**Mark 10:46-52** October 24, 2021

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*Mark 10:46 As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city [of Jericho], a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” 48Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” 49Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” 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.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

How do you feel when you have time to sit down and talk with your best friend in the whole world? You may feel better already just thinking about time with your closest friend! You know that your friend will listen to all your thoughts. You feel that your troubles are not only yours, but that your friend will help you bear them. Even if other people begin to abandon you or gossip about you, your friend will not. Your friend will still be your friend. This friendship is not only about tough times. This friend will also laugh with you, can be silly with you, understands your jokes. You want to be with this friend often.

Even though the blind man of our reading had probably never met Jesus in his entire life, by the end of this event, I am willing to bet that this blind man, Bartimaeus, thought of Jesus as something of a friend. Can’t you imagine him saying,

**“Let Me Be With Jesus!”**

**I.** There is a phenomenon called the cult of celebrity. It isn’t just a 21st and 20th century American thing. The cult of celebrity spans human history. Many people, maybe most people are intensely interested in popular and powerful people: in our day, a favorite football player, musician, television or movie actor.

Like many people of our age, Bartimaeus was interested in the popular person of his day. All the people of the land talked about Jesus and the wonderful things he was doing. He could raise people from the dead, heal lepers, feed thousands—you just never knew what Jesus would do next! So as Jesus walked through the small city of Jericho, Jesus could not walk without a crowd dogging his every step. If you had drone footage, it would have looked like a rugby scrum of people teaming around Jesus. When he moved, they moved. When he stopped for a meal or rest, the crowd rested.

One man was unable to follow Jesus. He was a blind man. We find this beggar just where we always found blind beggars when we lived in Africa. Bartimaeus was along the side of the busiest road he could find. There he would appeal to the hundreds and thousands of people who passed every day. He would ask for spare change, scraps of food. That was how he survived. Had he been whole, he well might have been in that crowd. But Bartimaeus knew that a pushing and shoving crowd is no place for a blind man.

Bartimaeus hoped to meet Jesus. But if managed somehow to meet Jesus, what would he find in Jesus? Maybe, when he got close to Jesus, Jesus would not help or even talk to him! That’s how many of the rich, famous and powerful would act: “Get these people off me!” as they dust the dirt of the unwashed masses off their shoulders. But Bartimaeus had heard something else about Jesus. Bartimaeus had heard that Jesus was merciful.

Bartimaeus called out, ***“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*** (47) No demands, no angry words of protest, only a plea: ***“Have mercy!”***

When Bartimaeus cried out, ***“Have mercy on me”*** he was saying this: “I have nothing, absolutely nothing to offer you Jesus. I can’t give you money, fame, etc. In fact, to be seen with me, Jesus, will only cause you trouble.” (Remember how the high and mighty sneered at the low-class company Jesus kept!) ***“Have mercy Jesus!”***

He cried out for Jesus’ mercy—but the crowd had no mercy. They preferred to yell at this helpless blind man. ***“Be quiet”*** they shouted (v.48). I imagine they became downright abusive. “Be quiet beggar. Can’t you tell that Jesus is coming. He doesn’t have time for the likes of you.” Through this abuse, the all-knowing Jesus kept his silence for a moment. In the still of Jesus’ silence, this blind man’s faith shown like sun through the clouds. The verbal abuse could not stop him. Instead faith burst forth the more fully, ***“He shouted all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’”*** (48) His plea for mercy would be silenced by none but the one to whom he appealed. ***“Son of David, have mercy on me.”***

Jesus—and here is a lesson to all of us—Jesus lived up to, and exceeded Bartimaeus’ expectations. Jesus, hearing the plaintive cry of his faithful believer, Jesus the Son of God came to a stop. ***“Call him,”*** Jesus commanded. And the crowd which had abused the blind beggar, called him. And now they parted to make way for the beggar. That crowd learned that Jesus’ favor falls on the meek and humble.

Bartimaeus’ plea is the same one which I must speak. Is Jesus my buddy? Well, he is my friend. But he is a friend superior to me in every way imaginable: in intellect, morals, courage, strength. I have nothing to offer him. And so I must speak to him as we speak or sing to Jesus in nearly every worship service, *“Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!”*

God needs nothing that I have. He tells me that in Psalm 50:9-12, *“I am God, your God… I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens…If I were hungry, I would not tell you.”* Again, Paul reminds us in Romans, *“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?”* (11:34-35)

Anything I could offer to Jesus is tainted with sin. What I can offer God is like giving a king a gift: a broken gift that doesn’t work; the sort of junk that God would be better off not having. So much so that when I draw near to Jesus, I must truly say ***“Lord, have mercy.”***

Will he? Will he have mercy? He knows my sins, and though I regret them and live a thousand years on this earth trying to do better, I cannot undo them. Instead, I repeat them. “Will Jesus accept me?” is a question which must be asked, not only in regard to the sins I have committed, but also in respect to who I am. Can Jesus accept me who may have one or two virtues in the eyes of the world, but who is short-tempered, jealous, lazy, cowardly, annoying, proud, disrespectful. If other people are put off by me, if they shun me for my imperfections, how much more the sinless God of heaven and earth. Something which is perfect, cannot become more perfect, it can only become less perfect. Won’t me coming close to Jesus defame Jesus, bring him down, inject some little bit of my impurity into his pure essence?

