

Jesus Our Merciful Saviour

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[0 : 0 0] Lord, show your steadfast love to us and do us good. Do us good from your Word, from your Word, the gospel we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now, we're going to hear God's Word together in Luke's Gospel, chapter 18. That's page 1052, if you're using the church Bibles. We're coming to the end of chapter 18. We're actually coming towards the end of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. We've been following this all the way from Luke chapter 9, verse 51, where Jesus resolutely, determinedly sets His face towards Jerusalem, and now we find Him coming near. So, we're going to read chapter 18 from verse 31 to 43, and we're going to consider together Jesus, our merciful Savior. So, let's hear God's Word.

Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles.

They will mock Him, insult Him, and spit on Him. They will flog Him and kill Him. On the third day, He will rise again. The disciples did not understand any of this. This meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what He was talking about. 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. Amen. In this little text, there are some questions about heart and about motive that are raised. I wonder if you can identify with this experience. Perhaps in the context of school or work, an authority figure drops in unexpectedly, or you find a note or an email saying that authority figure wants to see you as soon as possible. How does your heart feel in that moment? Mine instinctively sinks through the floor. Panic so quickly spreads. When we don't know why an authority figure comes, if we don't know what motivates them, if we don't understand what's their heart, perhaps we might feel fear, panic. Perhaps we might feel a sense of confusion. Jesus is the great authority figure, and we will never understand His journey, His coming, without understanding the cross. Because the cross is at the heart of His mission is at the heart of His mission. And we will never understand the cross without recognizing Jesus' heart of mercy. So we're going to think about heart and motive today.

[4 : 0 3] But this little text also introduces questions of seeing and seeking as well. The great theme in our text is the theme of mercy. What do we mean by mercy? Mercy is an act of compassion. It's a willingness to help another person. It begins with an emotion that leads to action.

And that's what Luke shows to us in the heart of Jesus. And again, one of the wonderful things about Luke as he writes his gospel is he's always wanting to show these surprising reversals that take place.

And today we see another one. We meet the disciples who at this present moment on the journey are in the dark to a certain extent about Jesus' mission of mercy and what it will involve suffering and dying.

But we meet a blind man who we know is called Bartimaeus. And he is led by God to see it. He is blind, but he sees. And not only that, not only does he see who Jesus is, he then because of that seeks mercy from Jesus. He understands why Jesus came to show mercy, so he seeks it for himself. And so there's two vital questions, simple vital questions for us today. Whoever we are today, wherever we are on the journey of life or faith, whatever our background, wherever we are to this moment, do I know Jesus is the merciful Savior? We're going to think about that. And secondly, unrelated, am I coming to this Jesus for mercy? So we begin in verses 31 to 34. Do I know Jesus is the merciful Savior? So we've discovered now that his journey to Jerusalem is almost complete. Jericho to Jerusalem, about 18 miles distant. So he's really close.

And we've also seen, if you've not been here, that as Jesus travels towards Jerusalem, he's not moving by himself. There's huge crowds that are coming along with him because they're all heading to the same place. They're going to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. What Jesus does now is really interesting. Look at verse 31. Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, we are going up to Jerusalem and everything that is written by the prophets will be fulfilled. And what he's saying to them, in effect, is I have a unique reason for attending this festival. The crowd, they're here as God commanded to celebrate the Passover. The Passover was this great event in the Old Testament where God's enemies were judged, where God's people were saved, that their freedom was secured so they could enjoy life with God. So they're going to celebrate that. But Jesus, he's got a unique reason for going. He is going to become the true Passover lamb. Jesus knows when he gets to Jerusalem, he is going to in himself experience God's judgment on sin. And he will do that to secure his people's forgiveness.

[7 : 26] So that spiritually we'd be set free from slavery, set free to know and enjoy God. So he's got this unique reason for going. And for the third time in Luke's gospel, he explicitly prepares the disciples for what lies ahead. And I just want to notice some of the words that Jesus uses here. First of all, in verse 31, he talks about fulfillment. Everything written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. The first time Jesus predicts his death in Luke's gospel explicitly is in Luke chapter 9 verse 22. And there he says, he must suffer. He must die. That must is a must because it's God's plan.

I must fulfill God's plan. Here, same idea, slightly different, I must go to fulfill prophecy. All those anticipations of my work in the Old Testament hundreds of years beforehand, I must fulfill them.

specifically, as God's Messiah King, as God's promised anointed King, he must be the Son of Man.

Notice that's how he talks about himself. His favorite title for himself, Jesus is the Son of Man. That's not simply saying that he is one of us, that he is fully human, which he is, as well as being fully God. This title, Son of Man, comes from Daniel chapter 7 from the Old Testament.

