

Meet Jesus: As a Blind Man identifies Him

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[0 : 00] So if you'd like to open your Bibles, it's on page 847. It's Mark chapter 10, reading from verse 46. Mark chapter 10, from verse 46.

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 rebuking, 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's 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, Rabbi, let me recover my sight.

[1 : 13] 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. So in Mark's Gospel, Peter identified Jesus, didn't he, as the Christ.

Can you remember? Chapter 8, verse 29. And then Jesus sort of shattered Peter's expectations. Jesus explained to Peter that he was on a journey, not to an earthly throne, as Peter had imagined, but to the cross and death.

And we come to our passage, and Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem, and the cross beckons. We've got three points.

Our first point is, Bartimaeus shouts through the crowd. And look at verse 46. Can you see, Mark's telling us that there was a great crowd.

You see? A great crowd. And who was in the crowd, we might ask ourselves. Well, of course, there was the 12 disciples, wasn't there?

[2 : 23] We've got the 12 disciples, and then there'll be another group of Jesus' followers. They are also disciples as well, more generally speaking. And then we've got those who are along.

They're probably along for the spectacle. You know, they're looking at miracles, and they're eager to see a miracle. They want the thrill of it all. You can just imagine it, can't you?

And then, fourthly, in this crowd, we've got people who are journeying to Jerusalem, because it's just approaching the time of the Passover.

And so there's people on the pilgrimage going with Jesus to Jerusalem as the Passover is looming up. It's only 20 miles away. So they're all walking together. It's like a mob of football supporters, I suppose, going to Ibrox or something like that.

You can just imagine it, can't you? Taking up most of the road. Perhaps they're in high spirits, you know, full of anticipation about what's ahead. And here's Bartimaeus. He's blind, sat there at the side of the road.

[3 : 31] And because of his blindness, well, he's got no prospect of employment, has he? And that's why he's there, begging. And it's like, I guess, it's like he's drawn the short straw, isn't it, when it comes to life's opportunities.

Back to the surging crowd. And it's like the helicopters are hovering overhead. It's like the police are at the traffic junctions, directing all the traffic.

Dust's in the air. You can hear the money jingling in people's pockets. They're on the way to Jerusalem and they want to buy sacrifices. So all the atmosphere is there.

It's electric. And then suddenly, we're here, don't we? Bartimaeus calling Jesus. Look with me, friends. There, verse 47. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy on me.

He doesn't say that, does he? He says, Jesus, can you see? Son of David, have mercy on me. My surname is Bedford.

[4 : 38] And I imagine that there's some connection with the town of Bedford. Now, Jesus, well, he's got a connection with Nazareth, hasn't he?

But it's as if Bartimaeus is saying, well, I'm not actually very interested in the geographic background of Jesus. Can't you see he's the Messiah?

the son of David. The son of David. That's what he's shouting, isn't it? 2 Samuel, chapter 7. A king who will be on his throne forever, reigning for all of eternity.

It's him, says Bartimaeus. It's the son of David in your midst. It's the 2020 vision of a blind man. Sinclair says in his commentary, which actually there's just one left on the bookstore for six pounds. Sinclair says this, he says, in effect, it's the crowd who are blind, not Bartimaeus.

[5 : 36] Think about this. Bartimaeus had heard, hadn't he, all of what Jesus was doing. And he knows his Bible, he knows his Old Testament, and he's been putting it all together in his thinking, thinking it through.

And it's no different today, is it? Think about it. Today, we don't see any less of Jesus, do we, than Bartimaeus saw?

Are you with me? He's blind, he can't see Jesus, but he has God's word. And it's exactly the same today. We don't physically see Jesus, but we have his word.

And there's no need to see a miracle, is there? There's no need for us today, in the 21st century, to physically see Jesus. We've got everything that's necessary, here in God's world.

We've even got his spirit, haven't we, living in us. Isn't that amazing? So it's like a eureka moment, isn't it, for Bartimaeus here. But the crowd, well, they're oblivious to it all.

[6 : 40] They think that Bartimaeus is a nuisance. You know, they want to get to Jerusalem. That's what the crowd want. Like you're late for a, have you ever been late for an appointment and been travelling on the bus?

