

Mark 10:46-52

⁴⁶Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. ⁵¹"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." ⁵²"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Mark 10:46-52

THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN JESUS AND BARTIMAEUS IS FAMILIAR TO MANY, BUT WHAT WE MAY NOT ALWAYS RECOGNIZE IS THAT IT IS MUCH MORE THAN JUST A STORY ABOUT JESUS HEALING SOMEONE.

LET US THEREFORE TAKE SOME TIME THINK ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING ON WITH BOTH JESUS AND BARTIMAEUS.

ONE DAY IN JERICHO A BLIND MAN NAMED BARTIMAEUS AWOKE AND BEGAN THE DAY MUCH LIKE HE HAD THE DAY BEFORE, AND EXPECTED TO DO THE NEXT DAY, AND THE DAY AFTER THAT.

HE GATHERED HIS CLOAK AND WALKING STICK AND MADE HIS WAY, EITHER ALONE OR WITH HELP, TO THE ROADSIDE WHERE HE WOULD SEEK THE ALMS HE NEEDED TO SURVIVE.

PERHAPS HE ATE A PIECE OF BREAD HE HAD SAVED FROM THE DAY BEFORE, OR MAYBE HE HAD A COIN OR TWO TO BUY BREAKFAST.

THEN AGAIN, HE MIGHT HAVE BEGUN THAT DAY IN HUNGER, HOPING TO BE GIVEN A BITE OF FOOD ALONG WITH A FEW COINS THAT DAY.

ONCE HE ARRIVED NEAR THE GATE LEADING FROM JERICHO TO JERUSALEM, BARTIMAEUS SEATED HIMSELF ON HIS CLOAK AND CALLED OUT FOR ALMS, MUCH LIKE THE OTHER BEGGARS WHO WERE NEARBY HIM.

ONE MIGHT WONDER IF HE EVER THOUGHT BACK ON WHAT HIS LIFE HAD BEEN LIKE BEFORE HE LOST HIS SIGHT, OR WHAT HE MIGHT HAVE DONE, OR BECOME, WERE HE NOT BLIND.

OF COURSE HE HAD NO CHOICE NOW, BUT TO SPEND HIS LIFE SEEKING CHARITY FROM OTHERS IN ORDER TO SURVIVE. AFTER ALL, EVEN IF HE HAD HAD SOME MEANS TO MAKE A LIVING WITHOUT HIS EYE-SIGHT, IT WAS NOT PERMITTED.

THOSE WHO WERE LAME OR BLIND OR OTHERWISE AFFLICTED WITH A DISABILITY OR DISEASE WERE NOT PERMITTED TO WORK, EVEN IF THEY COULD.

THEY WERE NOT PERMITTED TO ENTER THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM TO WORSHIP. THE ONE THING THEY WERE PERMITTED TO DO IF THEY DID NOT HAVE A FAMILY ABLE TO SUPPORT THEM, WAS TO BE A BEGGAR.

AND SO, FOR BARTIMAEUS AND OTHERS IN A SIMILAR SITUATION, THEY HAD TO FIND A PLACE BY A ROADSIDE GATE OR SOME OTHER PROMINENT LOCATION, HOPING TO CATCH PEOPLE IN A CHARITABLE MOOD.

THOSE LIVING AMONG THEIR FELLOW JEWS HAD A REASONABLE EXPECTATION OF RECEIVING AT LEAST SOMETHING EACH DAY, SINCE EVERY GOOD JEW KNEW GOD'S LAW CALLED THEM TO BE CHARITABLE.

SO BARTIMAEUS SAT IN HIS SPOT AND CALLED OUT "ALMS FOR THE POOR", OR SOMETHING LIKE IT EVERY TIME HE HEARD SOMEONE APPROACHING.

OF COURSE THERE WERE OTHERS DOING THE SAME, SO THE HOPE WAS ENOUGH PEOPLE WOULD PASS BY TO PROVIDE A MEAL OR TWO FOR EACH OF THEM.

