

FROM BLINDNESS TO BLESSEDNESS

Mark 10:46-52

Christ Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to partake of the Feast of the Passover for the last time and to complete, through sacrifice and suffering, the great work of human redemption. Great multitudes were making their pilgrimage to the same Feast. On their way to the Holy City, Christ and His party passed through Jericho, the town of beautiful palm trees and gay palaces. Try to visualize that scene with our Lord traveling like a popular leader with a vast multitude accompanying Him. Some of them were His genuine friends. Others followed out of mere curiosity. Still others accompanied Him with a view to personal benefit or worldly advantage.

By the side of the highway at the outskirts of Jericho sat a blind man begging alms from the passers-by. Mark called him "Bartimaeus", which means that he was the son of Timaeus. His biography is full of interest and rich in instruction.

I. The Story.

1. His Condition. Mark 10:46.

He was blind. In the lands of the East, even to this day, diseases of the eye have been very prevalent. In the days when our Lord was there medical skill was but little advanced, so minor ailments frequently developed into blindness. This man was blind, but he could hear, walk and talk. Some blindpeople were also deaf, or crippled or dumb. That goes to show that regardless of what one's calamity may be others may have a worse one.

Being blind, Bartimaeus was a stranger to all the beauties of nature. What made his blindness even more sad was the fact that the valley of Jericho was the most beautiful place in all the land. His blindness deprived him of many innocent delights, exposed him to many dangers and incapacitated him for effective service.

It is difficult for us to imagine what blindness really means. When we think of living in a world of darkness, without viewing a single beauty of nature or seeing the face of a single loved one or friend, we can scarcely see a blind person without a real longing in our hearts for that one to have the invaluable sense of sight.

2. His Circumstances. Mark 10:46.

In addition to his blindness, Bartimaeus was beset with the handicap of poverty. It was sad enough to be blind, but poverty made him even more pitiable. Ample funds could have done much in providing the necessities and comforts of life, as well as in alleviating his sadness which was caused by his condition.

On account of his blindness, Bartimaeus was incapable of earning a livelihood from useful employment in a remunerative vocation. That made him an object of pity rather than a subject for blame. Forced to be dependent on the charity of others, he sat on the roadside and solicited alms from the travelers who passed. Those circumstances deprived him of the self--respect that always accompanies independence.

3. His Courage. Mark 10:47.

As Christ and those who were with Him left Jericho they traveled

along the highway toward the place where the blind man was sitting. Although he was blind, he could hear quite well. Often when one of the senses is lacking, another becomes much more acute. God usually sees to it that the compensation balances swing true. Hearing the tramping of the feet and the voices of the approaching throng, he inquired about the cause of all the excitement. He was curious to know what it was all about. He was informed that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. That was thrilling news to him. Evidently he had heard many things about Christ traversing the land, speaking matchless words and working marvelous cures. He had wished that the Lord Jesus might come his way, but had not expected Him to do so. Now that He was approaching, Bartimaeus believed that he had the opportunity of a lifetime, so he resolved that he would make the most of it. He realized that if he lost the opportunity at hand he might never have another. Christ was passing by and He might never pass that way again. Having been told that Christ had given sight to others who were blind, and having the conviction that He could open his eyes also, he was of the opinion that if the job was not done that day it might never be done. He was convinced that it was a case of then and there or never with him. This was the great opportunity to get that which would change his entire life, give him the beauties of the world, the smiles of his friends, the ability to make his own livelihood, and the power to fight his battles successfully.

Knowing that Christ was passing by, Bartimaeus was unable to control himself. He leaped to his feet and cried with a loud voice, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" It is noteworthy that he did not complain about his condition as if it were undeserved. He did not plead any merit, any good intentions in the past, any services rendered or any promises of amendment in the future as reasons for granting his request. His condition and the compassion of Christ constituted the basis of his earnest prayer.