I have. And you're looking at the time and the bus is slowing down and you see someone waiting, you don't want the bus to stop, do you? Someone's waiting at the bus stop. You want to get to your destination, to your appointment.

And that's what the crowd want. They don't want Jesus to stop. Shut up, they say, to Bartimaeus, verse 48. Bartimaeus was blind, wasn't he, friends?

And the crowd, they want him done as well. Do you see? And this world doesn't want the likes of you and me to find Jesus, does it?

So what will he do? What will Bartimaeus do? He could have listened to the crowd, couldn't he? And gone with the flow, you know, conformed himself to the democratic will of the people.

[7 : 44] The Japanese have an expression, the nail that sticks up gets the hammer. And it's not easy, is it, to go against the flow.

Jesus says in chapter four, when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. There's the colleagues at work, isn't there?

The family, maybe a husband or a wife. So easy, isn't it, to take the route of least resistance, to go with the flow.

But now, like, he's like Oliver, isn't he? Ignoring convention. Bartimaeus, he shouts to Jesus, and perhaps there's someone here, you know, the last few days, it's like somehow Jesus has walked into your life, and you've been thinking it through.

He's there. And you hear defying convention. Maybe your family would be shocked if they knew you were here. And here's the question, which way will your life unfold from here on?

[8 : 56] Will it go the way of the crowd, the way of the world? Or will it go God's way, the way of Jesus? I have a friend, his name's Tony Smith, he lives in France now.

But about 14 years ago, Tony learned that I'd become a Christian, and Tony was very concerned for me. We'd known each other for about 15 years before that.

We used to travel around Europe racing motorcycles, vehicles, you know, living in caravans here and there. And Tony had heard I'd become a Christian and I guess he thought that I was being brainwashed or something like that.

And it was just too radical for Tony. Tony lived in Leicestershire, I lived in Derbyshire. And once a week, he would leave his wife and his children and he would set out on the 30 mile journey to come and see me, to counsel me.

I remember one week he bought a bottle of wine with him and he was trying to explain to me that Christianity would be alright if it was just a smaller aspect of my life, like a little compartment, I suppose.

[10:05] You know, like golf would be or football or something, like that. He didn't really want me to have a totally life-transforming relationship with Jesus and someone here.

You might have similar things going on just now in your life. There's that conflict. And here's Bartimaeus, the crowd don't want him to meet Jesus. But he knows Bartimaeus, he knows it's his only chance.

The Tour de France, you can be sat at the side of the road waiting for ages. And then you see a helicopter coming and then a few cars coming and there might be a motorcycle with a photographer sat the wrong way around zooming past you and then whoosh, it's gone.

You've missed it nearly. That's the Tour de France. You can be waiting for ages and suddenly it's all over and you barely see the event itself.

Bartimaeus knew that Jesus wouldn't pass this way again. And who knows friends what tomorrow will bring in your own life.

[11:13] So Bartimaeus ignores the crowd doesn't he and he seizes the opportunity. The Bible says today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart.

End of verse 47 look at him shouting Jesus son of David have mercy on me have mercy on me so so is the Greek word and it does mean mercy.

Bartimaeus wants more than his sight and he's there he wants Jesus as the deer pants for water so my soul longs after you.

You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship you. Number one Bartimaeus shouts through the crowds and our second point is Jesus hears through the crowds.

Verse 49 just look there verse 49 the whole entourage comes grinding to a stop stops isn't it and Jesus do you see the first three words Jesus stops it's like someone's pulled the emergency cord on the train isn't it.

[12:27] Everything stops and everyday friend Jesus is listening to the rat race seeing if there's anybody calling out to him.

Alexander McLaren says they did not know that his cry of wretchedness was far sweeter to Jesus than their hallelujahs.

heart. So Jesus hears doesn't he. He hears Bartimaeus and he stops and the dust settles and everyone's full of intrigue aren't they wondering what's going to happen.

They're looking at Jesus. The air's full of anticipation. What will he say? He says call him and the order of command goes down doesn't it to Bartimaeus.

Get off they say to him. he's calling you. Think about this. Think about this. Jesus has got the ones who had been shouting at Bartimaeus to shut up.

