global average. High altitude, heavy sun exposure, and inadequate medical care in remote areas cause a large numbers of vision problems in this mountainous region.

According to official figures, there are 35,000 blind people in Tibet - out of a population of 2.6 million.

2. THE KNOWLEDGE OF BARTIMAEUS.

But Bartimaeus was not a moron; handicapped people can get treated as if they were simpletons when in fact they are intellectually much brighter than the people shouting at them, or talking down to them. The most important thing about Bartimaeus was that he was a man in the image of God. He could think and reason and rationalize, even though all those faculties had been damaged by sin, as they have in all mankind. He'd

He had witnessed none of our Lord's mighty miracles. He'd not had the opportunity to talk with the widow of Nain's son, or with Jairus, or with Mary and her sister Martha and her brother Lazarus. He had never seen dead people raised with a word, and lepers healed with a touch. At one time someone must said to another in his hearing that Jesus had healed a man who was born blind.

What would you do if your dear child had a rare genetic disorder and you heard of an identical child healed by an extraordinary physician? What would you do if you discovered that that physician was coming to your town? What would your love for this little one and your desire to see him or her healthy again constrain you to do? To seek out the doctor and bring your child to him and plead for him to examine him and cure him? Would knowledge and longing make you to act in this way? Of course. You could never sit in front of the TV while your child was hitting his head against the bedroom wall constantly.

See how Bartimaeus responded. There was a "large crowd" Mark tells us (v.46), and when he asked what was happening someone told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. What was his response? Did he think, "Here is a crowd and so there's an opportunity to make some money?" Did he think, "They are on their way to Jerusalem to the Passover feast, religious folk, feeling pious and looking forward to a break from work and seeing friends in the big city as every year. They will be more generous than other people plodding to the fields for a day's reaping and feeling cynical about a man sitting begging." So did he shout to the crowds for alms because he was blind? Did he take advantage of Jesus being there to line his own pocket and make a bit of money? Many do, but Bartimaeus did not. He began to shout. He didn't mutter , "Another religious charlatan; another man claiming to have direct access to God; another false prophet that the gullible will follow; when will they ever learn?" He didn't mutter; he shouted as loudly and as long as he could.

What did he shout? "Jesus". That was the first word on his lips. "Jesus," he cried. This

was the name not chosen by his father but given to the new-born Jesus by a messenger from God: "Thou shalt call his name 'Jesus' for he shall save his people from their sin." The name speaks so eloquently of who this one is and why the Father sent the Son into the world. It means, "Savior . . . salvation is of the Lord . . . Jehovah saves." Bartimaeus wanted the attention of Jesus the Savior: "Ye blind, behold your Saviour comes." But Bartimaeus said more, "Son of David," he cried. He lived in Judah steeped in the history of his nation. He lived 18 miles from King David's great city, Jerusalem. He knew something about this one who was the greatest of all the kings of Judah, to whom God had made this promise, "When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom . . . and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam. 7:12&13). Bartimaeus must have had heard stories about Jesus. What did he know of Scripture, we don't know. Who was this Jesus, the great Savior? It was the Messiah, great David's greater Son and what honor he gave to Christ, to address him like that!

3. THE AMAZING PERSISTENCE OF BARTIMAEUS.

Bartimaeus had little encouragement from the Jericho-ites to cry to Jesus. On the contrary, we are told that "Many rebuked him;" they told the old beggar to be quiet (v.48); "Shut up you fool." Bunyan tells us that right alongside the wicket gate Diabolus had built a castle and from its towers he used to shoot arrows at all who tried to pass through the gate. He also had a great fierce dog and it always snarled and howled threatening anyone who tried to pass through the gate. Whenever someone knocks on the gates of mercy they hear it in hell and every attempt is made to drive people away. The men of Jericho yelled at Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus was not to be stopped. There was that grand phrase which Spurgeon told to his students; "Show the hounds the fox." Bartimaeus was utterly determined to meet the one person whom he longed to tell his troubles to. He didn't have some vague, wistful, sentimental wish to see Jesus. He was absolutely desperate to meet him. If others didn't know the misery of blindness, Bartimaeus did. If others didn't think it worthwhile to be considered a fool

Mark 10:v46-52 New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier Nov.9, 2008, 5
in order to see, he, at any rate, knew better. He didn't care if familiar grumbling voices from the know-alls of Jericho told him to shut up, "he shouted all the more."

