

## "Once Blind; Now I See" - Mark 10:46-52

*Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)*

Jesus spoke those words to Nicodemus, whom He called the teacher of the Jews. Of course, He was speaking about spiritual blindness. Every one of us was born spiritually blind. In our fallen state, we were incapable of discerning the very Light of life. And there was absolutely nothing we could do about it.

We needed to be reborn. We needed the Holy Spirit to breathe life into us and then we could understand our desperate state. Then we could turn, in faith, to Jesus. Then, not only could we see the Kingdom of God, we were ushered in as members in good standing. But God had to heal our spiritual blindness. If you can trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you were once blind; but, by God's grace, now you see.

This morning, we are going to see the very last healing miracle of Jesus' earthly ministry. It is the healing of a blind man named Bartimaeus, certainly, a notable sign, but it's not at all unusual for Jesus. His compassion was always on display. He healed the sick, caused the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, freed people from demon possession, even raised the dead to life. This wasn't the first time He restored sight to a blind person, but giving Bartimaeus his physical sight was not the greatest miracle performed that day. I'll show you a greater miracle as we make our way through the text.

Now, Jesus and His disciples are on the way to Jerusalem for Passover. They had been in the region called Perea, on the East bank of the Jordan River. They have crossed over the river, probably on some sort of ferry. Scripture doesn't tell us that, but in the spring of the year, the Jordan would have been filled to overflowing. Forging the river was not possible. They arrived in the city of Jericho.

Jericho is an ancient city, and of course, it figures prominently in the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan. "Joshua fit the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down." It is 846 feet below sea level and is surrounded by desert, but Jericho itself is well-watered by natural springs and Herod had built the city up to use as his winter palace. It is a city where palms and fruit trees grow well.

Jerusalem, is about a 15 mile walk from Jericho. It's not a particularly easy hike because Jerusalem sits 2,490 feet above sea level, so if you do the math, you find that the walk involves a 3,336 foot elevation gain. But it's definitely doable in a day, about a 6 hour journey, not counting breaks. We learn from Luke, that Jesus and His disciples would spend the night at Zacchaeus' house, and continue on in the morning.

Now, let's get to Mark's account.

*Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. (Mark 10:46)*

Just a couple quick comments about this verse. First of all, notice how Mark identifies the blind beggar by name and lineage. I think it is significant. I think it is very likely that Bartimaeus was well-known in the Christian community. Mark doesn't always identify those Jesus helped by name, but he does this guy. I think it's because folks knew him.

Secondly, Bartimaeus was sitting by the road begging. Remember, there would be hundreds, or even thousands of folks making their way up the hill to Jerusalem. Many

would be in a festive mood, willing to provide alms. So, this would be a great place for a beggar to hang out.

We've talked about this before, but Bartimaeus would have been considered the most wretched of men. Being blind, he could do nothing else but beg and in their theology, if you were blind, it was because you were cursed by God. He would be held in contempt by everyone. The only thing worse in their culture was to be a tax collector.

But Jesus has compassion for the most contemptible among us. Passing through Jericho, He would stop to bless this blind beggar and as we learn from Luke, he would also stop to bless the chief tax collector.

*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!" Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47-48)*

Jesus had drawn quite a crowd ... a great multitude, and it was apparently pretty noisy. From Luke, we get an additional detail.

*... [Bartimaeus] asked what it meant. (Luke 18:36)*

As this mass of folks passed by, following Jesus, Bart asked someone what was going on and somebody told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

Clearly, Bartimaeus had heard about Jesus, and what He had accomplished. And Bart had come to exactly the right conclusion. He cried: "*Jesus, Son of David.*" That is a Messianic title. Bartimaeus understood that Jesus was none other than the promised Messiah, the Christ. And he cried out for mercy.

Many in the crowd just told him to shut up. The Greek word translated "be quiet" is *siōpaō* (σιωπάω). It's a strong word; they weren't nice about it at all. Remember, he was blind, so they considered him to be the scum of the earth and under God's judgement.

