

SLIDE 1. Series: Who Is this Man?: A Study of the Gospel of Mark

Teaching: *Faith Works and Wobbles*

Sunday May 11, 2025

READ: Mark 10: 46-52

PRAY

TEACH

SLIDE 2. *Then they came to Jericho...* (Mk. 10:46).

As we said last week – the end for Jesus – the Cross – was nearing. This text tells us that it's even nearer: Jericho was only 19 KM from Jerusalem. Calvary just a week away.

Jesus had stopped to call Zacchaeus to Him, and now He resumed his trek to the Cross.

Let's imagine the scene...

The main road ran right through Jericho. Jesus was on that road on His way to the Passover. For such a distinguished Rabbi – on such a journey – it would have been customary for Him to have been surrounded by a throng of people along the way – both the curious and the convinced – who would ask Him questions – and He would answer them – and teach them while He walked.

It was a common way of teaching for a Rabbi: teaching on the way; teaching while doing life.

It was the law – a spiritual obligation - that every Jewish male over 12 years of age – who lived within 22 KM of Jerusalem - should attend the Passover – but not everyone could. Those who couldn't - would line the streets of towns and villages that led to Jerusalem to see pilgrims on their way to Passover – and they would bid those sojourners godspeed on their way.

So then the streets of Jericho would have been loaded with people – and more than usual – because there'd be a long stretch of "star gazers" - eager to catch a glimpse of this audacious Galilean who pitted himself against the religious establishment.

Crowding and leaning in to see. Hot, dry and dusty. Smelly and noisy.

Popular enthusiasm swelled around Jesus – and for the first time – He didn't try to repress it. There was a shouting multitude – escorting Him out of the city. They have just passed the city gates – and are turning towards the mountain gorge – through it, on the road to Jerusalem.

A long line of beggars is sitting outside the gate – doing what they always do – lifting their voices at the sound of passing footsteps – begging for help.

SLIDE 3. *As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the son of Timaeus), was sitting on the roadside begging...* (Mk. 10:46).

Bartimaeus is among them.

In Luke's account of this same story (Lk. 18:35-43) – Bartimaeus asks about the cause of all the bustle. He's told that "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by" – which awakens some strange hope in Bartimaeus – a hope – we can only assume – that is based on his knowledge (the rumors) of the miracles Christ performed elsewhere.

Which is to say something else – about the notoriety of those miracles – and then about the fame of Jesus – that the stories of Christ's miracles had filtered down to be the talk of the beggars at city gates.

SLIDE 4. *When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"* (Mk. 10:47-48).

Bartimaeus knew Jesus – His place and His dignity.

The crowd referred to Him as "Jesus of Nazareth" – which – of course – He was – but He was so much more! And Bartimaeus knew it!

Bartimaeus specifies who it is – he cries out to Jesus as the Son of David.

This is like when Peter called Jesus "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16).

Calling Jesus the Son of David had significant implications. Bartimaeus called out to the man who is in the line of King David – the line of the true king – the one who would bring about healing and salvation and newness of life.

We don't have a clue how Bartimaeus came to such faith in Jesus – but we do know - he wasn't wrong!

And his repeated shout-outs to Jesus – when the people around him were telling him to be quiet – signified just how deep his faith was in Jesus - that Jesus could help him.

One commentator (Craig Evans) points out how the beggar's cry towards Jesus for mercy (or pity) – is an echo from the Psalms – the prayerbook of God's people – which exhibits all kinds of emotions, needs, and ways of relating to God – words of faith turned to God in the midst of hope, doubt, fear, anger, joy, opposition – you name it!

Bartimaeus is a man in great need. He is dependent upon others. And yet the people who he depends on are the ones who are telling him to be quiet. They think he's a nuisance – not worth Jesus' time.

He is hungry and poor and put down, suffering and rebuked...

...like someone who might express a prayer like a Psalm.

And so – like a Psalmist – Bartimaeus cries out for the mercy of God to help him because he has faith in the person he is crying out to. He is yelling a prayer in real time to a real person – Jesus of Nazareth, Son of David!

