

Seeing Blind



Mark 10:46-52

Have any of you ever asked somebody if they wanted to go somewhere with you, but before they would answer, they wanted to know where you were going. Before they would commit to going with you, they asked what you were going to be doing when you get there. Then, when they hear where you're going and what you're going to be doing, they answer, "No, I don't want to go." There were a couple of times at the campground this weekend when I would ask G, "Garnet, do you want to go with Papaw?" He would look at me and say, "Where are you going Papaw?" I would tell him where I was going, and he would say, "What are you going to do Papaw?" I would tell him what I was going to do and he would say, "Nah...I want to stay at the camper with Memish." Sometimes, we want to know what we're going to be doing because we generally believe if we're going somewhere with somebody, whatever they're going to be doing, we're going to be doing. We're going to be involved in it, so we really want to know the answer to those questions before we commit to whether or not we really want to go or not. Earlier in Mark's gospel, Jesus began to set His face to Jerusalem. This morning, when we open to Mark chapter 10, we're at the last stop before Jesus is going to be where He finally wants to be. Next week when we actually get there in Jerusalem, within eight days, He will fully fulfill what He told His disciples He came to do. Open to Mark chapter 10. We're going to read verses 46-52 and this is going to end a section that we started in chapter 8:22, a section on discipleship. When we

come in here next week, we're going to begin Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem. It takes Mark ten chapters, starting with the baptism of Jesus, to get us to Jerusalem. You remember we've been going at breakneck speed. Once Mark gets to Jerusalem, the last eight days of Jesus ministry, it will take him six chapters to record. It only took him ten chapters to record the first three and a half years of His life in His ministry as the Son of Man. Next week, we're going to begin the last part of Mark, and it's going to be forty percent of the gospel and it's just going to cover a little over a week of Jesus' life. You have to note that. This is not a diary about Jesus written by Mark; it's a gospel. Mark has a point. If we're not careful, we're don't understand how deep the gospels really are. In my opinion, the gospels are the deepest part of the Word of God. They're just packed with truth. Many times, we just put our floaties on and just skim the surface of a gospel. This morning, we're going to slow down and it's so important that we see why Mark tells us about this man who Jesus stopped to heal (the last man He is going to heal) before He goes to a cross, and He names him.

Scripture

"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. 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!" And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 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." 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."

(Prayer)

Father, what a story. I pray You give us the ability to unpack the truth of this story as we see it, as Mark takes time to give us detail about Jesus as He gets ready to leave Jericho and finally get to Jerusalem to do what He came to do. Father, we've got to see this morning how this story fits into the gospel so that as we read Mark's gospel, we're never the same, and we understand the propose Mark had for writing this gospel to a church during the day of the Roman Empire, and we would understand under the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit why You put it in the Bible so that a church in Hardin Kentucky could be encouraged by this gospel of Jesus. Father, open our eyes to see what blind Bartimaeus saw. It's in Your precious holy name we pray, amen.

If you've been with us regularly in our study, you will remember when we come to Mark chapter 8:22-26, we shared with you how we were beginning a new section in the gospel of Mark. That section that we began officially ends this morning. This section, the primary teaching from Mark chapter 8:27-10:45 speaks about discipleship and it talks about what it means to be a fully devoted follower of Christ. If you'll remember, when Mark begins this section of Scripture, he tells us about Jesus and the disciples coming to Bethsaida, and they meet a blind man there and Jesus attempts to heal the blind man. When He spits in the blind man's eyes, touches his eyes, and asks the man if he can see, the man immediately said I can see, but I see men walking around like trees. It was the first time Jesus seemingly failed at what He intended to do. Normally when Jesus healed somebody, they're just instantly healed. This time, when Jesus touched the man, his sight was blurry at first. Once the man said that he saw men walking around like trees, Jesus touched his eyes again, and this time when He removed His hand, the man could see clearly. We told you that Jesus and Mark have a purpose for this. Jesus is getting ready to set His eye on Jerusalem, and begins to teach His disciples about what is going to happen to Him once He gets to Jerusalem. He tells them what it ultimately means to be a follower of Him. Here's what He wants us,

the audience, to know as we read this gospel and see the life of the disciples. He wants us to understand that as the church, when we look at the disciples, they don't fully get it. They think they get it, just like some of us think we get it, but Mark is trying to say they don't get it. They're just like this man who was just healed. He's healed, but when he first sees he doesn't see clearly. Everything is blurry, fuzzy. He has blurry vision. That's because they're living on this side of the cross. This is because they haven't been to Jerusalem yet. What Mark is trying to tell is that you can't really know who Jesus is until He gets to Jerusalem and accomplishes what He came to accomplish, and that is to die on a cross for us so that we can be redeemed from our sin. Immediately, He touches the man and immediately he perceives.