YES INDEED, IT WAS JUST ANOTHER DAY, MUCH LIKE ANY OTHER FOR BARTIMAEUS, OR SO HE THOUGHT, UNTIL HE HEARD THE SOUNDS OF A LARGE CROWD COMING HIS WAY.

SURELY THERE AROSE WITHIN HIM AND OTHERS A HOPE FOR A LITTLE MORE BOUNTY THAN USUAL, SINCE PILGRIMS HEADING TOWARDS JERUSALEM FOR THE PASSOVER WERE OFTEN FEELING GENEROUS.

THE CROWD DREW NEARER, AND BARTIMAEUS BECAME ABLE TO MAKE OUT SOME WORDS FROM THE NOISE OF THE PEOPLE, CATCHING THEIR EXCITEMENT AS WELL.

WORDS LIKE: MASTER, TEACHER, JESUS. OH WHAT EXCITEMENT HE MUST HAVE FELT TO HEAR JESUS OF NAZARETH WAS PASSING BY.

SURELY BARTIMAEUS HAD HEARD ABOUT THE TEACHER WHO ALSO HEALED THE LAME, GAVE SIGHT TO THE BLIND, AND CURED LEPERS.

AND SO, AS BARTIMAEUS HEARD THEM PASSING BY, ALTHOUGH HE COULD NOT SEE JESUS, HIS VOICE ROSE ABOVE THE OTHERS, CALLING OUT WORDS OF FAITH AND HOPE.

“JESUS, SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME.” YES, BARTIMAEUS BELIEVED WHAT HE HAD HEARD THAT JESUS DID NOT GIVE ALMS, BUT INSTEAD GAVE NEW LIFE.

HIS FAITH THAT JESUS COULD HEAL HIM WAS STRONG ENOUGH THAT HE WOULD NOT ALLOW THE CROWD TO SILENCE HIM. THEREFORE HE CONTINUED TO CRY FOR MERCY, INSTEAD OF ALMS, HOPING JESUS WOULD HEAR HIM. AND HE DID.

THE BIBLE TELLS US JESUS STOPPED, STOOD STILL AND LOOKED TOWARDS THE MAN HE HEARD CRYING OUT FOR MERCY.

JESUS CALLED FOR HIM, AND THE CROWD’S ANNOYANCE WITH BARTIMAEUS TURNED TO WELCOMING: “TAKE HEART”. IT WAS WITH THOSE WORDS WE COME TO THE TURNING POINT IN THE STORY: TAKE HEART JESUS IS CALLING YOU.

AND IT IS AMAZING THAT JESUS EVEN HEARD BARTIMAEUS AMONG NOT ONLY THE CALLS OF THE OTHER BEGGARS, BUT THE CONVERSATION AND QUESTIONS, AND PLEAS OF THE CROWD.

THERE HE WAS WITH THE TWELVE, HEADING TOWARDS JERUSALEM, AND THE CROSS.

OF COURSE JESUS STILL HAD NOT GOTTEN HIS DISCIPLES, LET ALONE ANYONE ELSE TO LISTEN TO WHAT HE WAS SAYING ABOUT HIS MISSION AND WHAT WOULD SOON HAPPEN.

JESUS, HOWEVER, EVEN WITH SO MUCH ON HIS HEART AND MIND, DID LISTEN, AND SO HE HEARD A CRY OF FAITH AND DESPERATION AND IT STOPPED HIM IN HIS TRACKS.

THEN, AT THE CALL OF THE MASTER, BARTIMAEUS JUMPED UP CASTING ASIDE HIS BEGGAR’S CLOAK AND ANYTHING ON IT AND RAN TOWARDS JESUS’ VOICE.