There's even more to it. The fact that this happened in and among the crowd on the road is a further testimony of Bartimaeus' faith.

Scholars point out that the road on which Bartimaeus would've been begging – would've been a busy one. Not only would he have been able to beg from wealthy merchants and traders as they passed by – he would also have been able to ask for help from the religious pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem – as is pictured here in our text. But – among them – he called out to Jesus!

SLIDE 5. *Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."*

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you."
(Mk. 10:49).

Many of the folks who attempted to silence Bartimaeus might have been well-meaning in their intent – to keep the likes of a beggar from the important figure of a man like Jesus. Assuming: His time – important. Bartimaeus' – not so much.

And yet they were also the people who encouraged him to get up and go to Jesus when Jesus called for him. And probably helped Bartimaeus get to Jesus through the crowd – because he was still blind.

Which all seems a little bit fickle. "Be quiet! O, he's calling you! Let us help you!"

For his part – Bartimaeus had enough faith in Jesus to risk believing that Jesus *was* calling for him – even when the message came from the same people who were – moments ago – shushing him!

In other words – Bartimaeus knew and then listened to - God-in Christ – not the noise of the crowd!

Out of all the shouting – Bartimaeus made his thin voice heard.

Jesus stopped.

Let's remember that He was on the road to the Cross – no doubt feeling the tension of what was to come – deep in troubled thought – maybe even blocking out the distraction and noise of the crowd – like a basketball player who shuts out the booing and jeers of the opposing crowd when she is at the free throw line.

A muffled cacophony.

Out of all the shouting – Jesus heard the blind beggar's cry.

SLIDE 6. *Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus* (Mk. 10:50).

This too - is quite a picture of faith.

Bartimaeus threw his cloak aside – a cloak that would not likely have been to keep him warm during a hot day – but a cloak that he would have spread out before him to form a cloth basket in his lap to catch all the donations he would receive.

He threw this off. He left it behind. Imagine his donations flying through the air as he jumped to his feet – cloak on the ground where he sat begging.

What's money or possessions – after all - when Jesus is calling? Well - more than the rich young man was willing to part with - in a recent, previous story (Mk. 10:17-31).

Bartimaeus gave up everything he had before he was even asked – whereas the rich man walked away unwilling to give up - anything.

Mark is making a point: Bartimaeus is a model to imitate. Unlike the disciples – who hadn't really understood yet what Jesus was about – His kingship or his kingdom – he is already a man of faith, courage, and true discipleship.

SLIDE 7. *"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him?"* (Mk. 10:51).

Here is a contrasting picture of faith.

Remember how – when Jesus said to James and John (Mk. 10:35-45), "What do you want me to do for you?" – all he got was a request for power and prestige and glory.

Then – "What do you want me to do for you?" was a question designed to reveal their motivation.

Now – "What do you want me to do for you?" is a question designed for the opposite – for Jesus to give this man what he wanted because Jesus was delighted to give it to him. To the man who gave up everything – Jesus was willing to give anything.

SLIDE 8. *The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see"* (Mk. 10:51).

When Bartimaeus is finally face to face with Jesus, he doesn't have to think about what he needs. He doesn't have a Christmas list of things to ask for. He knows. He's ready. Maybe he's been ready for a while. Sitting where he did. Hearing what he has – of "Jesus of Nazareth." *Waiting* for this day.

He plainly declares his heart's desire: to see again.

This is a bold, simple declaration – rooted in faith - that a miracle is possible – whenever you are face to face with Jesus – and believe He can do anything.

SLIDE 9. "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." (Mk. 10:52).

The word here for "healed" could also be translated "saved" – which – in this case – certainly refers to a physical healing. For the early Christian – though – the word here would carry a deeper and wider meaning as well.

SLIDE 10. As N.T. Wright explains: **"The different dimensions of salvation were not sharply distinguished either by Jesus or by the gospel writers. God's rescue of people from what we think of as physical ailments on the one hand and spiritual peril on the other were thought of as different aspects of the same event"** (Mark For Everyone, N.T. Wright, p. 105).