Then He begins this teaching about who He is as the Messiah. He tells His disciples three times in this next section, chapters 8, 9, and 10; we're going to Jerusalem, and when we get there, don't panic. I'm going to fall into the hands of sinful men and they're going to kill Me. The moment He said kill Me, they panicked and never heard what He said next, which was, after three days I will rise again. Peter just rebuked Him for that thought. He rapped Jesus across the knuckles and said this will never happen to You! Jesus has to rebuke Peter. In that first episode, Jesus began to talk about what it means to be a disciple of His. See, He's going to Jerusalem and He's going to offer Himself on a cross, He said if you're going to come after Me, you've got to deny yourself. How are we doing at denying ourselves? If you're going to come after Jesus, the first thing Jesus says is you have to deny yourself. Then He said (it gets worse) you have to take up your cross. He had a cross to bear, amen, and He said each one of us have one to bear too. We don't run from it. You can't bear your cross until you first deny yourself. If you're going to come after Jesus, you have to deny self, then you have to take up your cross, and now, you can follow Him. The second time He talked about this, the disciples were so afraid of Him talking about going to Jerusalem to do what He was going to do that the Bible says they didn't even ask a question. The third time, we just saw it a couple of weeks ago, (God bless Kory, he had to preach on that passage three times) the Bible again says they were afraid. But this time, two of them, after hearing Jesus say what He said, actually said to Jesus 'we want you to do for us what we want.' Jesus said what do you want me to do,

and they actually said could you let me and my brother sit on Your right and left hand side? It caused a division among the disciples. I want you to hear this. In the midst of this teaching that is not an historical diary, it's a gospel, Mark is trying to tell us what Jesus believes following Him means. It's about being a disciple. Basically, He tells us in being a disciple, from our perspective it's impossible; but from God's perspective, all things are possible. Being a disciple of Christ is not something that we can do on our own; it's something that God must do through us. Give us that ability to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and ultimately follow Him.

Now, we're at the last section that's going to serve as a bookend, so I want you to see this. We have a bookend of Mark 8:22-26, then we have the actual section of discipleship that starts with verse 27 and goes to verse 45 of chapter 10, and now this last little section is another bookend. How do I know they're bookends? Look what Mark does. Mark 8:22 says, "And they came to Bethsaida." What does Jesus do? He heals a man. Now He's in Jericho, but what does the Bible say? "And they came to Jericho." Mark the storyteller uses the same phrase, 'And they came to Bethsaida, and they came to Jericho.' Guess what He does at Jericho. He heals a man who is blind. It's the same thing He did in the beginning of this section. Do you get that? Are you guys ready?

Jesus has been to Jericho. It's called the city of palms. It's seven hundred and forty feet below sea level, just right outside the Dead Sea near the Jordan River in the desert, but there's water, fresh water, and there's life, palm trees everywhere. The word, Jericho, means to smell. There were so many flowering plants that when you walked into Jericho, it just smelled different. There was the old city of Jericho that we read about in the Old Testament where Joshua and the children of Israel marched around the city and the walls fell, and then there was new Jericho where Herod had built his winter palace. It was the city in which there was that love affair between the Roman Caesar and the Queen of Egypt, (Mark Antony and Cleopatra) Mark Antony actually gave Jericho to Cleopatra as a gift. Mark says they're leaving. Now normally, Mark is trying to get to the cross as quickly as he can, so he doesn't give us many details, but now, he slows down and gives us detail. He has His disciples with Him and there's a great crowd. Get this picture. They're leaving Jericho, there is Jesus, His

disciples, and a great crowd, and Mark singles out Bartimaeus, blind beggar, son of Timaeus, sitting by the roadside. Now, Mark is writing to a Gentile audience, so when he says this man's name is Bartimaeus, he tells us in Aramaic that means he's the son of Timaeus because the name Bartimaeus literally means son of Timaeus. So here's what Mark wrote. You have Jesus leaving Jericho with His disciples and a great crowd, you have the son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus (he says it twice), except Bartimaeus is not following; he's sitting beside the road. This is going to be the bookend that's going to tell us about true discipleship that Jesus has been trying to get His disciples to see. Up until this point, they're just like the blind man in Bethsaida, they're eyes have been opened, but they have blurry vision. You and I know that just as that blind man's sight was fully restored, one day the disciples' sight is going to be fully restored and they will fully know who Jesus is.