That's not what Jesus thought.

*So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. (Mark 10:49)*

Now, remember, Jesus was pressing toward Jerusalem. He was goal oriented. He had an appointment to keep that was of cosmic importance. But at the cry of this blind beggar, He stood still. He took notice. Jesus will always take notice when the humble heart cries out for mercy.

It is why He came to earth. He is not interested in justifying the self-righteous. Remember the story about the Pharisee who thanked God that he was so pious and special?

*The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' (Luke 18:11-12)*

That guy was not justified. The tax collector was.

*And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' (Luke 18:13)*

Jesus heard blind Bartimaeus crying for mercy. He stopped, and called for him.

*Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." (Mark 10:49)*

Am I wrong? This seems like a bit of a change in heart among those following Jesus. A moment ago, they were telling the guy to shut up. Now they are telling him to be of good cheer. Talk about fickle!

*And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. (Mark 10:50)*

Throwing aside his garment! This indicates a significant amount of enthusiasm. Let me tell you, whenever Jesus calls, the only logical way to respond is with enthusiasm! When Jesus calls, you have to come. No hesitation. No delay.

Now, I suspect that he might have needed a bit of help. I think that's why Luke reads a little differently.

*Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. (Luke 18:40)*

The guy was blind, after all, so he would need somebody to show him the way. But there was no hesitation on his part. He just chucked his coat aside and came to Jesus.

*So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51)*

This is interesting. Do you notice it is exactly the same question Jesus asked James and John up in verse 36? "What do you want me to do for you?" But James' and John's request was denied. Bartimaeus' request would be granted.

*So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?"  
The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." (Mark 10:51)*

Rabboni is a title of great honor. He isn't just calling Jesus "teacher". The word literally means "my master". Luke records that Bartimaeus addressed Him as Lord – kurios (κύριος). So, it's very likely that Bart called Jesus both Lord and Master.

*Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, (Luke 18:42-43)*

Now, at first glance, it sounds like Bartimaeus is being commended, that he is being rewarded for his great faith. You might be tempted to think that Jesus could only do what He did because Bart demonstrated this faith. But remember, faith is a gift provided by a gracious God.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; **it is the gift of God**, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

So Bartimaeus doesn't get to boast about his great faith. Instead, he needs to give the glory to Jesus and, he did.

*Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road. (Mark 10:52)*

Bartimaeus glorified Jesus by following Him. He was among the throng that followed Christ as He made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. I would not be at all surprised if he was one of the 120 folks in the upper room at Pentecost.

This was a great miracle, yet another sign that Jesus is exactly who He says He is. As I said before, this would be the last healing miracle Jesus would perform before He went to the cross. But the fact that blind Bartimaeus was given his sight is not the greatest miracle that took place on the road through Jericho that day.

Let's take a closer look at what Jesus told Bartimaeus.

*Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well."  
(Mark 10:52)*

Well, is a translation of the Greek word sozo (σώζω). That word occurs 110 times in the Bible. It is translated as "made whole" 11 times. It is translated "heal" or be healed 3 times. 93 times, it is translated as some iteration of "saved". What Jesus literally said is "your faith has saved you."

This is the greater miracle. Salvation of the lost sinner is the greatest miracle Jesus performs. The price He paid is beyond human comprehension. Jesus ...

*... who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:6-8)*

Millions of eternities in hell endured by the sinless Christ as He hung on the cross!

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

In our natural state, our sin-filled state, we are absolutely blind. We can't even see the kingdom of God. In order to get right with God, we need an infusion of light. We need to be born again by the Holy Spirit. Only God can do that. Only Jesus can make it happen; and He told us so.

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)*

Are you like blind Bartimaeus this morning? Not blind physically, but blind spiritually. Are you sitting at the side of the road completely unable to see the kingdom of heaven? Then cry out to Jesus. Cry, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Confess Him as Lord and believe that He was raised from the dead. (Romans 10:9) Receive Jesus. Receive salvation. Because ...

*... as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)*