Think about the story of the man lowered to Jesus from a roof to be healed (Lk. 5:17-39). Jesus forgave his sins (saved him) AND instructed him to pick up his mat and walk (healed him). As Jesus put it then – one and the same thing.

But again – and not for the first time – we see that the key to healing (or salvation) – of whatever kind – is faith.

SLIDE 11. *Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road* (Mk. 10:52).

Bartimaeus had barely ended speaking when Jesus began. He was blind at the beginning of Christ's little sentence; he could see by the end of it.

And now – being physically healed – he could follow Jesus along the road.

Anyone can be saved. Healing faith in Jesus is open to anyone. It's only requirement is – as we see in this story – that we recognize who Jesus is and trust that He has the power to heal us.

And yet it isn't a formula, is it? Faith. Ask. Get. We all know people (you might even be one of them) who have faith like Bartimaeus – but it has not been effective to bring about healing – personally or for someone else – even if it will – by that same faith – brought about the ultimate healing of salvation.

We can tell ourselves that if we are differently-abled or sick or suffering – we only have to ask God to heal us – because He loves us – and He'll do so right away (as He did Bartimaeus). Healing then becomes a proof of our faith and of God's love.

But it doesn't always work that way!

Joni Eareckson Tada, for instance, prayed and fully believed that God would heal her quadriplegia. And 60 years later – He hasn't!

Some feel that God will never (miraculously) heal anyone today. Others feel that God will always heal a person if he or she has "enough" faith. But God will not be put into either box.

I think it is fair to say this: that God saves and heals through His Son, Jesus Christ – sometimes physically and sometimes spiritually – and sometimes not at all.

Though – in the latter case – it's not because God doesn't love us – and it isn't necessarily because we lack faith.

I think – sometimes - these such things are God's rightful prerogative.

Here's what I think I do know – or – to put differently – what I believe...

SLIDE 12. That **God has saved those who believe in Jesus Christ** and so they will follow Him into death, burial, and resurrection – because what God has accomplished, man cannot take away.

That **God heals in a myriad of ways: physical, mental, social, and spiritual.**

I have been healed of a migraine by prayer. My left knee has been healed by surgery. Our friend and Church Treasurer, Lori Davies, has experienced healing of her hypertension – she believes – because of both – your prayers and her doctor!

I have been healed from anxiety by meditation on God's word and prayer. I have been healed of situational depression by gaining perspective with a good counselor. Others' mental health has been stabilized by medication so that they can be more present to God and His will.

I have experienced reconciliation of relationships through prayer and gracious and patient talking and listening. I have seen the power of restorative justice at work (vs. retributive justice). I have seen a Filipino community in Vancouver - surrounded by and supported by Greater Vancouver, the province of BC, the nation, and internationally – through lament and prayer.

I still believe that salvation in Christ is the most fundamental healing (miracle) known to humankind. I have also experienced healing through forgiveness – both the giving and receiving of it. And I have been delivered from ancestral spiritual practices and personal addictions!

That **God *doesn't* heal for a myriad of reasons.**

I will not pretend – for a second – that I know why God heals some and doesn't heal others. I can only tell you what the bible seems to say – and this - in brief.

That God sees our suffering, God has experienced suffering, and God will end our suffering – in due time.

That God is at work in all things for believers who would believe it - to bring about good – not necessarily painlessness for us or even healing – but *good* that serves His purposes for the universe (Ro. 8:28).

That suffering transforms us like nothing else.

Paul provides some perspective and purpose for our suffering when he says: ...*we (can) rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope* (Ro. 5:3-4).

Suffering to endurance, endurance to character, and character to hope.

It's a rough road, but a road (I think) that God sometimes has us on or leaves us on to form in us (and for the benefit of others) what cannot be formed in any other way.

SLIDE 13. Application Qs.

- 1. If you were face to face with Jesus, would you know (without hesitation) what to ask Him for?**
- 2. How would you respond to Jesus if He granted your wish? How would you respond to Jesus if He denied your wish?**

SLIDE 14. Homework

Read Mark 11:1 – 12:44. This section includes the Passion - Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, his teaching in the temple, his teaching about the destruction of the temple and the coming of the Son of Man, his identity as the temple and the crucified Son of God.