This is a figure that we meet who comes into the throne room of heaven and is given glory and authority and a right to rule forever. So Jesus says, I've come to be that character, that figure, the Son of Man, but I've also come to be the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. He talks about his suffering here, doesn't he?

[9 : 21] He has come to be the Son of Man. He has come to be the Son of Man. He has come to be the Son of Man. He has come also to suffer and die in the place of sinners, to forgive and to heal and to save.

He's both at the same time. He also speaks in verse 32 about being handed over. One of the things we see as you compare the different accounts of Jesus predicting his death is that the details become clearer and we get a sense of how horrific these details are. In chapter 9, verse 22, there is rejection by the religious leaders, those who studied their Bibles, who are waiting for the Messiah, who should have understood. He's here in Jesus. They reject him. In chapter 9, verse 44, he is delivered over.

And we're going to see that there's a double meaning in that. He's going to be handed over by the Jews to the Romans. It's the Romans who will be responsible for executing Jesus. But we also understand in the gospel that he's handed over by his Father for the sake of being our Savior.

But now we have this idea in verse 32 that Jesus will be handed over to the Gentiles. And as we think about the details, as he speaks about being mocked and insulted and spat on and flogged and killed, what becomes clear is that Jesus, when he goes to Jerusalem, is going to bear shame.

He is going to go under God's curse. He is going to be treated as if he were unclean. He is going to suffer and he is going to be executed. Jews and Gentiles will conspire together to reject and have killed the Creator and their Savior.

[11 : 19] But that's not all he talks about wonderfully. End of verse 33, on the third day, he will rise again. So we thought about this last Sunday evening, the resurrection. Some people say the resurrection was invented by the church in the second century to make Jesus sound more impressive. No.

It's always been how Jesus has understood himself. And he understands his mission to involve both the cross and resurrection glory. And the significance of this for us is a reminder that death is not defeat for Jesus. Death is not the end for Jesus. Death is victory for Jesus and for his people. It also says to us, it's not going to be people's plans, people's pleasures that win the day.

Ultimately, God's plan is carried out. In fact, it's God's pleasure. We've gone back a few times to Isaiah 53, and we're going to do it again. Isaiah 53, let me just read again, verses 10 and 11.

Isaiah 53, verse 10, And though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied. God's plan in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

One other word for us to see, when it's misunderstanding, look at verse 34, The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them. They didn't know what he was talking about. It's true, isn't it? There are some ideas and some facts that are such a revelation and a revolution to us. It can be really hard for us to process them, really hard for us, in fact, to accept them. In the scientific world, we see this. You look back at the history of science, Galileo and Copernicus. They had this revolutionary way of looking at the universe where they saw that it wasn't the earth at the center, but rather it was the sun. And when they began to share those ideas, they were criticized, they were resisted, they were threatened. It took time to process this new reality. Now, spare a thought for the disciples. You know, we stand on this side of the cross, we have the whole story, and so we may think, it's so clear. What did Jesus say? It's so obvious.

[14 : 04] But they were brought up hearing from when they were little about the hopes that God would send a Messiah king. And when that king came, he would come in glory and majesty and triumph and victory, and enemies would be defeated. God's kingdom would be established. Peace in the promised land would be theirs. And remember, too, as they have been with Jesus in His ministry, they have heard God the Father speak directly from heaven, this is my son. I love him. I am well pleased with him.

No wonder Jesus' words to them were like that revolutionary idea that they struggle to accept, like the puzzle piece that just doesn't seem to fit. How can shame and glory go together?

How can the Son of God suffer like this? How can death be victory? We're told it was hidden from them. Couldn't always be. It was revealed to them so clearly once they met the risen Lord Jesus.

It was revealed to them when they ascended, Lord Jesus sent the Spirit, and then they would boldly preach about the cross as victory, the victory of God over the forces of darkness and evil and sin and death. They would speak about the cross as a demonstration of God's love. They would understand Jesus is the true Passover lamb, killed in the place of sinners as a substitute so that we might have spiritual freedom. He truly is the way and the truth and the life. But from their current point of view, before the cross, they couldn't see this message as good news. They couldn't see how this would carry out the merciful mission of God.

What about from our point of view, as we look back 2,000 years ago to consider the cross of the Lord Jesus? Do we see it? Do we see its significance? Do we understand it as an act of mercy? Because truth be told, misunderstandings are still many. From the beginning, people have misunderstood the cross.

[16 : 37] Sometimes people look at the cross and say, well, the cross is failure because Jesus died, and if He died, then He's buried, and dead people stay dead, and if that was true, we could have Jesus as a great moral example, a wise guru, but we would have no Savior. The cross is not failure. Some people from the beginning have looked on the cross as foolish. And again, if we don't understand that Jesus is standing in the place of sinners, acting as our representative and our substitute, it seems foolish. How can the death of someone else forgive my sins? How can such a horrible act ever be worthy of celebration and worship? There's misunderstanding. People still, I want to claim the cross is fiction. Again, we thought about this last Sunday evening, there's vast amounts of evidence for the reliability of the cross and the resurrection, but there are still those who want to keep it at arm's length by calling it a myth.