***“Jesus, have mercy on me.*** I know that you only stand to lose something, to be defamed by me, to have your gifts wasted by me, but ***Son of David, have mercy on me!”***

And he is merciful. The Almighty God in heaven, when he hears me say, ***“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*** He stops, so to speak. God bends his ear to his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night. He does not put them off (Luke 18:7).

While this incident at Jericho is an example of great mercy, it points to Jesus’ greatest act of mercy for Bartimaeus, and for you, and for me. Jesus was sent, not only to mercifully heal a blind man near Jericho, but to travel up to Jerusalem. He went there, the cross at Calvary, to be sentenced by God for all of my sins. God has heard our cry for mercy. Jesus is provided as the solution. Most importantly,

**I. Let Me Be With My Friend Jesus, Because He Is Merciful.**

**II.** But Jesus is more than merciful, he is also… Well, let us not answer that just yet.

You have all heard the legend of the genie in the bottle. This is a story, not true, but it is a good picture. The genie in the bottle is a spirit, so the story goes, which will only come out when a person rubs the bottle in the right way. But when the spirit comes out, it will give the person anything he or she wants. What would you wish for if you had a chance to wish for anything you wanted?

Do you know that it really did happen to somebody? Maybe some of you remember a king of the Old Testament who had just this chance: King Solomon. God appeared to Solomon one night and said, *“Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”* (2 Chronicles 1:7) Solomon could have had anything in the world. He asked for wisdom. God was very pleased.

Something like this also happened in the New Testament. It didn’t happen to a king, it happened to a beggar. Jesus summoned blind Bartimaeus to himself and he told this blind beggar, ***“What do you want me to do for you?”*** (51) The king of heaven and earth held his hands open to this beggar. “What do you want? I will do it.”

With the earth open before him, the beggar maintains his humility and says, ***“Rabbi, I want to see.”*** What faith! He asks not in selfishness, though he would benefit. He only asks to see; to end the darkness, the rebukes of bystanders, the mocking children, the degrading begging. ***“Rabbi, My Teacher, I want to see.”***

What faith! He believed Jesus could grant what no doctor on earth could do. To ask for that which one cannot give is an insult. No, this man believed that Jesus could give him his sight. And Jesus was pleased that this grown-up man with a child-like faith trusted him to do what none other could do.

But did only two people, Solomon and Bartimaeus, have this privilege to ask their heart’s desire? Did Jesus not teach us to come with the same faith that our God is a generous God? Has Jesus not instructed us, *“I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name”*?(John 16:23) And again, *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”* (Luke 11:9)

Jesus bids us come to him in humility and faith, as that blind beggar, and ask of him in accordance with his generosity. As one of our hymns sings, “You are coming to a king—Large petitions with you bring, For his grace and pow’r are such, None can ever ask too much.” (CW, 409:2)

**II. Let Me Be With Jesus, Because He Is Generous**

**III.** Merciful, generous, and the last verse of our text tells us Jesus third trait that we value, ***“‘Go,’ said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you.’ Immediately he received his sight.”*** (52) No hospital appointments, no time in a recovery ward, no follow-up doctor visits. His sight was immediately and completely restored. He could see again. Jesus proved Bartimaeus’ faith well-founded.

Jesus is worthy of our faith because he is powerful. As the Son of God, restoring sight to the blind is a very small thing. It is nothing. So too, supplying water in the desert, peace and safety for our family, food on our tables. But there was one need that required effort. All other needs God answers in a word. God could not, however, solve the problem of our sins merely with a word. That need required Jesus to die. But even in this extreme need for forgiveness, Jesus proved himself powerful, more powerful than sin, than death, than Satan. So powerful was Jesus, that his death not only covered the sins of the people of his day, but all people. Even in death, Jesus was powerful.

**III. Let Me Be With Jesus, Because He Is Powerful**

Mercy, generosity, power… Aren’t these three things, things we would love to see in our best and closest friends? Aren’t these three of the best things you could hope for in your parents, your children, your friends? And all three are found beyond all human measure in our friend Jesus Christ.

That is why, when Jesus told him, ***“Go!”***, this former blind beggar didn’t. He didn’t go. Instead, ***“He received his sight and followed Jesus along the road”*** (52). This was not disobedience, this was profound obedience, for from this point in his life, Jesus’ way would be Bartimaeus’ way.

I can imagine that Bartimaeus would agree with the theme for our thoughts today: **Let Me Be With Jesus.** He is merciful. He is generous. He is powerful. May it be *your* theme, when you get back in your cars, when you get home and drop the car keys in the drawer, when you drift off to sleep, when you wake for a new day: **Let Me Be with Jesus, Always!** Amen.