

## **A Blind Man Meets a Healer**

Series: Journey to the Cross

Luke 18:35-42

March 5, 2017

Welcome again to worship and the beginning of the season we call in the church calendar Lent, the time between Ash Wednesday and the day before Easter, that we focus on prayer, self-reflection, giving to the needy, and fasting in preparation for the Cross and the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

And this year, we are looking at encounters Jesus had in His life during His “Lent” as He made His way towards Jerusalem. We will learn what happens when individuals and groups of people meet Jesus on the “Journey to the Cross.”

We’ve provided page 5 in your bulletin for you to take notes.

One day, Stevie Wonder (the singer) and Jack Nicklaus (the golfer) are sitting around the pool talking. Inevitably the conversation turns to golf and Nicklaus is surprised to find out that Stevie Wonder, who is blind, has been playing golf for years.

Jack can’t believe it. He wants some details so Stevie explains how he does it: “My caddy stands out in the middle of the fairway and calls out to me. I listen for the sound of his voice and play the ball towards him. Then when I get to where the ball lands, the caddy moves further down the green, shouts out and I hit the ball again.

Nicklaus is obviously impressed but then asks, “But how do you putt?” The famous singer replies: “Well, I get my caddy to lean down in front of the hole and call to me with his head on the ground and his mouth just over the cup. I just play the ball towards his voice.”

Nicklaus finds all this very amazing and then asks Wonder if they can play a round sometime. Stevie agrees but says that because people don’t take him very seriously he only plays for money – and he never plays for less than \$10,000 a hole. Jack thinks about it for a minute and then says, “OK, that’s serious money, but I’m up for it. When do we play?”

To which Steve answers, “You name the night.”

This morning I want to talk about another blind man. Instead of being a professional golfer or a famous musician, this guy was wiped out by life. Because he was not able to see, he spent his days sitting by the fairways and highways, just waiting for someone to give him a shekel or a piece of bread. But one day, this blind man meets a Healer on the Journey to the Cross.

Let’s look at Luke 18:35-43; it’s in your bulletin:

*As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” “Lord, I want to see,” he replied. Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke 18:35-43 (NIV)

As Jesus was heading into Jericho, He meets a blind man. From Mark's account, we learn his name is Bartimaeus.<sup>2</sup> Bart is one of the people who are hurting, confused, in need of Jesus on His way to the cross. And as I look at this incredible encounter between Bart and Jesus, I see four different stages that Bart goes through.

**First, His Blindness.** We see this in verse 35

*As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.*<sup>3</sup>

Blindness was a very common problem in Palestine. Generally, one who was blind was never healed. In the city of Lydda, the saying was that everyone was either blind or had only one eye. In Jaffa, there were 500 blind people out of a population of 5,000.

While Leviticus 19:14 establishes that God's people were to care for those who are blind, there was also a cultural and religious stigma against blindness. We see this especially in the account of another man who was healed of his blindness in John 9. There, as Jesus and the disciples are out walking, the disciples ask Jesus a question in John 9:2:

*His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*<sup>4</sup>

And so, there's a sense in which those who were blind deserved their blindness as a consequence of sin, either by the individual himself, or because of something the parents did. As a result, blind people were often ignored or even castigated.

Because Bart was blind, he was relegated to a life of begging. He's just sitting there, waiting for something to happen because there was nothing he could do to improve his condition.

This is really a word picture for our spiritual condition, isn't it? 2 Corinthians 4:4 states that:

*The devil who rules this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe. They cannot see the light of the Good News...*<sup>5</sup>

We are spiritually blind and there is nothing we can do on our own to change that.

Just as Jesus gives sight to those who are physically blind, so too He grants spiritual insight to those who are in moral darkness. This man knew he was blind, and so did everyone else.

Is it possible that there is someone here today who is trying to act like you're not spiritually blind this morning? The first thing you need to do is to admit that you are just as blind in a spiritual sense as this man was in a physical sense.

Now, take a look at verse 36:

*When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening.*<sup>6</sup>

This man was smart. He knew that there would be a mass of people in Jericho that day preparing to make the final journey to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. That's why he was sitting by the side of the road with his hand out. He couldn't see what was happening, but he could hear the commotion and excitement. And so he's curious.

---

<sup>2</sup> See Mark 10:46-52

<sup>3</sup> Luke 18:35 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> John 9:2 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:4a (NCV)

<sup>6</sup> Luke 18:36 (NIV)

He wants to know what was happening. Perhaps he heard some unusual comments about a Healer who was headed to Jerusalem.

Verse 37 gives us the answer to his question:

*...Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.*<sup>7</sup>

Bart's heart begins to race. Could it be that the person He had heard of before was right here in front of him? It was almost too good to be true.

Today, this morning, the Healer is coming: Jesus of Nazareth.

The first stage is Bart's blindness.

The second stage is **His Belief**.

Notice how Bart addresses Jesus in verse 38:

*"...Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!"*<sup>8</sup>

The crowd referred to the earthly heritage of Jesus – He was from Nazareth. That just lets us know where He grew up. That's like someone saying that I'm from Piqua. That tells you a lot – I like the Reds, Cassanos Pizza and the crazy Ohio winter weather (not really on that point). It doesn't tell you everything about me.