Misunderstandings are many, but we need to see the cross at the heart of the Christian faith, and to see that mission of mercy there. There's a wonderful title for God that Paul uses in 2 Corinthians.

He talks about God as the Father of mercies and compassion, celebrating and bringing to the church God's heart of compassion for needy fallen sinners, for broken people, for suffering people, for sinful people. And what's true of God the Father is true of God the Son. The Lord Jesus shares that same merciful heart. And what we discover when we look into the Bible is that before the world was ever made, before there was a universe, before there was people, before there was sin, there was God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and there was His eternal plan to save sinners. That the Father in love and mercy would send Jesus the Son, that Jesus the Son in mercy would come and act on our behalf, fulfilling the law in His perfect obedience and in His sacrificial death, that the Son would save by way of loving sacrifice.

At the cross, we see Jesus as our representative. And as we think about Jesus suffering and dying, we need to understand God's justice against sin is being done, but it's being done to Jesus in our place, not to us.

That God's holy anger against sin is being satisfied because it falls on Jesus, His Son, and not on us.

[19 : 37] What we receive is God's mercy, His forgiveness, His freedom, when our faith rests in Him.

Do you and I know Jesus as the merciful Savior? Jesus is deliberately walking towards Jerusalem, knowing exactly what is coming, knowing exactly what it will cost Him.

Why does He do it? To show God's mercy to a sinful world. To bring God's compassion to people in darkness and need and suffering.

Let's ask God to show us again and again His mercy in and through Jesus.

That we would find healing and life and hope and joy from Him. Second question we need to ask, personal question, am I coming to Jesus for mercy?

[20 : 41] See, that takes us to verse 35 to 43. But before we get into our text, just to think again about this. By God's design, you and I, we're all wired differently.

God has made us all unique with our own personalities and temperaments, and that's a good thing. One way that we're different, some of us will find ourselves to be task-orientated people.

Others will more naturally be people-oriented. In the way we operate. Which is Jesus? Is He task-oriented? Is He people-centered?

The answer is both. When we think about what we have here, we have Jesus deliberately walking to the cross. This is His great task. He's on this journey to show mercy for sinners.

So, He's focused on His task. But also, He's going to show mercy on the journey, because He stops and He focuses on this blind man, Bartimaeus.

[21 : 46] Picture the scene that we have before us. We have a huge crowd of pilgrims heading up to Jerusalem for the festival. There'd be the singing of Psalms.

There'd be the praising of God. There'd be excitement and expectation in their conversations. They're following Jesus at the head of this procession. And they arrive at Jericho's main street. And as they're arriving, this huge, noisy procession is coming.

There's a blind beggar sitting on that street where he always is in his daily struggle to survive. Very little help in his day. Very little hope in his life.

But in that moment, these two worlds collide. And Jesus coming, coming on His mission of mercy, will change everything for this blind man.

Again, three things to notice. First of all, let's notice the request. It's really interesting, and I think it speaks to spiritual condition, to see verse 37 compared to verse 38.

[22 : 53] So you've got Bartimaeus, and he's sitting there, and he hears the noise, wonders what's going on. And the crowds, they tell him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. He's using that.

And Nazareth, that's where he comes from. Suggests perhaps they don't really see anything greatly special about Jesus. But how does Bartimaeus talk about Jesus?

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. The only person in the Gospels to use that title, Son of David. Why does he use it?

What's that about? It's the title of God's Messiah King. Okay, so Bartimaeus knows this Jesus. He has come to set up the kingdom of God.

He is the one who God has appointed to reign forever. And because he knows that, he asks his Messiah King something. Messiah King, will you show me mercy?

[23 : 48] He sees it. He gets it. God's King, God's Son, has God's heart of mercy. And so he asks the question. And we need to be so careful that we don't miss this.

Knowing that Jesus is the Son of God, knowing that he is God's Savior, knowing that he shows mercy, that's not enough. That's good to know that truth.

That is not enough. We need to know Jesus by faith. We need to come to him personally to find the mercy and the help that we need. That extra step is the step of faith, to receive Jesus as Lord and as Savior.

So that's his request. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Then notice the rebuke. The rebuke that certainly speaks to spiritual blindness. Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet.

Jesus, too busy. Don't you know Jesus is heading to the festival? He's got a busy schedule. He's got an agenda to keep. He's got no time for you. Or perhaps even more negatively, because we know this from John's Gospel, that some people looked at a blind person and said, well, somebody has sinned.

