

Mark 10:46—52
January 20, 2019

Dismiss Kids—

Pastoral Prayer

You are worthy. And we are not, and yet we are grateful that we can approach and know you. You are utterly other from us.

What is man that you are mindful of him?

You have made mankind to reflect you.

Mankind, men and women have been made in the image of God, and we treat life like a trifling thing. Our nation has legalized abortion and for years babies have been robbed of life like they don't matter. Lord we pray that you would end this evil in our country. On this sanctity of life Sunday—awaken us and our nation to the value of human life.

We pray that we Christians would treat all life as precious—not just babies. Those with mental limitations, the infirmed, the marginalized. Please give us each opportunity to be your hands and feet to a lost and dying world.

May we not rail against the culture but may we serve people in love showing them a better way.

In just a few moments we are going open your word and we expect you to speak. We need you to speak to us. The Bible is not just words on a page but the very voice of God.

You promise that your presence always accompanies your word, please be here in power today.

It has been two months since we have been in the book of Mark with Jesus. Before we remind ourselves of where we are with Jesus JC Ryle reminds us why we are going with Jesus through the book of Mark.

“Now the Gospels were written to make us acquainted with Christ... [In the gospels we see] His ways, His manners, His feelings, His wisdom, His grace, His patience, His love, His power, are graciously unfolded to us by four different witnesses.

Ought not the sheep to be familiar with the Shepherd? Ought not the patient to be familiar with the Physician?

Ought not the bride to be familiar with the Bridegroom? Ought not the sinner to be familiar with the Saviour?

Beyond doubt it ought to be so. The Gospels were written to make men familiar with Christ, and therefore I wish men to study the Gospels.

On whom must we build our souls if we would be accepted with God? We must build on the rock, Christ. *From whom* must we draw that grace of the Spirit which we daily need in order to be fruitful? We must draw from the vine, Christ. *To whom* must we

look for sympathy when earthly friends fail us or die? We must look to our elder brother, Christ. *By whom* must our prayers be presented, if they are to be heard on high? They must be presented by our advocate, Christ.

With whom do we hope to spend the thousand years of glory, and the after eternity? With the King of kings, Christ. *Surely we cannot know this Christ too well!* Surely there is not a word, nor a deed, nor a day, nor a step, nor a thought in the record of His life, which ought not to be precious to us. We should labour to be familiar with every line that is written about Jesus." J.C. Ryle

We cannot know this Christ too well. Mark helps us to know Jesus better.

Mark beckons us to join him again as we take our place with the crowd surrounding Jesus walking toward Jerusalem.

"And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." ⁵⁰ And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

And the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.” ⁵² And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.”

We join Jesus and his disciples in Jericho—but to understand what happens here we need to refresh our memories of what has happened earlier in chapter 10. We won’t understand what is happening on the outskirts of Jericho if we don’t understand what happened on the road before Jericho.

Previously in Mark,

Jesus took his followers aside and told them for the third time that they were going to Jerusalem and that he would be killed.

“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. [34] And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.” Mark 10:33–34

Jesus would not just to be murdered. He would be publicly disgraced. He would be mocked, whipped, spit upon and killed.

In the silence of that solemn moment James and John ask a favor—

“And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” [36] And he said to

them, “What do you want me to do for you?” [37] And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Mark 10:35–37

They asked—can we be given more honor in the world to come than anyone beside you? Can we be exalted in glory? This was not just the question of a couple of simpletons, but deeply selfish. They wanted to use Jesus to get what they wanted.

Jesus’ closest followers showed that they didn’t really understand who he is or what he was about. Mark means for us to ask the question—does anyone really understand who Jesus is and what he is to do?

With that question ringing in our ears we meet a man named Bartimaeus.

1. Meet Bartimaeus—

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem had to pass through the village of Jericho (Yes that Jericho, The walls were rebuilt and people were living there again). Jesus and his retinue go through town and exit the southwestern side to get to Jerusalem.

Outside those walls was a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. In that day there was no social security or disability or any government assistance of any kind, so the mentally and physically disabled were pushed to the margins of society. Most if not all of them were reduced to begging.

