

LUKE 18:35-43 6-4-17
Blind Faith

As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. 36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was. 37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, 41 "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!" 42 And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." 43 Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

Incredible isn't it? And to think that Luke offers so many stories about Jesus just like this one. The apostle John, at the end of his gospel, which itself includes many of the miracles of Christ, writes John 21:25 *There are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.* But we know that the stories that are included are given to us for a reason. They are meant to instruct and so it is with this story of the blind man of Jericho. Jericho is the location of these events. It is a city about 17 miles northeast of Jerusalem and was the gateway to Jerusalem. Jesus is soon to complete his long journey toward the cross. But we find in Jericho something that would slow him down a bit. We read that there was a blind beggar sitting along the road because there he hoped to receive the alms of generous people. Mark calls the beggar's name *Bartimaeus* but Luke leaves out the name as of little importance. So here you are, blind, sitting along a dusty road and you hear the trampling of many feet approaching and, naturally your curiosity is aroused. What is the cause of all the hubbub? When he learned that Jesus was coming he felt a sudden surging of hope throughout his weary bones and he cried out, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*" Twice he said this, calling Jesus *the son of David*. How the blind man knew what he did about Jesus we can't really tell but what he says about Jesus is important to understand. To call Jesus *the son of David* was tantamount to calling Him the Messiah for the Son of David is the long expected one of Israel.

Let's do a brief study of that term so that we can see the significance of it when it is applied to Jesus. We start in II Samuel 7 with what is called *the covenant with David*. God is speaking to his servant the king. II Samuel 7:12-14a, *When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, 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. 14 I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me* 16 *Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.* There we see the promise to David that one of his descendants would reign for how long? Forever. And as you read the Old Testament you should look for this theme of the Davidic kingship. It is critical to an understanding of the books of history and the prophets. Even in the Psalms you see it. Psalm 89:3-4 *I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, 4 I will establish your seed forever; And build up your throne to all generations.* When we come to the prophets you find often the reiteration of this promise. Isaiah 9, in that passage so often quoted at Christmas, Isaiah 9:6-7 *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.⁷ There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore.* Isaiah 11 and another Messianic prophecy speaks of Jesse the father of David, 11:1-2a *Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him.* In Jeremiah 23:5 *Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land.* Ezekiel 37:24-25 *"My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. 25 They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever.*

These are really just a few of the passages that point to this one who is to come, the great son of David. Look now at Luke 1. This, I hope, will help you appreciate the importance of what we read in the Christmas story. 1:26-27ab *Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose*

name was Joseph, of the descendants of David. That is not an incidental comment. It is vital to the whole flow of Biblical history. See what Gabriel had to say to Mary **31-33** *Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.*” He is saying that the time of David’s greater son has arrived. The fulfillment of God’s word to David over 900 years before is about to happen. In the benedictus of Zacharias, just before Jesus was born, in Luke 1:**68-70** *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant— 70 as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—* And where would the great birth take place? Where else but in Bethlehem the city of David. One more passage. This one in Romans 1. I get excited by this stuff because it enable me to see how so many parts of the Scripture fit together and how Christ is the focus of it all. **1:1-3** *Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.* At the very outset of his theology of Christ and redemption Paul sets forth this all-important fact that Jesus was the Son of David promised of old. So you see how pregnant with meaning was this title given to Jesus by the blind man. But how did he know? How could this blind fellow in Jericho perceive who Jesus was? Maybe, probably, he had heard reports of Christ’s wonderful deeds and had deduced that Jesus was the Messiah. One can only guess about what the man had heard but we have been given insight as to why he knew who Jesus was. It is the same reason Peter knew. Do you remember Mathew 16 where Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do the people say that I am?” And then he asks them, “Who do you say that I am?” Matthew 16:**16-17** *Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”* Who revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Christ? God did. Who revealed that same truth to blind Bartimaeus? Was it not the same God who delights to show His treasures to the lowly?

So, we learn from our passage that Jesus is David’s greater son. We also see that He is a king who is characterized by compassion, by sympathy for the hurting, by mercy. Again, this

attribute of Jesus is presented to us in contrast from those who followed Him. As the man called out for mercy 39 *Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"* And what did Jesus do? Verse 40 says, *Jesus stopped*. If ever Jesus was going to pass over such a request you figure this is the time. He is headed to Jerusalem to complete the greatest mission anyone had ever undertaken. He has his own sufferings to think about, and yet, when a poor man cried out for him He stopped. Learn from this dear people that our Lord is never too busy to attend your prayers, especially your desperate cries. He is beautifully compassionate towards the weak. 40a *Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him*. This is the second time this chapter that Jesus especially asked for someone to be brought to him. He did it already with the little children. Do you think Luke is trying to tell us something by this? We see that Jesus cares, that He is sensitive, that He has a particular concern for those who others don't care about. He loves the lowly. I ask you: where do you find yourself today? Are you among the humble children, are you with the despised tax-collector who groaned over his sin, are you with blind Bartimaeus sitting by the road? It is there you will find Jesus and it is there you will find mercy.