Instead of calling on Jesus as the guy from Nazareth, Blind Bart expresses His messianic heritage. He is the Son of David, the one who the Old Testament has been pointing to as the Savior of the World. This blind man can see that Jesus is more than just a man from a small town in the north; He's the Messiah, sent from Heaven to be the Savior of the world.

It seems Bart was aware of what the Son of David had accomplished in the lives of other people. Maybe he had heard of Jesus giving sight to other blind people. Perhaps he heard what Jesus said in Luke 4:18, when He stood up in the synagogue and read from the book of Isaiah:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind..."*<sup>9</sup>

When Bart called out for the Son of David to have mercy on him, he was expressing his belief that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He could heal his blindness. He knew who Jesus was and He also knew what Jesus could do for him.

Do you know what Jesus can do for you? If He can restore sight to the blind, He can grant you the deepest longing of your heart. We need to cry out for mercy just like Bart did.

Bart's third stage is **His Boldness**.

Bart knew that he needed mercy because there was nothing he could do on his own. And so, he called out to Jesus, the Son of David, for mercy in verse 38. In the first part of verse 39 we see that the crowd of people is bothered by the blind and believing Bart:

*Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet...*<sup>10</sup>

The people who were leading the way may have been important city officials in Jericho. They wanted Jesus and his followers to see how beautiful their community was.

---

<sup>7</sup> Luke 18:37 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> Luke 18:38 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> Luke 4:18 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Luke 18:39a (NIV)

They were probably embarrassed and even irritated when they heard Bart cry out for mercy. They wanted to shut him up and so they told him to knock it off and to be quiet.

When Atlanta hosted the summer Olympics, they removed all the homeless people who lived under an overpass because they didn't want their city to look bad.

The officials from Jericho probably wished they had done the same.

I love the second half of verse 39:

*"...but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'"*<sup>11</sup>

This guy was really bold and courageous! He chose to not listen to the crowd and shouted out even louder than the first time. He broke all the cultural rules of etiquette. He didn't want Jesus to get away. This was his chance to receive mercy and perhaps his sight.

I wonder if you and I have this same kind of boldness and courage when it comes to calling out for divine help. Maybe we don't because we don't really understand our condition of blindness. Or maybe we don't because we don't believe Jesus can really do anything about it. What about you? Do you think of yourself as more enlightened than you really are? Or, do you think less of Jesus than you should? If you saw yourself in the dark and in need of mercy, and if you saw Jesus as Bart did, you too would be bold and shout out for Jesus to change you.

Hebrews 4:16 says:

*So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*<sup>12</sup>

Friend, don't hold back or be afraid to give yourself to Jesus. Come to Him boldly and with confidence. Let Him know what you need. That's what He's waiting for – and He'll reward you with mercy and grace to help in your time of need.

As a result of Bart's boldness, verse 40 says that,

*Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him...*<sup>13</sup>

Can you imagine how the crowd must have felt, especially those who had rebuked Bart? I picture everything getting real quiet. People are looking at Bart and then at Jesus. Jesus orders some guys (maybe the same ones who rebuked Bart) to help him walk through the crowd so that he is face-to-face with the Messiah.

The question Jesus then asks Bart is very interesting. Look at verse 41:

*"What do you want me to do for you?"*<sup>14</sup>

Isn't it obvious what Bart needed? Jesus knew what Bart wanted but He asked the question for Bart's sake – and for the crowd of people who had gathered around. He wanted Bart to verbalize what it was that He wanted. I love Bart's answer:

*"Lord, I want to see."*<sup>15</sup>

What do you want Jesus to do for you? Have you ever put into words the cry of your heart? Have you ever verbalized your deepest needs? Have you ever shouted out for mercy to have Jesus save you from your sins? If not, Jesus is waiting for you to exhibit some boldness and to ask Him for what you need.

---

<sup>11</sup> Luke 18:39b (NIV)

<sup>12</sup> Hebrews 4:16 (NLT)

<sup>13</sup> Luke 18:40 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup> Luke 18:41a (NIV)

<sup>15</sup> Luke 18:41b (NIV)

This brings me to the last stage in the passage. Once we admit our blindness, and place our belief in Jesus as our only Savior and Lord, we can then be bold in our requests. That then leads to the fourth thing that happens: **His Blessing.**

In verse 42, we read,

“Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.’”<sup>16</sup>

Here’s a spiritual principle that you should never forget: **Jesus always responds to faith.** Because Bart believed and put his faith in Jesus, he received his sight back.

Jesus is looking for more Barts today – people who will exhibit some faith, no matter how small it is, and cry out for mercy. Jesus loves to answer prayers like that by healing us from the inside out, granting us spiritual insight as He moves us out of darkness.

Friends, God wants us to recognize our blindness and beef up our belief in who Jesus is. He then wants us to exhibit some boldness by asking Him for mercy so that we can receive a blessing that can be passed on to others.

---

<sup>16</sup> Luke 18:42 (NIV)