Family members would bring the mentally and physically ill to a busy roadside to beg for money of those who passed by. On the day we join Jesus, more people than normal would be passing through Jericho on that road.

It was Passover time. Tens of thousands of Jews would travel each year to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast. The week we meet Bartimaeus would be the week he would make most of his money with all the traffic.

So, Bartimaeus was brought to the roadside on the Jerusalem side of Jericho to plead for help from the river of people flowing by.

Bartimaeus was blind but he knew who Jesus was. He had heard of the reports of the power and mercy of Jesus of Nazareth. Sitting on the side of the road he had heard people talk of how the Nazarene had raised the dead, healed the sick, fed the hungry, confronted the Pharisees, calmed storms and dispatched demons. Bartimaeus had heard about Jesus—and now he wanted to make sure Jesus could hear him.

Verse 47,

“And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

He cried out. Bartimaeus did not politely call to Jesus he cried out. He didn't know if or when Jesus would pass that way again. He cried out.

But his cries were well informed.

Look at what he said, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

This is the only time in this book that a person calls Jesus the Son of David. That is an official title for the Messiah. Bartimaeus is referring to Jesus as the one who would come from the line of David to free people from their sin.

God spoke to David some 10 centuries before give or take saying,

“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. [13] He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” 2 Samuel 7:12–13

No one else in the book of Mark had the insight of Bartimaeus—though blind Bartimaeus saw that Jesus was the promised Son of David.

“What Bartimaeus lacks in eyesight, he makes up for in insight.” James Edwards

And Bartimaeus would not be denied. He cried out to Jesus—and the crowd tried to ‘shush him.’

⁴⁸ And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent.

People are saying to the blind man, “Hey shut up—Jesus is passing through. He wouldn’t want anything to do with you.”

But Bartimaeus did not care a whit,

But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

We hear again that Bartimaeus calls for the Son of David and did you hear what he asked for? He was blind—but did he ask to be healed?

Not yet.

What did he ask for?

Let’s look again, 48b:

“Son of David, have mercy on me!”

See it?

He asks for Mercy.

Bartimaeus is not just using churchy language that sounds good to appeal to Jesus—he is saying something specific.

Bartimaeus doesn’t seeming himself as a victim or somehow deserving of something from Jesus.

He asks for ‘mercy.’

Mercy is not getting what you deserve. It is different from grace. Grace is getting something you don't deserve. Mercy is different.

Mercy is the word a captured soldier begs for from a conquering general. To cry for mercy is much more than just saying, "I want to see." It is something more like: Spare me! Let me live!

Why would Bartimaeus ask for mercy?

Because he knew he had no standing before Jesus. He knew he had nothing to offer. He knew he had nothing to give. He knew he had nothing but NEED.

And that is precisely the best way to come to Jesus. How? Aware of and admitting your great neediness. Many people think that they have to somehow improve themselves—clean themselves up—become a better version of themselves for Jesus to be interested in them.

Nothing—and I do mean nothing—could be further from the truth. Bartimaeus had nothing to offer and he didn't pretend like he did. He doesn't shout from the roadside saying,

"I can be a significant asset to your king, I just need to see!"

NOR does he say,

"I have tried to be a good person—help me!"

NOR does he say,

“I’ll do anything you ask—just heal me!”

Nope, he shouts, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

In other words, I have nothing but need, have mercy on me. And that is the way to come to Jesus. Any who come asking for mercy from Jesus will always receive it.

He does not say he deserves to be healed. He says—
Mercy. Mercy. Mercy.

And Jesus hears him.

Surely, Jesus heard the first time but he responds to the second cry for help. He may not answer immediately but he hears every cry. Every plea. Every prayer.

We’ve met Bartimaeus, now Bartimaeus meets Jesus Christ.

2. Bartimaeus meets Jesus—

Vs. 49,

And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.”

You could render this—Jesus stopped in his tracks. Nothing gets Jesus’ attention like calls for mercy. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem—he was going to die.

This was the very reason he came to earth. But a plea for mercy got him to stop.

Our Lord never ignores pleas for mercy. His ear is always attuned to calls of the helpless and the hurting.

