

**Bartimaeus:** Mark 10:46-52; Matthew 20:29-31; Luke 18:35-43

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record Jesus' encounter with Bartimaeus with Mark's giving the most complete picture. Read Mark 10:46-52 as you go through this study.

Mark wrote in verse 46 that Jesus was leaving Jericho. With Him was a large crowd of fellow travelers. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Jericho was about 15 miles from Jerusalem with virtually all major roads to Jerusalem passing through Jericho. A large crowd was accompanying Jesus. According to Jewish Law every Jew who could was to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover at the temple so many were traveling to Jerusalem at the same time. They would naturally go together, especially on a road considered as dangerous as the road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

Mark wrote in that same verse that Bartimaeus was begging along side the road near the gate to the city. The city gates were the begging point for anyone needing help because anyone coming to or going from Jericho passed through them, A beggar got the most exposure there.

We know Bartimaeus was blind but we are given no details on that blindness. In one case of healing a blind man we were told that the man was born blind. We are not told how long Bartimaeus had been blind. He was physical blindness, but in various places in Scripture blindness is used to describe those who cannot see spiritual truth, those who may have 20/20 eye vision but are blind to the things of God. Understanding that, we can view this miracle as telling us something about spiritual blindness and the only one who can open spiritually blind eyes to the things of God.

Mark wrote that Bartimaeus meant "*son of Timaeus*". Timaeus meant dirty or defiled. In all probability his father had a reputation that was translated into his name. In Jesus' day it was not uncommon to give someone a name that reflected his character. There can be little doubt that Bartimaeus did not come from an ideal home nor had life been good to him. He was blind so every day he went to his place at the gate and begged for enough to live on for another day. Each day was the same. His life held little hope for change or improvement.

It is interesting to think of Bartimaeus' physical blindness as a picture of spiritual blindness. All of us were born with a sin nature. We were all born defiled, with the only hope of changing that defilement being an encounter with Jesus. John Newton got it so right with the first verse of *Amazing Grace*, "*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound! That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.*"

Mark went on in verse 47 to note that Bartimaeus heard that the one coming with the loud group was Jesus. Mark noted that Bartimaeus began to shout "**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**" He addressed Jesus as the "**Son of David**" which was a title given to the promised Messiah. That suggests to us that Bartimaeus believed that Jesus might be the promised one and he understood, or at least hoped, that Jesus could give him his sight. It is quite likely he had

heard of at least one of the many Jesus healed of blindness and believed that if He could do it for them, He could do it for him also. One of the exciting things about sharing a personal testimony of what Jesus has done for us is that we never know where it will travel and when it might reach others we may never personally see or talk to.

Bartimaeus knew he was not worthy of healing, which is why he cried, **"have mercy on me."** There is only one way to come to Jesus seeking healing from spiritual blindness and that is aware that we don't deserve what His love offers to us.

What follows is a vivid picture of the typical response of those around us when we talk of seeking salvation in Jesus. Mark wrote in verse 48 that many told him to be quiet, which I think is a polite way of saying *"Shut up and leave Him alone. You don't matter to God since you are a sinner from a sinful family."* That is certainly typical of the way Satan loves to tell us that that God is not interested in us or that we have sinned too much to be loved by Him.

Bartimaeus, however, was persistent. We read in verse 48 that he shouted all the more. Persistence in prayer seems to matter to God. Throughout Scripture persistence in prayer often resulted in God answering. Perhaps it has to do with being an indication of our seriousness and that we believe God can and will answer us.

Mark wrote in verse 49 that **"Jesus stopped."** A persistent praying soul gets God's attention. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to die, but He took time to stop and meet the need of one who called to Him. Jesus is never too busy to listen to us or be concerned about the things that concern us.

So the crowd called to Bartimaeus, **"Cheer up. On your feet He's calling you."** I doubt anyone had to tell Bartimaeus to **cheer up**. Then Mark wrote in verse 50 that Bartimaeus **"Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus."**

There are several things to see in that action. It was the practice of beggars to sit at a begging spot with a coat over their knees so that those passing by could toss coins into it. Many did not want to touch these individuals, believing them to be unclean, so that way they could give and not come in actual contact with them. For Bartimaeus that meant that he was throwing aside the coins collected that day.

His coat was also a sign of his condition and of his need to beg. Today a blind man may walk around using a white cane with a red tip. That cane identifies one as blind. In ancient times clothing such as a worn ragged coat often identified those who needed to beg. In casting his coat aside Bartimaeus was saying, *"I won't need that any longer, I'm going to be changed."* The miracle had not taken place yet but Bartimaeus believed God was going to act and so the coat was no longer needed. When we come to Jesus, we all have old clothes representing the way we used to live that we need to throw away.

There is more to throwing off the coat. The coat was probably all he owned. Beggars had very little. A coat was worn during the day and slept in at night. Read Deuteronomy 24:12-13 giving a man back his coat at night. Bartimaeus threw aside literally all he had to go to Jesus. Jesus is never an add on to our lives. He replaces our old life with a new one.

In verse 51 we read that Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted Him to do for him. On the surface that appears to be a dumb question but in reality it is crucial. Read John 3:19. All Bartimaeus knew was begging. All his friends were beggars. His whole life revolved around begging and Jesus wanted to know if he was really anxious to give that up. Many people want Jesus as Savior and still want to keep the old lifestyle with all of the same friends and activities etc. Asking Jesus to remove spiritual blindness is asking for a whole new life. One cannot love living like the blind while claiming to want sight.

Verse 52 puts the whole incident in perspective. Jesus said his faith had made him whole. Read Hebrews 11:and Ephesians 2:8, 9. Jesus said to Bartimaeus, **"Your faith has made you whole."**

Mark concluded his account of this encounter by noting that Bartimaeus followed Jesus. Sounds like an obvious next step only for too many it really is not their response. Earlier in His ministry Jesus healed 10 lepers of their deadly disease. We would think all of them would have done like Bartimaeus and followed Jesus, but we know the story. Only 1 of the 10 did (Luke 17:11-17). Jesus does not offer us some paid up insurance policy that we simply cash in when we die and want to go to heaven. He offers to take away spiritual blindness and give us a new life in Him, a life that is abundant and full. Satan's desire is to keep us blind as long he can to the richness in Jesus but if we accept Him as Savior, Satan wants us to continue to live as beggars. Jesus offers so much more to those who will truly seek to follow Him, and His offer is to be lived out each day.

None of us is physically blind but we all suffer to one degree or another from spiritual blindness. There is so much more God wants to give to us. To receive more spiritual sight, we have to call out to the only one who can give it to us, and we must truly want it. As we receive it, we must apply it in our daily living. God would love to make 2019 a year for each of us to see God more closely and more vividly.