

The Journey to the Cross, Part 8 - Mark 10:46-52

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[0:00] Mark chapter 10 and verse 35. Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. Teacher, they said, we want you to do for us whatever we ask. What do you want me to do for you?

He asked. They replied, let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory. You don't know what you're asking, Jesus said. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized the baptism I am baptized with?

We can, they answered. Jesus said to them, you will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with. But to sit at my right or my left is not for me to grant.

These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared. When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, you know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord over them and their high officials exercise authority over them.

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. And whoever wants to be the first must be slave of all.

[1:13] For even the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Then they came to Jericho 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 by the roadside begging. 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. Jesus stopped and said, call him.

So he called to a blind man, cheer up on your feet, he is calling you. Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped up to his feet and came to Jesus.

What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asked him. The blind man said, Rabbi, I want to see. Go, said Jesus, your faith has healed you.

[2:21] Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road. Amen. So let's, for a very short time, turn back to the chapter we had in Mark chapter 10.

Like we said, we're just following on from a series over the last few weeks. We were following Jesus and his disciples and the crowds around them as they make their way to Jerusalem.

And today we arrive in verses 46 down to verses 52. Before we begin, I want to ask you to think.

Think just now and think as we go on through this sermon. As we look at this passage, as we read and see what happened. I want us to think of the question. What right now do we want most in the world?

What right now do you want most in the world? If I was to come down to the world and say, right, tell me right now, what do you want? What do you want most this very second?

[3:27] Whatever you ask for, you will get it, I guarantee you. I wonder where our minds go. Now, what I actually offer you, I can't offer you very much, unfortunately.

I can offer you a listening ear and that's about the limit of my abilities. But today we see the same incredible question being asked by the one who had and who has all the power of the universe.

The one who reigns over all things. The one who is king over all things. He asks the same question in these verses today. And he asks this man, what can I do for you?

So for some context, remember, last Sunday morning we joined Jesus and disciples as they make their way to Jerusalem, like we said. And in our section here, they've just been to Jericho and as you see in verse 46, they've come to Jericho and now they're leaving Jericho.

And as they leave Jericho, they encounter this man, Bartimaeus. In the previous section, Jesus had been teaching his disciples about humility, teaching them about reminding them again about his

death.

[4 : 44] That was coming very soon. And now we see a break, if you like, in this teaching where we narrow down in on what took place after they left Jericho.

They're now roughly 25 miles or so away from Jerusalem. Before they get any distance out of Jericho, they meet this man, Bartimaeus.

We can look at these verses in roughly four ways and the verses will overlap. So it's a very rough structure. But first of all, looking at the condition of Bartimaeus, then looking at the call he receives, then looking at his conversion or his change, and then looking at the commission he receives.

So his condition, his call, his conversion or his change, and then the commission he receives. So firstly, looking at the condition of this man.

It's one of these accounts in scripture that I'm sure most of us have read a hundred times and have heard so much about. It's very easy to kind of lose sight of just the reality of what's taking place in these verses.

[5 : 58] This man was a real man. Bartimaeus was a real man. He's not just here in the text to add a nice story for us. This man had a life of suffering, a life of blindness, we presume, his whole life.

And here he is spending every day begging for change, for people passing him by, people who could see the world that he could not.

And here he is asking them for change, for a few small pennies as they pass him by. He sat here on the roadside of this great city, this great trading city, and he's outside by the roadside waiting for a few small pennies.

The image of Bartimaeus is here, this man, he's holding his hand out into the darkness for him, looking for some help for anyone who's passing him by.

The ones who walked by him could see the world he could not. They had opportunities he could and would never, ever have.

[7 : 06] They could go where they wanted and do what they wanted. In a sense, those who passed by Bartimaeus, they lacked nothing in their lives. Perhaps they had some issues going on, perhaps they had some worries, but at least their lives were better than this man on the roadside.

Better than this man who was blind and helpless. And I wonder how much has changed for us today. If we're honest with ourselves, and if we truly are honest right now with ourselves, we are no different.

Although we do, of course, have many issues and many worries in life, many problems in life. Real problems, real worries. I'm sure most of us here are pretty content, pretty happy with where we are right now in life.

