

## JESUS IS PASSING BY

Luke 18:35-43

For the last time Christ Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to partake of the Feast of the Passover, the great annual festival of all Jewry. Not only did He intend to be present at the Passover festival, but also to complete, through sacrifice and suffering, the great work of human redemption which He came to earth on purpose to accomplish. Numbers of people were making the pilgrimage to the feast at the same time. Mark tells us that, "He went out of Jericho with His disciples, and a great number of people."

Visualize that scene if you can. See the great Teacher, the generous Benefactor, the faithful Friend, and the Almighty Saviour, who had long been ignored, forsaken, despised, and hated, now traveling like a popular leader with a vast multitude accompanying Him. With Him are His true disciples and genuine friends, but all of the concourse was not of this class. Some of them were impelled by nothing more nor better than mere curiosity or inquisitiveness—a desire to please their eyes and to gratify their ears. Some followed Him with a view to future worldly advantage. He had been performing noble deeds of generosity and kindness toward others by feeding them and healing them, so many of these who were with Him hoped to derive the same advantages for themselves and their friends. Selfishness prompted them to accompany Him. Many flocked to Him with the hope that He would help them.

As they passed through Jericho, the city of beautiful palm trees and gay palaces, the fair city was stirred with excitement. This excitement was accentuated by the presence of Jesus Christ, whose fame had spread throughout the land, and of whose miracles the multitudes were talking.

At the outskirts of Jericho sat a poor blind man begging alms from the passer-by. His name was Bartimaeus. He was but a poor blind man, an object of charity. Being blind, he was a stranger to all the beauty of nature. He was deprived of many innocent delights, exposed to many dangers, and incapacitated for effective service. It is difficult for us to realize what blindness really means. When we think of living in a world of darkness, with no sunlight, without viewing a single beauty of nature, and without seeing the face of a single friend, we can scarcely see a blind person without a real longing for that one to have the invaluable sense of sight.

On account of his blindness, Bartimaeus was incapable of earning a livelihood from useful employment. His blindness incapacitated him for the ordinary and remunerative vocations of life. His blindness was aggravated by his poverty, for both of which he was an object of pity, rather than a subject for blame. Being destitute of worldly possessions, he was dependent on the charity of others. He sat by the wayside, in his customary place, and solicited alms from the passing travelers. Thus, he was deprived of the self-respect that accompanies ordinary independence.

Hearing the sound of many voices and the tramping feet of a crowd that he could not see, and sensing that a larger and different group than usual was passing by, Bartimaeus inquired what it meant. He was informed that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. That name was a welcomed name to him because he had heard about what Jesus had done for others. He was stirred deeply as he thought of the many persons who had been cured by the wonder-working power of Christ. Perhaps some kind traveler had remarked to him that if he could only get to Jesus, He would be sure to give him sight.

Doubtless he had often wished for Jesus to come his way, but little had he

expected Him to do so. Now, Jesus was there and passing by. The blind man considered it the opportunity of a life time. It was far too precious to be lost. He realized that if he lost it, he might never have another. He decided that he would not lose the opportunity to gain that which would change his entire life, give him the beauty of the world, the smiles of his friends, the ability to find his own way, and the power to fight his battles successfully. Concerning Jesus he reasoned, "This is the very Person I want to meet. I am poor; He is the Friend of the poor, and to them His Gospel is preached. I am blind; He is the Healer of the blind, and, therefore, the Saviour for me."

Not able to control himself Bartimaeus leaped to his feet, stretched forth his hands, and cried with a loud voice, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" He did not complain about his condition as if undeserved. He pleaded no merit; no good intentions in the past; no services rendered; no promises of amendment in the future as reasons for granting his request. On the contrary his condition and the compassion of Christ were his only pleas. He knew that he did not have any merit to recommend him, and that he did not have any particular claim on the clemency of Jesus, but he determined to arouse the sympathy of Christ if possible. He believed that Jesus was able to do for him what it had been reported He had done for others. He knew that he was blind and that Jesus was passing by. His need was his plea. He asked for what he needed and wanted, and he was willing to take what was given him.