Bartimaeus didn't have to be told twice to go to Jesus.

Vs. 50,

⁵⁰ And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

I wonder how many times Bartimaeus had ever sprang up to go anywhere. His whole life he would have stepped gingerly forward into an unending darkness. But today, he springs up and bounds over to Jesus.

Then Jesus addresses Bartimaeus and asks him a question—

⁵¹ And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Jesus addresses this man that everyone else ignored. Jesus looks the man in the face that everyone else passed by on the road without a second glance. Jesus never treats people as objects—as things to be dealt with. With this question—What do you want me to do for you? Jesus restores a bit of Bartimaeus' humanity.

We will remember that the very same question was put to James and John earlier in the chapter. Jesus asked them,

“What do you want me to do for you?”

And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Mark 10:37

In other words, “We would like to be the most important and revered people in all of the universe—after you of course. We want greatness.”

With their answer ringing in our ears, Jesus asks the very same question of Bartimaeus and gets a very different answer.

Vs. 51b,

And the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.”

You might think—duh—of course he would ask for that. We think that because we read the story already and we know what is coming next. Think about how great a risk and surprise for Bartimaeus to make that request.

It is a risk and a surprise.

Why?

Bartimaeus is on the roadside begging for money. He came out that day to get cash, with no expectation of

asking for or recovering his sight. Bartimaeus knew that Jesus was different.

If anyone else stood before him and asked, “What do you want me to do for you?”

He would have asked for a few extra shekels, or some scraps of food. But Bartimaeus knew that Jesus was different. When Jesus asks him what he wants, Bartimaeus asks for something more.

“Rabbi, let me recover my sight.”

The word, Rabbi, means ‘teacher,’ but here Bartimaeus uses the word, “Rabboni.” Faithful Jews addressed God in prayer as Rabboni.

Do you see what that means?

Bartimaeus is talking to Jesus as one would address God the Father. If we were to give a literal rendering in English that gets to what Bartimaeus said it would be something like,

“My divine master, let me recover my sight.”

And the response is immediate,

Vs. 52,

⁵² And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.”

Bartimaeus had come in contact with the Divine Master, had asked for mercy and he could see.

Faith is a word often used (especially in church) but rarely understood. What does it mean? Faith is nothing more than trust in something.

When Jesus says, *“Go your way; your faith has made you well.”*

He is saying—Go your way; your faith (in me) has made you well. Faith always points to something or someone.

You have faith that the chair you are sitting in won't collapse, so you keep sitting down. You have faith that the roof won't topple down on our heads, so you stay in this room.

Bartimaeus had faith that Jesus could help him. He trusted that Jesus and only Jesus could help him. It is important to see and understand what Jesus says,

“Go your way; your faith has made you well.”

Literally we could render his words, *“Go you way; your faith has saved you.”*

Bartimaeus was saved because he believed that Jesus only Jesus could help him. Jesus had mercy on him.

Some of us in the room need to come to Jesus and say—have mercy on me!

This miracle like all of the others in the book of Mark serve as a sign showing us NOT so much what Jesus

can do but WHO he is. He heals to testify to who he is.

The fact that Jesus heals the blind speaks to who he is. This healing is a signpost to who he is from way back in the prophet Isaiah,

“I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;

I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,

[7] to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.”

Isaiah 42:6–7

In other words—the LORD is the one who is will be able to restore the sight of the blind. And if he is able to do that, he is also the one who brings prisoners out from the dungeon of sin and death.

Do you see this?

The point here is not just that Jesus can give sight to the blind; but he gives mercy to all that call on him. That is who he is and what he does.

When Jesus heals Bartimaeus we read,

“Go your way; your faith has made you well.”

And the reader is meant to ask—where would Bartimaeus’ way be? Now that he was restored,

where would he go? Mark does not leave us to wonder long.

Vs. 52b,

And immediately he (Bartimaeus) recovered his sight and followed him on the way."

Where was Bartimaeus going?

He was following Jesus. Wherever Jesus led, Bartimaeus would follow.