Now we meet a second blind man, and he's sitting by the roadside. I want you to use your sanctified imagination with me and just see what the Bible is trying to say. Slow down when you read your Bible! Get over where you need to be and get over what you need to do! Listen to this picture. There's Jesus, His disciples, a great crowd, and we have Bartimaeus, a blind beggar sitting by the roadside. I don't know about you, but this is really good news to Bartimaeus because there's a big crowd of people with Jesus. He's doing what he does every day; he gets up early in the morning, goes out to sit beside the road that leads to Jerusalem, and he is so tickled because it's almost Passover, and he knows there will be a lot of people leaving Jericho because they have to be at the Passover. He knows the more people that are in that crowd, the more likely somebody will be generous to him and give him what he needs just to get through this day. If the crowd is big enough, he might get enough alms to make it two or three days, because he's a blind beggar. He lives in total darkness. He probably has a stick to help him get to where he's going. He's now sitting where all of his beggar friends are sitting begging for alms. The crowd on this day is great! That's good news because if it were a small crowd, he probably wouldn't get many alms because we all know the nature of people; we're just not very generous. I know I just insulted some of you, but how many times do you pull up in Nashville Tennessee at that stop sign and there's that little person with the sign, and you try to talk to the

person in the car with you and act like you don't even see them? You fidget with your radio. You're not going to dare roll your window down because you've already made a judgment about that person of why they're standing where they're standing, and if they were like you, they wouldn't be standing on that corner. That's why those guys are always there at rush hour. At rush hour, there are a whole lot more cars coming by, therefore, the more people, the better odds they have of a few people giving them enough to get through the day.

So here's blind Bartimaeus, sitting by the roadside, crowd passing by. Did I tell you that Jericho is thirty-five hundred feet below Jerusalem? It is eighteen to twenty miles northeast of Jerusalem, and it is almost a straight up and down climb. Sometimes we refer to this as the road to Jericho, but when you're in Jerusalem going to Jericho it's all going downhill. But when you're in Jericho climbing the same road, it's straight up, all uphill. They're getting ready to start this journey up the hill to Jerusalem, and blind Bartimaeus hears that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. I should have told you this earlier, but I've entitled this message, "Bartimaeus, the blind man who could see what others could not see." That's who Jesus is. What I'm going to share with you is my belief that in that crowd that day there were a lot of people who had eyes to see, but couldn't see. But there was a man there who had eyes that couldn't see, but he saw what those who had eyes to see couldn't see. It scares me to death that with a crowd this big that gathers three times on Sunday here at Hardin, there is a possibility there are some of us here who have eyes to see, and we're in the crowd but we really don't see who Jesus is. Because we don't see who Jesus is, we really don't see who we are. In reality, we're just like Bartimaeus; we're living in darkness. But here's a man who is literally living in darkness and he hears Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

Please get this picture. You're a beggar, but when he hears that Jesus is passing by, he knows he can't see Him, and because it's a great crowd that day, he knows Jesus probably can't see him. He doesn't draw the conclusion that Jesus is right in front of him in the crowd. He draws this conclusion, Jesus is probably somewhere else in the crowd, and I can't see Him because I'm blind, but because of all this crowd of people, He can't see me. Even though he can't see, he hears Jesus of Nazareth. When he

hears that, Mark says he cried out, "JESUS, SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!" That word, to cry out, in the Greek dictionary literally means to raise your voice to a level that is unpleasant to hear. He screamed, "JESUS!" He's not even standing; he's sitting, "SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!"

I know many times you go home, and your small children say, "Why does Bro Ricky scream?" "I don't really know." My lovely wife has tried to get me to perfect my scream to where I scream and it doesn't sound squeaky. I can't tell you how many times, I've been told, "Don't use that squeaky voice!" So I try not to have a squeaky voice. This week, a little girl on Wednesday night said, "Bro Ricky, why do you scream at us from time to time?" I don't know, but I know why Bartimaeus was screaming. He's living in total darkness. He's a beggar. He can't see where Jesus is, but he hears Jesus is in the crowd, and he probably believes Jesus can't see him. So here's what he knows; if Jesus can't see him, he's going to make sure Jesus hears him, and he screams. Jesus is the name the angel told Joseph to give to Jesus because when He comes, He will save His people from their sins. But he says more than Jesus of Nazareth. I don't know why we translate this Jesus of Nazareth because in the Greek it says "Jesus the Nazarene." This isn't talking about where He was born, it isn't talking about His hometown; it's talking about who He is. The city named Nazareth literally means branch.