HE STOOD BEFORE JESUS WHO ASKED HIM WHAT IT WAS HE WANTED JESUS TO DO FOR HIM. BARTIMAEUS ASKED TO BE ABLE TO SEE AGAIN AND IMMEDIATELY HE WAS HEALED. BUT WHEN JESUS TOLD HIM TO GO HIS WAY, HE CHOSE TO FOLLOW JESUS ON THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM.

WHAT THEN, YOU MAY WONDER, MAKES THIS STORY SO DIFFERENT FROM THE MANY OTHER HEALINGS IN THE GOSPELS, APART FROM THE FACT EACH INDIVIDUAL’S STORY IS UNIQUE? ONE WAY TO FIND OUT IS TO THINK ABOUT JESUS, BARTIMAEUS, AND US.

A PASTOR NAMED GREG BUCHNER SHARED A STORY ABOUT AN EXPERIENCE HE HAD WITH HIS FAMILY, AND HOW HE CONNECTED IT TO THE STORY ABOUT JESUS AND BARTIMAEUS.

HE WAS AT MCDONALDS WITH HIS CHILDREN, WAITING IN LINE TO ORDER WHEN A THOUGHT POPPED INTO HIS HEAD. HE EXPLAINED THAT IT OCCURRED TO HIM HOW OFTEN WE COME TO JESUS AS IF HE WAS TAKING OUR ORDER FOR A SUPER VALUE MEAL.

“YES I’LL HAVE A REASSURANCE SANDWICH, WITH A SIDE OF PROSPERITY, AND A LARGE REFRESHING DOSE OF HOPE, TO WASH IT ALL DOWN, AND SUPERSIZE IT!”

HIS POINT IS THAT TOO OFTEN WE TAKE JESUS FOR GRANTED, AND CALL TO HIM FOR ALMS, INSTEAD OF SEEKING HIS POWER IN OUR LIVES, LIKE BARTIMAEUS DID.

WHILE THE STORY OF JESUS AND BARTIMAEUS OFFERS US POWERFUL IMAGE OF PRAYER CENTERING GOD’S ATTENTION ON US, IT ALSO ASKS US TO THINK ABOUT HOW WE PRAY.

DO WE USUALLY APPROACH GOD WITH THE SAME LEVEL OF ENTHUSIASM OR EXPECTATION WE HAVE WHEN ORDERING FOOD?

OR ARE OUR PRAYERS FILLED WITH HEARTFELT SINCERITY? THE TRUTH IS WE HAVE PROBABLY APPROACHED GOD, BOTH WAYS, AT DIFFERENT TIMES IN OUR LIVES.

THERE IS ALSO THE FACT THAT WE MAY NOT ALWAYS THINK ABOUT WHAT IT IS WE ARE PRAYING FOR, IN THE SENSE OF WHAT THE REAL NEEDS ARE FOR OURSELVES OR OTHERS.

THINK AGAIN ABOUT ORDERING FAST FOOD AND WHY WE DO IT. IS OUR REAL NEED FOR THE BURGER AND FRIES OR WHATEVER IT IS WE ORDER? OR IS OUR REAL NEED HUNGER?

THE REAL NEED IS HUNGER, BECAUSE EVEN IF WE HAVE A CRAVING FOR A CERTAIN KIND OF FOOD, IF WE ARE NOT HUNGRY WE WILL NOT EAT IT.

SO WHEN IT COMES TO OUR PRAYERS, IT CAN BE HELPFUL AT TIMES, TO PAUSE AND THINK ABOUT WHAT IT IS WE REALLY NEED GOD TO DO FOR US, OR OTHERS?

IN OTHER WORDS-IS IT HEALING, OR IS IT HELP WITH SOMETHING ELSE, WE REALLY ARE ASKING GOD FOR? PERHAPS WE ARE ACTUALLY TELLING GOD WE DESPERATELY NEED OUR LIVES TO CHANGE, OR TO STAY THE SAME.

IS THE GREATEST NEED THE ITEMS ON OUR PRAYER LIST, OR IT IS FOR SALVATION, AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION, OR A NEED FOR US TO DRAW CLOSER TO GOD?