[25 : 05] That's the cause of this. Either the individual has sinned or his parents have sinned. So perhaps some were thinking, well, that Jesus is not going to have time to speak to a sinful person like you.

What's happening there? They're missing the truth that Jesus is the merciful Savior. Even though there are people who are joining that procession with Jesus, they've missed it.

They've missed verse 13. They missed Jesus. Talk about the tax collector who prayed, God, have mercy on me, a sinner. And he went home justified. And they missed the point that Jesus deliberately welcomed the little children.

The kingdom of God belongs to little people like these. But there are some who would still write Bartimaeus off as beyond Jesus' care.

We must never write other people off. Luke's Gospel says that on almost every page. The reality of God's grace, the goodness of his mercy, says that nobody is too bad.

[26 : 24] Nobody is too unimportant. Nobody is too insignificant. Nobody is too different for Jesus to stop and to save. Let me put that another way and say we must never write ourselves off.

Sometimes, perhaps, because of our past or our circumstances, we say, well, Jesus can't be for me. Jesus is not for people like me because I'm not a good person. Truly, the Bible says there are no good and righteous people.

The only qualification we need is to feel our need for mercy and to come and to come. Because look at what Bartimaeus receives.

Verse 40, Bartimaeus won't stop. They're saying, be quiet. But he won't stop. He keeps crying, son of David, have mercy on me. Where Bartimaeus won't stop, Jesus does.

Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. This is why he's come. He's come to show mercy. In this conversation, what does this conversation reveal, Jesus?

[27 : 36] What do you want me to do for you? The blind man says, Lord, I want to see. Jesus said, receive your sight. Your faith has healed you. Bartimaeus has faith in Jesus as God's king, God's merciful king.

That's why he comes, why he asks the question. And the request is granted. Granted in the sense that now he receives his sight. That's mercy, isn't it?

His physical blindness is healed. But also, do you notice the new direction of his life? As soon as he receives his sight, he's not all about his own business.

He follows Jesus. He's praising God. He's a worshiper. And the crowd are led to join and to praise.

When all the people saw it, they also praised God. No one can deny a miracle of mercy has happened. God will have his son be praised. Let's close where we began.

[28 : 39] To know why Jesus came. That changes everything. If we understand his heart and his motive, that he comes to show mercy, then we will run to him and not run from him.

The picture that we get in Luke 18 as Jesus enters Jericho is that of a king of mercy, leading a royal procession, heading to Jerusalem, to the royal city.

And on that journey, the king stops to invite a beggar into his presence. To invite a beggar to ask from a king of great grace and mercy.

He's inviting a beggar to join his royal court. Isn't that a lovely picture of Jesus? That's a wonderful picture of the gospel.

King Jesus invites you and me today to come and find the mercy we need, the forgiveness we need, the eternal life we need.

[29 : 54] He says, come. Come and have your life transformed as we would experience his powerful love for us.

And the wonderful thing about this king of mercy that we meet in Jesus, he is the one who knows each and every one of us, inside and out. So he knows exactly what we need in this day, in this hour.

There was a Puritan preacher by the name of Thomas Goodwin. He had a lovely picture. He spoke of Jesus as a king with a treasure chest of mercy.

Made me think of jewelry. Not that I have a lot of jewelry. But you know, if you have jewelry, you probably have something fit for every occasion. Maybe. What mercy do you need today?

Are you coming to King Jesus to find what you need? He has mercy for each one of us.

[30 : 59] Bartimaeus, he had an illness. Jesus had mercy. Jesus has mercy that would heal. Jesus has mercy to help us endure through illness, giving glory to God.

If we are in spiritual darkness today, still confused about who Jesus is and why he came, there is mercy. Mercy to give light. Mercy to reveal Jesus as God and Savior to us.

If you're here today and your heart is hard or hardening, there is mercy to give you a soft and tender heart to gladly receive the love of Jesus.

If you're here today and you are spiritually dead, you know that all is not well between you and God, there is mercy to give new life.

If you are discouraged today, burdened down by cares and troubles, there is mercy from Jesus to lift you up.

[32 : 11] Mercy to encourage you and to keep you walking. If you come here today aware of your sin and your guilt, there is mercy to cleanse and forgive.

He has a treasure chest of mercies. Child of God, you're a Christian, do you understand that your father and Jesus, your elder brother, they are full of tender mercy for you.

If you're not a Christian here today, do you understand that if you come to Jesus in faith today, you will find mercy. How do we know?

How can we have such confidence? Because of the journey. Because Jesus will go to the cross to die in our place for our sins.

The great demonstration of love and mercy from God. So there's an invitation to each one of us, like this blind beggar, to ask that God would help us to see who Jesus is, to see Him as the merciful Savior, and that we would...