I believe that Bartimaeus, being a Jew, understood that the prophet, Isaiah, and the prophet, Jeremiah, looked forward to when the righteous branch would come and He would reign as the Messiah, as the King who would execute righteousness and justice in the land. Isaiah pictures Him as of the root of Jesse as a branch, a shoot. Therefore, he cries out, "Jesus, Messiah," not just Messiah, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" I want you to listen to that. He's a beggar. He understands because of his condition of being blind, living in darkness, he has no way to be self-sufficient. He has to depend on the generosity of others. But when he turns his attention to Jesus, he asks for mercy. I was raised to believe that when we talk about being saved by grace and mercy, when we're saved by grace, what grace basically means is God giving to us what we don't deserve...a right standing with Him. But mercy, that's the negative side. It's what God

withholds from us. So while God is giving us grace, He's withholding what we really deserve. He gives us what we don't deserve, and He withholds what we do deserve. I'm glad Bartimaeus lived when he did and not in this world today. If he had been living in the United States of America, he would have blamed somebody for being born blind. He would have lived his whole life believing he didn't deserve the life he had. He would have moaned, bellyached, and griped. He brought himself before God and said, God, I deserve the life I'm living. He recognized he was a sinner. He recognized he doesn't even deserve what Christ could do for him, so he puts it under the heading of 'be merciful to me.'

Do you know what somebody in the crowd had the audacity to do? They told him to be quiet! I don't know about you, but here's what I'm envisioning. I'm not seeing this guy sitting on the side of the road crying out, "JESUS, SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!" and them saying, "Shhh, would you be quiet." I see somebody saying, "Would you shut up! What do you think you're doing? How dare you holler at Him that way!" I'm going to tell you, Bartimaeus wasn't embarrassed. Have you ever hollered at somebody and they didn't look, someone else did? You got embarrassed. We were leaving the campground last night and I saw little G playing with Hudson. Even though we had been together for two days, I rolled down the window and hollered out, "G!" G and Hudson were the only two that didn't look. Five campsites before them all looked. I just wanted to hide and let them see Celisa in the truck! Blind Bartimaeus...do you know what he did when they told him to shut up? Do you know what he did when they told him to be quiet? Mark says they rebuked him, rapped him across the knuckles. But Bartimaeus said, "SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!" The Bible says Jesus stopped. Whoa...that's powerful. Do you know what Mark really wrote? He wrote, "Jesus stood still."

Get this picture. Jesus is leading His disciples, a great crowd, He stops, and a chain reaction happens...everybody stops. Why did He stop? Because there was a blind beggar. A guy like the guy standing by the stop sign in Nashville on the side of the road stopped Jesus. Jesus' world stood still for moment. Even though Mark is trying to get Him to the cross as fast as he can, Mark now has Him stopped. He turns to those around Him and says, "Call him." Can you imagine that chain of command as it goes through that

crowd? Someone said, hey, be of good cheer, take heart, get up, He's calling for you! Then Mark records with detail like never before. Here's this man, sitting down, and all of a sudden, the Bible says he left his cloak. Guys this man's a beggar. Jesus doesn't tell him what to do, but he leaves his cloak. Do you remember the story last week about the ruler who was rich? What did Jesus tell him he had to get rid of? Everything he had, everything he trusted in he had to get rid of it, and he went away sorrowful. Jesus has Mark record this man leaving everything he had. It wasn't just a cloak; it was what he spread out to receive alms on. It's what he wrapped around himself of a night. It was the essence of his life, and Mark says he left it. I know somebody is going to say he probably was going to come back and get it later. Really? You're blind, you've been living in darkness, and you leave it behind in a great crowd of people? Not on his life! I think when he sprang up to answer the call of Jesus he knew he was never going to need that cloak again. The Bible says he sprang up. He literally jumped to his feet! And he came to Jesus. Now, the other two gospel writers tell us people brought him to Jesus. Can you see that crowd as it starts to divide like the Red Sea? All of a sudden, he's now standing in the presence of Jesus, and Jesus looks at this man and says, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Earlier in this chapter, James and John, supposedly followers of Christ, disciples of Christ with blurry vision, said to Jesus when He asked them the same question, and they said let us sit on Your right and Your left in Your glory. Can you imagine that? Do you hear me? Can you imagine somebody in here serving in this church saying to God, would You let me be in the seat of distinction along with my buddy, my brother? How dare some of us believe we are at the place to be that elevated above other people! And these were the followers of Christ, these were the people who were supposed to deny self, take up their cross and follow Him! He's getting ready to go to a cross and lay His life down, and they want to sit on the right and left hand side in glory! They have eyes to see, but they do not see! Why is this story in the Bible? It is because some of us have eyes to see, but we do not see! But here is a blind man, but he could see what James, John, and the crowd could not see.