AND, WILL WE TRUST THE LORD ENOUGH TO GIVE US WHAT WE NEED EVEN IF IT MEANS SAYING “NO” TO WHAT WE ASK? REMEMBER JESUS AND BARTIMAEUS-HE ASKED FOR HEALING, AND JESUS GAVE HIM HIS SIGHT BACK.

BUT WHAT IF THE THING BARTIMAEUS REALLY NEEDED WAS BETTER SHELTER, PLENTY OF FOOD AND THE COMPANIONSHIP OF FRIENDS OR FAMILY?

AFTER ALL BARTIMAEUS WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO BEG FOR ALMS, AND PERHAPS HE HAD BEEN BLIND SO LONG THAT HE LOST OR NEVER ACQUIRED SKILLS TO EARN A LIVING.

THE MORE MERCIFUL THING FOR JESUS TO DO, UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, MIGHT HAVE BEEN TO ARRANGE FOR OTHERS TO TAKE HIM INTO THEIR HOUSEHOLD AND CARE FOR HIM.

SO WE, LIKE BARTIMAEUS, ARE ENCOURAGED TO CRY OUT TO GOD TRUSTING IN HIM TO MEET OUR REAL NEEDS, AND DOING SO WITH PERSEVERANCE.

AGAIN, THINK ABOUT BARTIMAEUS. HE REFUSED TO BE SILENT WHEN HE WAS ORDERED BY THE CROWD TO SHUT UP. AND NOT LISTENING TO THEM MIGHT HAVE CAUSED THOSE WHO LIVED IN JERICHO TO NOT GIVE HIM ANYTHING IN THE FUTURE, IF JESUS DID NOT HEAL HIM.

HOWEVER BARTIMAEUS, WHO TRUSTED JESUS COULD HEAL HIM, PLACED HIMSELF IN HIS HANDS, AND CALLED OUT UNTIL JESUS RESPONDED. NOTICE, BARTIMAEUS DID NOT LET ANYONE OR ANYTHING GET BETWEEN HIM AND JESUS, NOT EVEN THE CROWD OR HIS CLOAK.

THIS BRINGS TWO THINGS WHICH THE STORY REVEALS. FIRST, WE ARE REMINDED TO NOT STEP BETWEEN JESUS AND ANYONE ELSE.

SADLY, EVEN WELL MEANING CHRISTIANS MIGHT DO THIS BY TELLING OTHERS THEY SHOULD NOT PRAY SELFISHLY OR BOTHER GOD WITH CERTAIN REQUESTS. OR THAT THEY HAVE TO CHANGE THEIR LIVES BEFORE GOD WILL LISTEN TO THEM.

IT IS NOT OUR PLACE OR ANYONE ELSE'S TO DECIDE THOSE THINGS, GOD IS PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF MAKING HIS OWN ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE.

AND, SOMETIMES EVEN A LESS THAN "WORTHY" PRAYER MAY OPEN THE DOOR TO A DEEPER OR MORE SINCERE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD.

THE OTHER THING THE STORY REMINDS US ABOUT IS THE FACT THAT WE ARE CALLED TO TRUST THE LORD TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS, AS WELL AS TO RESPOND ACCORDING TO HIS WILL.

IN SHORT, WE HAVE TO TRUST IN GOD TO TAKE CONTROL ONCE WE ASK FOR HIM TO DO SO. HERE IS ANOTHER STORY THAT MAY ENCOURAGE US TO DO THIS MORE OFTEN:

A MAN HAD A FRIEND WHO WAS A VERY EXPERIENCED PILOT OF A SMALL PLANE. HE HAD FLOWN ALL OVER THE COUNTRY IN ALL KINDS OF WEATHER.

ONE DAY THE FRIEND OF THE PILOT WAS INVITED ON A PLANE RIDE. IT WAS A GOOD DAY FOR BOTH MEN, UNTIL WHILE THEY WERE HEADING HOME AND THINGS BEGAN TO GO WRONG.