The thoughtless multitude tried to silence the blind man as though Jesus was too great to be troubled, and his progress too important to delay Him. Thinking that he was begging alms, they rebuked him, and told him to hold his peace. Seemingly they thought it was beneath the dignity of the Saviour to converse with such a one as he. When they commanded him to be quiet, it only made him press his claim the more earnestly, and he cried all the louder, whereupon Jesus stopped, stood still, and commanded that the blind man should be brought to Him. With His usual tenderness Jesus gave this command for He knew that the blind man could not make his way to Him alone. It was a case in which the agency of others could be helpful, and so that was called into operation. This was done not only to rebuke those who had bidden the blind man to hold his peace, but also to remind us that we may often do lasting good to others by bringing them to Jesus. Thus reproved, the multitude hastened to bring him forward. Casting away his outer garment that it might not impede his movement, the blind man rose at once and permitted them to lead him to Jesus. We can only imagine the flutter of his emotions at the moment, and how he must have felt when the Lord Jesus, with the most tender consideration and a desire to bring him back to his calmness of spirit, quietly said to him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Without any faltering suspense, the man responded with a straight-forward and intelligent answer, saying, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." At the word of the Saviour, the man received his sight. The first thing that he saw was the face of Christ. He not only received sight, but salvation also. Because of his faith in Christ, this man was saved, for the Saviour said, "thy faith hath saved thee." I want you to note that these words, "thy faith hath saved thee", fell from the lips of Christ, and that they are as true as any that He ever spoke. We may repeat them to others without any fear of misleading them. Jesus never said, "thy prayers have saved thee", or "thy baptism has saved thee"—for the man had not been baptized, but He did say, "thy faith hath saved thee."

After Jesus had saved him, he left it to his choice as to what direction he would take. Without reluctance or hesitation, he chose to follow Jesus. As he went on his way, he glorified God. He was anxious to testify to the power of Christ, and to glorify Him because of the wonderful deliverance which he had just experienced. He had a great need, and he knew it. He had a great opportunity,

and he seized it. He had a great appeal, and he made it. He had a great faith, and he exercised it. He experienced a new life, and he showed it.

Jesus of Nazareth is still passing by. He is the central figure in history. He is the foundation stone for all true civilization. He is the inspiration for right living. He is the strength of all true character building. He is our only hope for time and eternity. He is most assuredly passing by today. A man insults his intelligence if he does not consider and consult Him. We know what sort of a man He was by what He said. "Never man spake like this man." We know it by what He did. He had only to reach out His hands, and the lame were healed; He had only to speak, and the blind could see; He had only to look, and the sick were made to rejoice because they had been made well. Tissot pictures Him passing through the country, and all ahead of Him are people suffering, and all back of Him are people leaping and praising God. We know Him by what he said, by what He did, and by what He was.

Just as Bartimaeus needed and wanted the Saviour, so does every unsaved person today, although he may not be aware of it and may not acknowledge it. If he would confess it, he would be obliged to say, "I wish I knew Jesus Christ as my Saviour." As Jesus passed by, He saw a man with a needy heart. That is the condition of the human heart everywhere today.

"Down in the human heart  
Crushed by the tempter,  
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore!"

If you are a lost person, you are as blind and as poor as Bartimaeus. His was the poverty of possessions, but yours is the poverty of soul. You have no merit; you have no strength; you have no possibility of ever getting the means of spiritual livelihood for yourselves.

As Jesus is passing by you today, what does He see?

### 1. He Sees A Person With A Soul To Save.

You are more than a body. You are a soul and you have a body. Your soul is destined to live on and on somewhere. Jesus asked the question, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Satan will offer him the pleasures of sin. And many are bartering their precious, immortal souls for a mess of pottage, some worldly honor, or some fleeting pleasure.

### 2. He Sees A Person With A Life To Be Lived.

You have only one life to live here. It can be a life of selfishness and greed, or of blessing and usefulness to others. It might be that you could be saved in old age, but your life will have been wasted and lost. You may become a Christian while you are young, and then grow up to live for God and for others as you walk in the paths of righteousness. Your life will be saved as well as your soul, and how much better that is!

### 3. A Person In Relation To Death.

Death is sure, if Jesus tarries. "It is appointed unto man once to die." None can alter this appointment. Death is coming to you, and it will be one of two kinds only. It will either be the death of the righteous, or

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the death of the wicked. There is a tremendous difference between the death of a saint and the death of a sinner. One has light in the valley, but for the other it is a leap in the dark. One has a glorious hope for the life beyond, while the other goes away without a ray of hope.

4. A Person In Relation To The Judgment.

After death comes the judgment. "God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness." A record of the deeds done in the body must be given on that day. There will not be any time to confess sins on that day.

5. A Person In Relation To Eternity.

The very thought of eternity ought to make one wise. Heaven is the holy place. It is where God dwells, and nothing that is sinful will enter there.

I want you to realize that Jesus is passing by. The Saviour is passing by every time a Sabbath dawns upon us, a sound peals forth from the church bell, a sanctuary is entered by an assembly of the people of God, a song is sung to the praise of His Name, a gospel of Christ is preached, or a striving of the Holy Spirit is felt in the soul. Jesus is calling you to accept Him now. Promptly accept His invitation and receive His salvation before He passes by entirely.

"This is the season of hope and grace  
Jesus is passing by;  
This for salvation the time and place,  
Jesus is passing by.  
This is the hour for the soul's release,  
Jesus is passing by.  
Trust Him and thou shalt go forth in peace,  
Jesus is passing by."

"Jesus is passing by, Jesus is passing by,  
Bring Him thy heart, ere in grief He depart;  
Jesus is passing by."