And somehow in our mind, we're thinking, well, at least we're not as bad as this man by the roadside. I'm happy.

I'm doing okay. I've got a decent job. A lovely family. I've got a car that works. I'm doing okay. We get holidays occasionally. My studies are going okay.

[8 : 22] I get okay grades. I'm passing. I'm getting better than I hoped for. School's doing well. I'm leaving school soon. To go and to go to university. Or my grandkids are doing well.

If that's all our life consists of, then the reality is we are just as blind as this poor man, Bartimaeus. He sat by the roadside.

It's not a physical blindness that affects us today. It's a blindness, if we like, of our souls. The world is blinded to the reality round about them.

Blinded to the reality, the truth of God. Blinded by the darkness of their sin. We're all so well aware of that. Turn on the news.

Even this morning, there's awful stories of bombs going off in the Middle East. We see such awful stories and see such awful tragedy going on in the world. And it's not hard to see that there is this darkness, this spiritual darkness.

[9 : 32] This real sad darkness cloaking our world. This blind man, he was of course aware of his situation.

He was aware of the condition he was in. He knew he needed help. And we see that from the request he asks of Jesus. What does he say? He says, Rabbi or teacher, I want to see.

Rabbi, let me recover my sight. From his request, we can see that Bartimaeus had heard something about Jesus.

He knew something about who Jesus was. Something about what Jesus had done previously. He had heard something about the mercy and the power of this man.

And he had believed it. Even perhaps in a small way, he held on to the hope that if what he had heard about this man was true, then this man could help him as he had helped others before him.

[10:38] He knew that Jesus was merciful. Perhaps he didn't know much. It's likely he didn't know much at all about Jesus. He perhaps heard his name being mentioned by those passing him by.

He had heard the stories of this man who was healing people. This man who was sharing this message of hope. And he had believed something of what he had heard.

He had trusted, even in perhaps a small way, that what had been said about this man was true.

Bartimaeus doesn't ask Jesus for power.

He doesn't ask Jesus for riches. He doesn't ask Jesus for anything else. He asks Jesus, of course, the one thing he could never do for himself.

Rabbi, teacher, let me recover my sight. Teacher, let, I want to see. He asks Jesus for his greatest need, the need he knew fine well himself.

[11:41] He could do nothing to help himself with. And in doing so, he openly acknowledges his condition. He acknowledges that he was in desperate need of something that only Jesus could do for him.

If there's anyone here this morning who, as of yet, doesn't know Jesus and doesn't love Jesus and doesn't worship Jesus, then before you do anything else, you have to know your condition.

Bartimaeus was wise enough, and it didn't take much for him to see that he was blind. He knew he was. He knew he was different. He knew he needed that help. If anyone here today is to cry it to Jesus, we must cry it to Jesus, admitting that we're not good.

Admitting that we're not that nice. We don't say Jesus saved me because I've been to church the last 10, 20, 30 years. Jesus saved me because I'm such a good citizen.

Jesus saved me because I know my Bible off by heart, and I pray every day. And again, good things, of course, amazing things. We encourage you in these things. If you're looking to be saved, you come to Jesus and you say, Jesus, I am in desperate need of your saving power.

[13:02] Bartimaeus knew his issue, and he knew the only one who could help him. If you want to have a life transformed by Jesus, you must come to him honestly, admitting your situation, saying as it really is, and crying out that he would give you sight.

Look, a bit of these, to verse 47, or verse 47 and verse 48. So Bartimaeus cries out to Jesus for the first time, son of David, have mercy on me.

What happens then in verse 48? Well, the crowds tell him to be quiet. Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet. Told him to keep his mouth shut.

Stop bothering us. You're shouting out after this man. They didn't want to hear him cry out for Jesus. It was ruining their nice day, ruining their situation as they're walking past him.

They didn't care for what he was shouting out. And the second anyone here call that to Jesus, the second we start looking and seeking after Jesus, you can be sure, you can be certain, and I'm sure the Christians here will testify to this, you will find opposition from those around you.