THE ENGINE BEGAN TO SPUTTER AND LOSE POWER, THE ALTITUDE DROPPED SOME. WHILE THE PILOT WAS PERFECTLY CALM AS HE ADJUSTED KNOBS AND SWITCHES, HIS FRIEND WAS NOT.

THE PASSENGER LATER SHARED HE HAD TO FIGHT THE URGE TO GRAB THE CO-PILOTS WHEEL AND TRY TO TAKE CONTROL. HOWEVER, THE PASSENGER DID NOT KNOW HOW TO FLY A PLANE, BEYOND OBSERVING WHAT HIS FRIEND DID.

SO HE HAD TO TRUST HIS FRIEND TO LAND THEM SAFELY, WHICH HE DID. WE ALSO NEED TO TRUST IN THE LORD IN A SIMILAR WAY.

OF COURSE THIS KIND OF TRUST IS NOT ALWAYS EASY FOR US, BECAUSE LETTING GOD TAKE CONTROL MEANS GOD WILL RESPOND TO OUR PRAYERS, IN GOD'S OWN WAY.

FINALLY, THERE IS ONE MORE THING TO KEEP IN MIND CONCERNING THIS STORY AND WHAT IT HAS TO DO WITH US, AS WELL AS JESUS AND BARTIMAEUS.

THE FINAL POINT TO REMEMBER IS THAT EVEN WHEN BARTIMAEUS COULD NOT SEE JESUS, JESUS COULD AND DID SEE HIM.

WE ALSO CANNOT SEE THE LORD WITH OUR PHYSICAL EYES, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN GOD ISN'T NEARBY. AND EVEN THOUGH WE CANNOT SEE GOD, GOD CAN AND DOES SEE US.

SO LET US, LIKE BARTIMAEUS TAKE HEART AND CAST ASIDE ALL THAT HINDERS US, SO WE MAY SEEK THE LORD, WHO IS CALLING TO US. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: MARK 10:46-52

AT THE CALL OF THE MASTER, BARTIMAEUS JUMPED UP CASTING ASIDE HIS BEGGAR'S CLOAK AND ANYTHING ON IT AND RAN TOWARDS JESUS' VOICE.

HE STOOD BEFORE JESUS WHO ASKED HIM WHAT IT WAS HE WANTED JESUS TO DO FOR HIM. BARTIMAEUS ASKED TO BE ABLE TO SEE AGAIN AND IMMEDIATELY HE WAS HEALED. BUT WHEN JESUS TOLD HIM TO GO HIS WAY, HE CHOSE TO FOLLOW JESUS ON THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM.

WHAT THEN, YOU MAY WONDER, MAKES THIS STORY SO DIFFERENT FROM THE MANY OTHER HEALINGS IN THE GOSPELS, APART FROM THE FACT EACH INDIVIDUAL'S STORY IS UNIQUE? ONE WAY TO FIND OUT IS TO THINK ABOUT JESUS, BARTIMAEUS, AND US.

WHILE THE STORY OF JESUS AND BARTIMAEUS OFFERS US A POWERFUL IMAGE OF PRAYER CENTERING GOD'S ATTENTION ON US, IT ALSO ASKS US TO THINK ABOUT HOW WE PRAY.

DO WE USUALLY APPROACH GOD WITH THE SAME LEVEL OF ENTHUSIASM OR EXPECTATION WE HAVE WHEN ORDERING FOOD? OR ARE OUR PRAYERS FILLED WITH HEARTFELT SINCERITY? THE TRUTH IS WE HAVE PROBABLY APPROACHED GOD, BOTH WAYS, AT DIFFERENT TIMES IN OUR LIVES.

THERE IS ALSO THE FACT THAT WE MAY NOT ALWAYS THINK ABOUT WHAT IT IS WE ARE PRAYING FOR, IN THE SENSE OF WHAT THE REAL NEEDS ARE FOR OURSELVES OR OTHERS.