4. His Crisis. Mark 10:48.

Believing that Christ was able to do for him what it had been reported that He had done for others, Bartimaeus was determined to arouse the sympathy and compassion of Christ if at all possible. His prayer was short, specific and very personal. Thinking that his condition was desperate, he prayed, "Have mercy on me." The thoughtless multitude tried to silence the shouting of the blind man as though Christ was too great to be troubled or in too much haste to be delayed. Seemingly they thought that it was beneath the dignity of Christ to be bothered with him or to converse with such a one as he. Assuming that he was just begging alms, they rebuked the blind man and told him to hold his peace. When they commanded him to be quiet, he refused to be silenced and screamed in eagerness so much the more. Their opposition only strengthened his determination, so with renewed earnestness he kept on with his vociferous appeal. Little, if anything, can be done with an earnest man who feels that apart from Christ his case is hopeless, and that it is now or never with him. That was certainly true with Bartimaeus. Therefore, his shrill voice continued to penetrate the air with the persistent cry, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!" It was a personal cry to the right source for the blessing of mercy. He knew his need and he longed to have it supplied.

5. His Call. Mark 10:49.

In his desperate need the blind man cried all the more, whereupon Christ stopped, stood still and listened to his cry above the hum of all the conversations. How characteristic of His ministry when help was sought! Instead of being impatient or angry, Christ "commanded him to be called." Knowing that the blind man could not make his way to Him alone, with His usual tenderness our Lord requested that he be brought to Him. It was a case in which others could be helpful, and He did not hesitate to call upon them to render that service. His call is a reminder to all Christians that they can do great and permanent good to others by bringing them to Christ.

6. His Conversion. Mark 10:50.

Thus reproved, those who had scolded the blind man willingly made way for him and told him, "Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." He did not wait for a second call. Casting off his outer garment in order that it might not impede his movement, Bartimaeus arose at once and permitted them to lead him to Christ.

We can only imagine the flutter of the blind man's emotions when Christ, with the most tender consideration and a real desire to bring him back to his calmness of spirit, quietly said to him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Our Lord knew the great need of the man, but He wanted him to express his need. Knowing full well what he needed and wanted most of all, without any faltering suspense, the man responded with a straight-forward and intelligent answer: "Lord, that I might receive my sight." As soon as he had stated his desire, he immediately received his sight as a gift from Christ. Moreover, Christ saved his soul and said unto him, "Go thy way; thy faith had made thee whole."

7. His Consecration. Mark 10:52.

After saving Bartimaeus, Christ left it to his choice as to what direction he would take. "And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way" (v. 52). Without hesitation or reluctance Bartimaeus chose to follow Christ. Because the Lord had forgiven his sins and saved his soul and given him sight, Bartimaeus wanted to love, follow, obey and serve Christ and to glorify God. Having entered the fellowship of believers, he became a faithful and effective witness for Christ.

II. The Similarity.

This same Jesus of Nazareth is the central figure of all history. He is the foundation of civilization, the strength of character building and the inspiration for right living. He is our only hope for time and eternity.

Just as Bartimaeus needed the Saviour, so does every person who is not a Christian today, although he may not be aware of it and may refuse to acknowledge it. If he would make a true confession, he would be obliged to say, "I wish that I really knew Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour." When He looked at Bartimaeus, Christ saw a man with a needy heart. That is the condition of the hearts of men everywhere today.

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

There are many similarities between the blind man of the long ago and the people of our day. As Christ passes by He notes the similarities. What does He see, as He passes by today, which He saw on that day?

1. 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. You cannot afford to barter it away for anything.
2. A person with a life to be lived.
You have only one life to live on this earth. You can make it a life of selfishness and greed, or one of blessing and usefulness to others. In the event that you are not saved until you are old, your life will be wasted and lost. If you are saved while you are young and thereafter live for God, then your life will be saved as well as your soul. How much better that will be!
3. A person in relation to death.
"Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (II Kings 20:1). "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Nobody can alter this appointment. Death is coming to you, and it will be one of two kinds. It will be the death of the saved or the unsaved. The person who is saved has a glorious hope for the life beyond, but the unsaved departs this life without a ray of hope.
4. A person in relation to the judgment.
After death comes the judgment. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). A true and final account must be rendered on that day. All preparation for this judgment must be made in advance.
5. A person in relation to eternity.
You will spend eternity in heaven or in hell. You determine which will be your future abode by what you do with Jesus Christ.. If you receive Him as your Saviour, you will spend eternity in heaven. If you reject Him, you will spend eternity in hell.

"Brother, the Master is waiting,
Waiting to freely forgive;
Why not this moment accept Him,
Trust in His grace and live?
He is so tender and precious,
He is so near you today;
Open your heart to receive Him,
While He is passing this way."