But Bartimaeus would not be silenced by men, and he knew what to say to God in Christ, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" He hadn't read that in a book, because he couldn't read. No one had told him to repeat those very words when he bowed before God. How simple were the words. He didn't need a prayer book; he didn't need to look in the index to learn what to say when a man feels guilty and wretched before God. It was his sense of need that supplied him with the right language and the right spirit in which to speak. This man was a blind pauper begging for his living, and the Lord Jesus Christ was passing by, don't you think he would know what to say to this man?

It was not enough for this man to sit there by the roadside saying and doing nothing while Jesus was passing by, pleading fate, that whatever will be will be, that if he were destined to receive sight that somehow it would be granted to him, that if Jesus wanted to help him then he would somehow find Bartimaeus because he was omniscient. No, Bartimaeus had no rights to Jesus' mercy, no claims upon our Lord, no entitlement to anything . He might have sat there mutely until he'd died. "Have mercy on me!" Bartimaeus cried. "Have mercy on me!" That was his only plea and he would not be silenced though many rebuked him. He was blind and wretched. Jesus had power to open his eyes. He was the only helper under heaven. It was now or never with

4. THE RESPONSE OF THE LORD.

We are told that Jesus stood still - that is what the word 'stopped' means. The cries of a poor worthless man were enough to cause the Maker of the universe to stop in his tracks. Jesus had time for him. Here in Jericho Jehovah Jesus had the coming extraordinary final week on his heart; it was going to be seven days full of tribulations and responsibilities. Jesus would have to purge the Temple again. He had to meet in the Upper Room with the disciples. There he had to preach the greatest sermon ever preached and then pray as no man ever prayed. He had to agonize in the Garden, and

be arrested and beaten and tried and crucified. He had all that on his heart; it was heavy within him bearing the weight of many thoughts, but he stood still when he heard a sinner call out to him! Jesus' disciples had no time for this man. The crowd just shouted at him to shut his mouth, but Jesus stopped what he was doing. Jesus stood for Bartimaeus

"Call him!" said Jesus. There were hundreds there but Jesus singled him out. In all his loving particularity his grace fell that day on the man who was crying out to him, "Have mercy upon me!" "Call him!" said Christ. So, we are told, "they called to the blind man, 'Cheer up! on your feet! He's calling you'" (v.49). Was it the same people who had told him to shut up two minutes earlier who now told him to cheer up. Shut up! Cheer up! So similar. Just two little words' difference between the phrases, but all the difference between despair and hope lie in those two exhortations. What did the Jericho-ites mean with their cliché 'Cheer up'? What do people mean by that such phrases today? Have a nice day! Keep smiling!

What did they mean when they looked at this poor blind man and told him to cheer up? Did the sadness and longing in his hearts touch them profoundly? Or were they only interested in the 'sport' of the occasion - the silly old man crying out to Jesus of Nazareth? What will happen now? We don't know what was the precise meaning of the words, but they urged him to go to Jesus. "On your feet! He is calling you!"

Look at Bartimaeus' reply. He's on his feet and off he goes. Have you ever seen a blind man jump? Never! In his blackness Bartimaeus leaped. He threw aside his cloak. This would have been spread out to receive the money that people dropped before him. Away with any hindrance! What were those shekels in comparison to coming into the presence of Jesus of Nazareth. Certain opportunities come just once in a lifetime and he knew that this was one of them. Bartimaeus came to Jesus.

5. THE QUESTION HE WAS ASKED.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus said to him." (v.51). All the questions in the Bible that God asks men seem naive questions, beginning with the first question of

heart of the matter, what does this man want from God? Why had Bartimaeus called on Jesus? Why had a blind beggar shouted out? Did he want a handout? How much, or how little, did he believe that Jesus could do for him. Jesus can do something with this man. "What do you want me to do for you?"

We don't know all of what Bartimaeus understood but consider what we know.

He was a real person made by God and for God as all things are. He is being told to express himself to the incarnate God.

6. THE REPLY BARTIMAEUS GAVE HIM.

"Rabbi, I want to see." (v.51). Just one thing he wanted, and that was his sight.

Look at this man, there is no stammering and no stuttering, no "I really don't know what to say." He just said it once, "Rabbi, I want to see."

7. THE SAVIOUR'S RESPONSE.

"Go," said Jesus, "Your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road." (v.52). Our Lord didn't say that if he promised to follow after him and put money in the bag each week he would be able to see. "Go! You are healed!" said Jesus. What Bartimaeus wanted had been done and now he can go. Go! He trusted himself to Jesus of Nazareth. Bartimaeus believed right into Christ and cried to him to have mercy on him, and he was changed. He who was blind saw, and the first thing he saw was the face of Jesus, and he did go, just as Jesus said, but it was to follow Jesus along the road. When we first met Bartimaeus in verse 46 he was sitting on the side of the road like so many of marginalized men and women, but what a difference now. He is on the road; he is following Jesus along the road.