WHEN IT COMES TO OUR PRAYERS, IT CAN BE HELPFUL AT TIMES TO PAUSE AND THINK ABOUT WHAT IT IS WE ARE REALLY NEED GOD TO DO FOR US OR OTHERS?

IN OTHER WORDS-IS IT HEALING, OR IS IT HELP WITH SOMETHING ELSE, WE REALLY ARE ASKING GOD FOR? PERHAPS WE ARE TELLING GOD WE DESPERATELY NEED OUR LIVES TO CHANGE OR TO STAY THE SAME. IS THE GREATEST NEED THE ITEMS ON OUR PRAYER LIST, OR IT IS FOR SALVATION, AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION, OR A NEED FOR US TO DRAW CLOSER TO GOD?

AND WILL WE TRUST THE LORD ENOUGH TO GIVE US WHAT WE NEED EVEN IF IT MEANS SAYING "NO" TO WHAT WE ASK? WE, LIKE BARTIMAEUS, ARE ENCOURAGED TO CRY OUT TO GOD TRUSTING IN HIM TO MEET OUR REAL NEEDS AND DOING SO WITH PERSEVERANCE.

THINK ABOUT BARTIMAEUS. HE REFUSED TO BE SILENT WHEN HE WAS ORDERED BY THE CROWD TO SHUT UP. AND NOT LISTENING TO THEM MIGHT HAVE CAUSED THOSE WHO LIVED IN JERICO TO NOT GIVE HIM ANYTHING IN THE FUTURE, IF JESUS DID NOT HEAL HIM. HOWEVER BARTIMAEUS, WHO TRUSTED JESUS COULD HEAL HIM, PLACED HIMSELF IN HIS HANDS, AND CALLED OUT UNTIL JESUS RESPONDED.

THIS BRINGS TWO THINGS WHICH THE STORY REVEALS. FIRST, WE ARE REMINDED TO NOT STEP BETWEEN JESUS AND ANYONE ELSE. SADLY, EVEN WELL MEANING CHRISTIANS MIGHT DO THIS BY TELLING OTHERS THEY SHOULD NOT PRAY SELFISHLY OR BOTHER GOD WITH CERTAIN REQUESTS. OR THAT THEY HAVE TO CHANGE THEIR LIVES BEFORE GOD WILL LISTEN TO THEM. IT IS NOT OUR PLACE OR ANYONE ELSE'S TO DECIDE THOSE THINGS, GOD IS PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF MAKING HIS OWN ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE. AND, SOMETIMES EVEN A LESS THAN "WORTHY" PRAYER MAY OPEN THE DOOR TO A DEEPER OR MORE SINCERE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD.

THE OTHER THING THE STORY REMINDS US ABOUT IS THE FACT THAT WE ARE CALLED TO TRUST THE LORD TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS AS WELL AS TO RESPOND ACCORDING TO HIS WILL. WE HAVE TO TRUST IN GOD TO TAKE CONTROL ONCE WE ASK FOR HIM TO DO SO. OF COURSE THIS KIND OF TRUST IS NOT ALWAYS EASY FOR US, BECAUSE LETTING GOD TAKE CONTROL MEANS GOD WILL RESPOND TO OUR PRAYERS, IN GOD'S OWN WAY.

THE FINAL POINT TO REMEMBER IS THAT EVEN WHEN BARTIMAEUS COULD NOT SEE JESUS, JESUS COULD AND DID SEE HIM. WE ALSO CANNOT SEE THE LORD WITH OUR PHYSICAL EYES, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN GOD ISN'T NEARBY. AND EVEN THOUGH WE CANNOT SEE GOD, GOD CAN AND DOES SEE US. SO LET US, LIKE BARTIMAEUS, TAKE HEART AND CAST ASIDE ALL THE HINDER US, SO WE MAY SEEK THE LORD WHO IS CALLING TO US. AMEN