

Mercy Me
July 12, 2015

A man named Kenneth Filkins wrote a poem entitled "The Pit". I want to read a portion of this poem to you.

A man fell into a pit and he couldn't get out.
A Pharisee said: "Only a bad person would fall in a pit."
A Buddhist said: "Your pit is only a state of mind."
A Hindu said: "This pit is for purging you and making you more perfect."
A follower of Confucius said: "If you would have listened to me, you would never have fallen into that pit."
A... (braggart) said: "You haven't seen anything until you've seen my pit."
A county inspector asked, "Have you got a permit for that pit?"
Jesus... took him by the hand and lifted him out of the pit.

What Jesus did for the man in the poem He can do for you too. What pit are you in today? You may be in a pit of sin. Maybe you have a problem with alcohol, a drug, pornography, gambling, stealing, gossiping, or lying.

Maybe you are in a pit of addiction, not to something sinful, but still something that is controlling. It could be shopping, music, TV, email, surfing the World Wide Web, or something else.

Maybe you are in a pit of negative emotions. Your pit is loneliness, depression, anxiety, worry, fear, anger, resentment, or apathy. Maybe you are stuck in a bad relationship. Maybe you are stuck in a bad job, or you have no job, or you are struggling to keep up with your bills.

Whatever your pit is, likely it is keeping you from being right with God. It prevents you from living in the power the Holy Spirit. It distracts you from keeping your eyes on Jesus. For any of these reasons and more, I am sure you want out of your pit.

We're going to read of a man this morning who was in a pit. He believed Jesus could help him. And so he asked Jesus for help. God wants to encourage us to the same, to believe that Jesus can help us and to ask Jesus for help.

Mark 10:46-52 (NIV)

As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus 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.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Here is a man with a problem, a very great problem. Being blind may not be the worst condition to be in, but it is pretty bad. Being in a pit is a good analogy for his life. In those days there were no schools for the blind, no seeing-eye-dogs, no Braille language, no workshops for handicapped people. The only thing he could do was sit by the road and beg for money.

So he is sitting by the side of the road and he hears a crowd of people walking by. But it sounds different than the usual foot traffic. He asks who is passing by and is told by someone that Jesus of Nazareth is passing down the road, with His disciples and many others too.

I have no doubt that this blind beggar has heard of Jesus. Everyone had heard of Jesus. And there was great interest in Him. Some were interested because they hoped He was the Messiah who would re-establish the kingdom of Israel. Others just hoped to see Jesus do something miraculous. Still others were most interested in getting healed. Bartimaeus most wanted to be cured of his blindness. He figures if Jesus can heal others of blindness, then Jesus can heal him too. So he calls out to Jesus.

I want you to see what Bartimaeus calls Jesus. He calls Jesus the "Son of David". The Jews knew from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 9:7) that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David. The fact that Bartimaeus called Jesus the Son of David shows that he believed Jesus to be the Messiah.

Notice too what else he says. "Have mercy on me!" He is asking Jesus for something he does not deserve. **Mercy means getting good things that you do not deserve.** Getting what you deserve is called justice. Bartimaeus is asking Jesus for help that he does not deserve. The crowd doesn't think he deserves help either.

You see, the common theology of that day was that suffering was always due to sin. Most people believed that God punished sins by causing you to experience suffering and hardship, even illness or worse. Blindness was pretty bad suffering. So most everyone assumed that Bartimaeus had committed some terrible sin. And now God was punishing him for that sin.

I don't hold to that teaching. But that is what most people of that day believed. We see this belief in the story of Job. Despite what they knew of Job previously, Job's friends believe that he must have committed some horrible sin. In their minds, that is why God had taken away Job's flocks, herds, servants, children, and his health. They believed God was punishing Job for some great sin. However, at the end of the book of Job God disputes that belief.

But that false theology did not die out in the days of Job. In the days of Jesus it was still quite popular. The crowd believes that Bartimaeus committed some great sin, and that is why he is blind. So most people walking by don't feel sorry for him. Many treat him with contempt, as if they are better than he is simply because they are not suffering what he is. They treat him as if he deserves the harsh life he is having to live.