Most of the time in the gospels when someone is healed we don't learn their name. But here we know that Bartimaeus is the one that is healed. We know that he is the son of Timaeus.

Why?

When the saints first read the book Mark wrote Bartimaeus was still with them. The Christians could go to him and say, "Is that story about the Lord healing you true?"

And he would tell of the day that we just read about. The day he cried for mercy and the God of the universe came near to heal and help him.

So what?
Who cares?

You might be saying what does a story about a formerly blind man who is healed and follows Jesus

have to do with me? What difference does that make for me?

Good question.

Remember where we started—with the notion that we cannot know this Jesus Christ too well. This story then is a story that helps us get to know Jesus better.

What can we see about Jesus?

1. Jesus still offers mercy—

The reason this is more than a story about a blind man who received mercy is because of Jesus in the story. To be crass—who cares that a blind man long dead had sight restored?

Because of the one who restored sight. Jesus still lives and he still offers mercy. Because Jesus still lives and he still hears the cries of help from the helpless.

Our Lord's ears are tuned to the call of the helpless for mercy. The reason we can be sure that any who call on him can and will receive mercy is because in Jesus' hour of great need Jesus received none.

There was no mercy for Jesus when he hung and died.

Remember what the book of Mark chronicles—Jesus is in Jericho this morning—but he is heading to Jerusalem to be mocked, spit upon, flogged and killed.

And as he was in the throes of death he cried out for mercy to his father. He cried out for help from his Father and he was ignored. There was no mercy for him on that day.

Why does that matter at all?

Here is why—Bartimaeus did not deserve mercy but Jesus did. When he cried for mercy by all rights, God should have lurched forward to save his son.

His son was faultless.
His son was entirely obedient.

His son deserved help but he got none. As he died, Jesus was treated like he deserved all that was happening to him. He was punished for our sins.

So that we might be able to receive mercy.

In other words, Jesus purchased the right to give mercy by paying for our sins with his death. That is why this story matters.

If Jesus did not die and rise again this story about Bartimaeus would have no bearing on our lives whatsoever.

Jesus was able to give Bartimaeus mercy because he received none. Bartimaeus' greatest problem was not that he was blind but that he was a sinner. His greatest problem was that he was unworthy. Not that he couldn't see.

Often times hardship (including disease or some physical disorder) causes us to come to Jesus. We think we need help with our physical disorder but we really need Jesus.

Are you sick?

Anyone shackled to disease understands their own humanity and how short life really is. If you are a here and you are sick and in need of help but the help you need goes farther than your health.

Jesus can heal but what you need more urgently is to come to him and say, "Son of David have mercy on me!"

Have mercy. I am a sinner and I don't deserve mercy—but please give it to me.

And he still does.

Remember, who are the ones who receive mercy?

Those that don't deserve it!!

You don't need to improve yourself or become a better person to be loved and accepted. You just need to ask.

Maybe you don't feel worthy.

John Mayer asks a set a questions in his song, "In the blood.."

"How much of my mother has my mother left in me?"

*How much of my love will be insane to some degree?
And what about this feeling that I'm never good enough?
Will it wash out in the water, or is it always in the blood?"*

What about this feeling that I'm never good enough?
What about it?

None of us are good enough.

Jesus still offers mercy to the unworthy and those not good enough.

Don't let your sense of unworthiness keep you from crying out, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Not only does Jesus **STILL** offer mercy—the Christian life is simpler than we might think.

2. Follow Jesus!

The most moving words in this passage to me are the last ones—

And immediately he (Bartimaeus) recovered his sight and followed him on the way."

In those few words we have encapsulated the whole of the Christian life.

What are we who have received mercy to do with our lives?

Follow him on the way.

What are we to do when the winds of trouble blow?

Follow him on the way.

What are we to do when we are burdened by disappointment?

Follow him on the way.

What are we to do when we face an uncertain future?

Follow him on the way.

What are we to do when our kids wander?

Follow him on the way.

What are we to do tomorrow?

Follow him on the way.

Keep following him. Those that have received mercy keep following Jesus, keep obeying him. Keep putting one foot in front of another.

And as we continue to get to know this Jesus—following him makes more sense.

PRAY