Where will the road lead him? Was he saved, will he be saved?

Some have preached as follows.

"He is following him to the cross. He would see for himself the blood of the Son of God. He sees the one who gave him new life give up his own life. I believe that Bartimaeus

Mark 10:v46-52 New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier Nov.9, 2008, 8
was there with the five hundred on the Mount of Ascension. He saw the risen Christ, the conqueror of death.” Does Scripture tell us this?

Does the text say Bartimaeus was saved? Where is the Gospel in this text? Is it preached? Or can we see Bartimaeus as a picture - an illustration of salvation even as we saw the rich young ruler as an illustration of one trying to be saved by keeping the law.

Many followed Jesus, many after following walked away.

In the end a few remained. How was it with Bartimaeus. We don't know.

But, this story is certainly a powerful illustration when used in a spiritual context.

The New Testament tells us that that is the world occupied by all men and women who do not know the living God, a world of utter blackness. Tell them of the beauties of the Savior and they cannot see him. Read to them the Sermon on the Mount and it is vocables they hear, and that is all. They cannot see the loveliness of those sentences. Tell them John 3:16 and they are blind to its promises. Bring them to a church service, and whereas they are aware of men speaking, and people singing they can't see the point. They are blind, spiritually.

Without Jesus Christ all men are blind. Kind mothers, but blind. Brilliant scientists, but blind. Wonderful musicians, but blind. Creative artists, but blind. Bank-managers, doctors, mailmen, postmen, policemen, media people - every one is blind.

It is terrible to be blind, or to be deaf, or be dumb. I am sure it is, but better to be blind

As some area and see in your heart the truth, the true and living God, than to have two eyes and see nothing. Better to be deaf, as some are and hear in your mind the voice of the living God speaking and saving, than to have two ears and hear nothing.

Why don't people throng to hear us preach each Sunday? Why are they so deterred from seeking Christ, so discouraged from drawing near to God? The two answers are short and simple. Firstly, they don't know the wretchedness of their own sins. They refuse to face up to their own hearts and the disease of their own souls, but once let a

man begin to see himself as God sees him, wicked, depraved, lost, condemned, without God, without hope, then that man will never rest until he has found pardon and peace in Christ. Those who know their own deplorable condition will persevere until they know the healing power of Christ in their lives. Why don't they come to hear of Jesus? Secondly, because they don't know him, and don't appreciate him, and don't want to know him, and don't want him interfering in their lives because they love their sins too much.

And all over the world today there are preachers and God has said to them, "Call that guilty despairing sinner to me. You make sure you do. Call such sinners. Don't you spend your time flattering the wealthy and praising the righteous. Enough people do that to them every day. When convicted needy sinners come into my presence call them!"

Listen to what Spurgeon said when he spoke on these words on Sunday morning August 7 in the year 1859. Did he bring pressure on people to get out of their seats and come to the front and then give them assurance that they had become Christians because of that? Not at all.

Listen to what Spurgeon said, "Let me beseech you to go home to your room, and there, kneeling by your bedside, by faith picture the Savior saying to you, 'What do you want me to do for you?' Fall on your knees, and without hesitation tell him all, tell him you are guilty, and you desire that he would pardon you. Confess your sins; keep none of them back. Say, 'Lord, I implore you pardon my drunkenness, my profanity, or whatever it may be that you have been guilty of,' and then still imagine you hear him saying, 'What do you want me to do for you?' Tell him, 'Lord, I would be kept from all those sins in the future. I shall not be content with being pardoned. I want to be renewed.' Tell him you have a hard heart, and ask him to soften it. Tell him you have blind eyes and that you can't see your interest in Christ. Ask him to open your heart; confess before him you are full of iniquity and prone to wander; ask him to take your heart and wash it, and then set it on things above, and prevent it from being fond of

Mark 10:v46-52 New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier Nov.9, 2008, 10

the things of the earth any longer. Tell it out plainly, make a frank and full confession in his presence; and what if it should happen, my dear hearer, that at this very day, while you are in your room, Christ should give thee a touch of grace, put your sins away, save your soul, and give you the joy to know that you are a now a child of God, and now an heir of heaven. Imitate the blind man in the explicitness and straightforwardness of his confession and his request - 'Rabbi, I want to see.'"