So when he dares to call out to Jesus, when he dares to interrupt the great teacher who is walking by, when he dares to ask Jesus for help, the crowd rebukes him. How dare HE request anything from Jesus... is what they are thinking.

You might be thinking that about yourself today. You might be thinking how dare I ask Jesus for help out of my pit. Maybe you have convinced yourself not to ask. You might be thinking one or more of the following kinds of statements:

- "My pit is punishment for sin."
- "My pit is my own fault."
- "He won't help someone like me."
- "I don't deserve help."
- "God is too busy helping other people."
- "God doesn't care what happens to me."

It MAY be true that your pit is your fault. It IS true that you don't deserve help. But do not believe that God doesn't care about you. God cares about every person and every part of every person's life. It doesn't matter what your pit is or what the origin of your pit, God cares about YOU.

I encourage you to call on Jesus, not because of YOU are, but because of who HE is. HE is the Savior of the world. He came to earth, lived, and died, in order to help us ALL. So call on Him.

And be persistent. Despite the crowd's rebuke, Bartimaeus shouts the louder. After all, this may be his only shot at getting the kind of help he needs. He calls out to Jesus, showing faith in Jesus as Messiah. Jesus may never have passed here before and may never do so again. This may be his only opportunity ever to get help from Jesus. Now is the time to call out and he does.

Consider with me his faith. Jesus says he has faith. In fact, he has Biblical faith. By Biblical faith, I do not mean he has faith in the Bible. Instead, I mean he has the kind of faith described in the Bible. Biblical faith is belief in the power of God. Bartimaeus had Biblical faith. He believed that Jesus had the power of God to heal people. He believed that Jesus could heal him.

Based on the evidence available to him, Bartimaeus believed the Jewish prophets spoke the truth of God. He believed a Messiah was coming to redeem Israel. He believed that Jesus was that Messiah. He believed the power of God was in Jesus to cure His blindness. So He called out to Jesus for the healing he desired.

Biblical faith believes/trusts in the existence of God, believes/trusts in the goodness/kindness of God, believes/trusts that anything God says is true, and believes/trusts that any promise made by God will come about.

It is with this kind of faith that Bartimaeus calls out to Jesus for help. Note the object of Bartimaeus' faith. He wanted to see. But his faith was not in being healed. His faith was in Jesus. **He believed Jesus COULD heal him. He did not believe Jesus WOULD heal him.** His faith was not in the outcome he desired. His faith was not in his own ability to believe. His faith was in Jesus. Only Jesus could heal him.

Too often someone will mischaracterize Biblical faith as a belief that something you want will happen. That is a false teaching. The object of your faith must not be in some desired outcome. The object of your faith must be Jesus.

This is the kind of faith Jesus sees in Bartimaeus. This is the kind of faith Jesus is looking for from us, too.

Bartimaeus believed that Jesus **COULD** heal him. He did not believe that Jesus **WOULD** heal him. Jesus had not promised to heal him. God had not promised to heal him. Biblical faith is not believing that God **WILL** do something He has not specifically promised to do. No, the faith Bartimaeus had was only that Jesus **COULD** heal him. He **HOPED** Jesus would heal him. That is why he asks Jesus for help. But Jesus was not obligated to do so just because Bartimaeus asked Him to.

Today, put your faith in Jesus. He **CAN** help you. And He **MIGHT** do so, but only in response to your faith and you asking.

I have a riddle for you. There were four frogs sitting on a log. One decided to jump into the pond. How many were left? ... Four. The one only decided to jump in. He didn't actually jump in. He remained on the log.

Faith in Jesus does you no good if you don't act on it. If Bartimaeus had believed fully in the identity and power of Jesus, but had failed to call out to Him for mercy, he would not have been healed.

So you must call out to Jesus for mercy today. He does not promise to solve every pit problem. But you will not get help without faith and asking. So today put your faith in Jesus and ask Him for the help you need.

Now, we know that Jesus could do more than heal the man's blindness. Jesus could also forgive him his sins. Blindness was a temporary problem. Sin, unless forgiven, is an eternal problem, with an eternal consequence. We all have a sin problem. And while I encourage you to ask Jesus for help out of your pit, I even more encourage you to ask Him for help out of your sinful condition.