[13:32] Jesus has got them calling him come to Jesus. Come to Jesus. And it's the sort of thing isn't it friends that God does. He seems to delight in using the strangest of means to draw people to himself.

You know he does own the universe doesn't he? We can sometimes forget that. God has everything at his disposal doesn't he?

The Roman nails the soldier's hammer he controls all of it. Get off he's calling you they say to him. Bartimaeus didn't know it but Jesus had been calling him long before he met him on this road.

Ephesians chapter 1 and he knew you friend before you were born. Life is precious isn't it friends to the one in whose image it was you.

Get up he's calling you and that's what he does when we open our Bibles. Wherever we might be in life he's calling you. Jesus is calling you.

[14:52] Everything seemed to be against Bartimaeus didn't it? Are you with me? Do you agree? Everything seems to be against him but not from Jesus' perspective. Everything was in place just as he had planned it.

Job tries to sort of understand God's ways doesn't he and prove the secret working of God. Job chapter 38 God says to Job in effect he says where were you when I created the world?

Where were you when I created the world? And a carpenter here is walking towards the cross a carpenter who actually owns the world. It's all topsy-turvy isn't it friends?

To our understanding a blind beggar becomes a disciple. Might not understand it all but what are you doing about it friends?

What does Bartimaeus do? Let's have a look. Verse 50 look down and you see verse 50 and throwing off his cloak he sprang up and came to Jesus through sprang came.

[16:06] I guess Mark's trying to communicate to us. It was quite spectacular. He leapt up. He wants to help us understand how dramatic it looked.

He's like a greyhound isn't he Bartimaeus out of trap 1. You can just imagine can't you as he chats with Jesus in the background. You see that cloak that he thrown into the air drifting down like an autumn leaf you see.

I once had to just recently explain to an Indian student what looking a gift horse in the mouth meant. Bartimaeus doesn't need that explanation does he?

Does he? We thought in our first point about everything that was against him but Jesus says that the one thing he needs the one thing that he needs well he's got that going for him verse 52 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 faith Jesus hears faith doesn't he?

Whatever your circumstances might be in life whatever your lot in life whatever your record of sin Jesus hears I've not come to call the righteous but sinners says Jesus and the blind can see and those on the outside become those on the inside remember me when you come in your kingdom said the thief on the cross next to him and Jesus replied today you will be with me in paradise you see friend Jesus is listening why not make today the day that you call upon him number one Bartimaeus shouts through the crowd number two Jesus listens through the crowd number three briefly the disciples watch through the crowd or it could be the church watches through the crowd really

[18:22] Bartimaeus was blind wasn't he but now he sees he began in verse 46 sitting down by the road side and the event ends in verse 52 with him following walking with Jesus following him on the road Mark saying look at him look at Bartimaeus he's become a disciple and he's there following Jesus he knew the identity of Jesus didn't he son of David have mercy on me and think about this if he's asking Jesus for mercy he's got an idea about Jesus' deity he thinks Jesus is God have mercy on me he says to Jesus and he didn't beat about the bush did he Bartimaeus so the church watches and I wonder if you would look after Bartimaeus if you met him if he was here today amidst us if he were sat all by himself and you walked in through the door would you have gone to sit with him would you chat with him would you sacrifice time for him or are we like the crowd with our own agendas

Jesus asked him what do you want me to do for you and the dungeon flamed with light his chains fell off his heart was free and he rose went forth and followed thee shall we pray dear heavenly father we thank you so much for sending your son into this world and we thank you for all the encounters that he had and particularly here as we think of the encounter he had with Bartimaeus and we pray father that we value whoever we come across in this life and that we'd engage with them and love them and care for them like Jesus we pray that we wouldn't be indifferent like the crowd that we wouldn't be so busy with our own agendas that we have become sort of apathetic so we pray you'd heighten our understanding of these things through your spirit and we ask father that if there's anyone amidst us today who is like

Bartimaeus and just looking at your son and trying to understand him and communicate him with him for the first time we pray that you'd draw him to yourself in like manner and as we hear the plant just ready to get back underway at 140 we thank you for this privilege of coming to your word for this short time and we pray that you'd be with us now this day and forever and we ask in Christ's name Amen