So when Jesus asked what do you want Me to do for you, can you imagine? We don't know if this man was born blind, but he says recover my sight. We don't know if he could see and, like so many people in the Middle East because of the climate and unsanitary conditions they live in, they lose their eyesight. But you haven't seen anything in years, maybe never seen anything in your life and you've heard all the stories of how the world looks, and Jesus says to you, "What do you want Me to do for you?" What would you want Him to do?

The man just quickly says "Rabboni," but let's be careful here. This word is translated, Rabbi, in most of our bibles, but it's a word that's not used by the Jewish people to refer to man. It's a derivative of the word, Rabbi, which means teacher, but Rabboni was used by the Jewish people only to talk about God, and they usually only used this word when they prayed to God. It's a word that literally to them meant they were acknowledging who God was; God as master and Lord. Here's this man who was blind who can now see what no one else can see, and that's who Jesus really is, master and Lord.

So standing before his master and Lord, Bartimaeus said, "...let me recover my sight." It's such a simple request, such an ordinary request. When we've just seen those with blurry vision ask to be on the right and left in glory, all this guy wants is to see. Jesus says, (ESV) "Go your way, your faith has made you well." The ESV interprets this phrase 'your faith has made you well' because Jesus is dealing with a physical healing. The man is blind and is now going to be able see. So after he can see, Jesus pronounces him well. Just like if we go to the doctor when we're sick, they prescribe something, and we get better, we're now well. Do you get it? What Jesus actually said was this, (I know some of you aren't going to like this) "your faith has saved you."

Whoa...whoa. Mark has just recorded Jesus saying discipleship and salvation from man's perspective is impossible. There's nothing we can do. It would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. The disciples said who, then, can be saved? They're realizing nobody can be saved. Jesus said you're right; it's impossible to be saved, from man's perspective, but with God, all things are possible. If you remember in this gospel, we started out with Jesus

healing and every time somebody would touch Jesus, they would be healed, and all of a sudden, a crowd of people wanting to follow Jesus because they believe all they've got to do is touch Him. Everybody believes they have it within themselves to touch Jesus and be healed. Now Mark has been telling us no, no, no. He's having Jesus say it's not your touch that saved you; it's your faith that saved you. Now Mark is making the message plain. Do you know why this man can now see? It's because he had faith. Yeah, faith. He believed Jesus was who He was, and he believed Jesus would be merciful to him, so he trusted Christ. The moment he trusted Christ, he was made whole; he was saved.

Now watch this. I love this! This isn't Bro Ricky; this is the Word of God. Jesus didn't say you've been saved, now go your way. He says to a blind man, 'go your way, your faith has saved you.' You see this, right? He actually has to turn and go away, believing he's been healed. Wouldn't it be so much easier to be healed than go your way? No, go your way, and not you *will* be healed; you *have* been healed. Instantly, he could see! Do you know what he decided to do? He's now looking at a hill that is thirty-five hundred feet in elevation, and at the top of that hill is a city called Jerusalem, it's going to be the Passover, Jesus is going to Jerusalem, He's going to die on a cross in Jerusalem, He's going to be raised again, and Bartimaeus decides, by faith, he's going to follow Jesus. Wow!

I want to leave you with this thought. I want you to let the Holy Spirit of God use it in your life. Here's what I believe this bookend says. If your faith does not lead to discipleship, you are not really saved. What is discipleship according to Mark? I said that wrong. This is the gospel of Mark about Jesus. It was Jesus who said in Mark's gospel you have to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me. Here's what our faith will lead us to do if we're really saved. We'll deny ourselves, each one of us. As a believing husband, wife, father, mother, child, business owner, or employee, we will deny ourselves. We'll battle that unredeemed flesh in us that wants to exalt us and get our way, and have God bless us instead of us being a blessing to Him. He says we will deny self. Once we've denied self, now you'll take up your cross. Jesus didn't run from the cross; He embraced the cross. If you're going to follow Him, you have a cross too. You take it up; you pack it around. You can't take up your cross until you

deny self. Once you've denied self, taken up your cross, you will follow Him. You'll be where He is doing what He's doing, and your life will be about Him, not about you. Here's the question. Do you see? You say it's kind of blurry. No, no, no...listen to me. We don't have the gospel so that we could look at Peter and go, oh man, I'm just like Peter! I sometimes speak when I shouldn't speak. No, we don't look at the disciples that way; we look at the disciples and say they shouldn't have been the way they were. Oh yeah, I know why they were the way they were, they were on that side of the cross. If you want to compare yourself to one of the apostles, do it after the cross, amen. Do you get it? We are the people who have been to Jerusalem, and we've seen what He did. We now know what it means to deny self, take up our cross, and follow Him.