Well, besides giving us another look at our Savior as the merciful Son of David we find in this story a lesson about faith. There are several examples of great faith in the gospel narratives and the blind man is yet another. Jesus was able to say to this gentleman 42bc *"Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."* Note three things about the blind man's faith. It was first of all an asking faith. That is obvious from the account given. The man had a faith that boldly asked Jesus for mercy. That is what a God-given faith will do. It allows the man to see two things: his own sin and Christ's greatness, His power to heal. And when he realized these two things nothing was going to stop him from getting an audience with Jesus. Now there were those who tried. 39 *Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"* You gotta like this guy. He had all this peer pressure, all these people telling him to shut up but he wouldn't do it. Do you have somebody or somebodies trying to keep you from Jesus? Even well-meaning people will do that to us. You be like this man. He knew he had a deep need and that no one could meet that need but Jesus, so he would let nothing stand in his way. The word in 39 translated "crying out" means it was a real serious, desperate type scream. Since he was blind and didn't know how far away Jesus was he was making sure he could be heard, and the more cultured

friends of Jesus were hushing him up because he really was making a spectacle of himself. You know, those concerned to look cool and be respected and respectable usually miss out on God's mercy. It is always our pride that stands between us and Christ. It is often our desire to look good that blocks us from grace. I'm concerned that this is true of me. If you have good parents you were probably taught how to look good. You were instructed as to what is and isn't socially acceptable. Yelling is not socially acceptable. The blind man yelled out. I'm not sure I would know how to do that. Would you? It dawned upon me last week that I get more excited about my sermons when I write them in my office than when I preach them here. In my office I get moved and stirred. I get teary-eyed, I shout with praise, but I rarely get that emotional in the pulpit because I suppose I'm too concerned that I will look phony or fanatical or just plain goofy. It bothered me to realize that and I saw that I need to sit at the feet of blind Bartimaeus. He wanted mercy so badly that he yelled out for it. This whole chapter in Luke is about the need to call out for God's mercy. You have a tax-collector who did it, a blind man who did it and you have a Pharisee and a rich young ruler who would not do it. They saw no need for mercy. The blind man could see. Can you see? Do you find yourself frequently crying out for mercy for yourself and others?

If you grew up Roman Catholic you may well remember one of those chants repeated so often. *Kyrie Eleison*, which means what? *Lord have mercy*. I have never been a Catholic but I find myself offering that prayer often, in English or in Greek. Our world is full of need isn't it? I remember years ago how a 14 year old boy showed up at our church on a Saturday night afraid to go home because his daddy would beat him up. For two nights he slept outside the church under blankets that I loaned him until finally he let me call his father and he went home to a man who may or may not have hit him with his fist but who certainly tore his son to shreds verbally. I ached for that boy growing up in a home without love but what could I do except pray "Kyrie Eleison" We hear, it seems almost weekly nowadays, of a bomb going off in some crowded city in order to kill dozens of harmless citizens in the name of someone's imaginary deity. *Kyrie Eleison*. Our world is full of needs only a mighty, merciful Savior can meet. My life is full of needs that only Christ can meet as well. So I pray 38b *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!* We need an asking faith. We need a faith that cries out to God for mercy. Say it with me please, *Lord have mercy!*

The blind man had an asking faith and he also had a saving faith. By that I mean his faith got things done. It was effective. Jesus said, *“Your faith has made you well. Or, your faith has saved you.* What made him well? If you were standing and watching this and someone asked, *what made him well?* What would you say? If someone asked the blind man, *what made you well,* what would he say? I don’t think for a minute that you or the blind man would say that his faith made him well. You would say, “Jesus made him well. Jesus saved him.” But Jesus says, “His faith made him well.” Which is true? Was it Jesus or the man’s faith that made him well? It was both wasn’t it? Realize that faith without Jesus can do nothing. Christ is the healer, Christ is the Savior, but it is by faith that we link up with Christ. It was faith that led our friend to Jesus. It was faith that made him cry out to Jesus. It was Jesus who healed but without faith Bartimaeus would still be blind.

So, he had an asking faith and a saving faith and finally he had a responsive faith. **42-43** *Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” 43 Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.* The blind man responded to what Jesus did for him didn’t he? His faith led him into a new relationship with Jesus. He was now bound to Christ with the strong cord of a grateful heart and so he followed his Lord. And how did he follow? He followed Jesus, glorifying God. He was a worshipper. His was no dead faith. His was a following, praising faith. It made a difference in the way he lived. Real, saving faith always does that. We receive saving mercy by asking. We respond by praising and following.

Has the Lord been merciful to you? Then, I invite you to come alongside the blind beggar. First, as he humbly seeks the Savior and then as he joyfully follows Him with praise. I want us to glorify, in song, the mercy of David’s greater Son. Will you do that with Newton’s great hymn that says, *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found; was blind but now I see.* The hymn speaks as well of a responding faith that will sing the Lord’s praise 10,000 years and more. So, let’s gratefully worship and prepare ourselves, as we do, to feast at the table of the Lord’s mercy