[14:26] In this case, of course, Bartimaeus found opposition from the crowd. We didn't want to hear this man shouting in our ears. Very often, the loudest voices we encounter are those who are closest to us.

Friends and family who very often mean well. If we're talking about Jesus and talking about wanting to become a Christian and wanting to love him and serve him, you know, they'll come to you and they'll try you and in their mind help you by saying, don't, look at the Christians, look how odd they are, look how strange these people are.

They're so dull, they're so weird. Why do you want to be like that person? Jesus, this man who lived 2,000 years ago, why do you care about him? Bible, this book, it's just a book.

You'll be amazed. You'll be amazed at who stands in opposition to you following Jesus and in how they seek to justify that opposition.

So if you are this morning seeking after Jesus, if you are looking into what it is to be a Christian, don't be put off and don't be surprised when you face horrendous opposition. But let's learn from Bartimaeus.

[15:43] Verse 48, we tell him to keep his mouth shut. What does he do? But he shouted all the more. He would not be quiet. They're trying to get him to just keep quiet, please.

But he shouted all the more. Son of David, have mercy on me. Let nothing this morning, this day, this week, stop you from crying out to Jesus.

If you're seeking after him to save you, let nothing stop you. Bartimaeus have a wisdom to do that. And please follow his example. Now, place yourself in the place of Bartimaeus. Here you are above a roadside, and the crowds are passing you by.

You're there as a blind beggar. This is your day. There is crowds filing past you. This is your chance to make a fortune, perhaps, if you're smart enough.

[16:40] Bartimaeus sat there and begged and begged for more money. And who knows? They received a small fortune from this crowd passing him by. But Bartimaeus was smarter than that.

He made the most of his chance. He knew as this man Jesus was passing him by, he knew this was his chance to make an everlasting, real change in his life.

This was not the time to be concerned about a few pence that wouldn't last him that long. This was a chance, his chance for his life to be changed. And he recognized that.

So instead of doing what he always did and begged and sat there, he instead calls out. Even in the midst of opposition, he calls out and calls out. He seized the chance, quite literally, as Jesus was passing him by.

As we sit here today in this church, we sit here with breath in our lungs. We sit here with a chance of life this day. A wonderful chance of life.

[17:46] And we sit here as we read God's word together. As you have it open in front of you, as you read it with me just now, this is the true word of God.

As we see Jesus heal this man, as we see Jesus give this man, as we'll see in a second, new life. Don't let this chance pass you by either.

If Bartimaeus had kept his mouth shut, if Bartimaeus had listened to the crowds, Jesus would have passed him by on his way to Jerusalem. Never to pass by the same way again.

Bartimaeus had the sense to make the most of the chance he had to cry out to the only one who could help him. Don't lose your chance to cry out to Jesus in the same way.

This is not just nice words we say on a Sunday to keep ourselves happy. This is not just a nice wee story we have. Mark it and just add this to fill in the space. This is God's real living word.

[18:51] And this is important for us to understand this. This is real life and real death. We become quite relaxed in our routines, quite relaxed in our Sunday routines. Me here and you there.

But this is real. This is serious. Don't let this chance pass you by. So then we see that, so he's called out to Jesus. He's called out twice to Jesus.

And then in verse 49, Jesus stopped and said, call him. So Jesus talks to disciples or people around him and says, call him. So then they call out to the blind man.

We have to note that it was Jesus who gives the first call. Jesus is the initiator. Jesus does the work. Jesus says, call him. It wasn't his followers.

It was no one else. Jesus is the only one who can call us to himself. It's wonderful, comforting words. In Luke 5 and verse 32, where Jesus says, I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

[19:59] Jesus calls us to himself. Jesus came into the world to call sinners to himself. Of course, at our core, at our very base level, we'll do anything and everything to escape that call, to run away from that call.

We do everything we can to ignore that call of Jesus in our lives. We hear the call of the gospel saying, come to Jesus. He is calling you. And we go, no.

I don't want to listen to this call. It's going to ruin my life. It's going to ruin my plans. It's going to ruin my nice situation I'm in. Bartimaeus receives this call from Jesus.

And Jesus made use of his people. Jesus calls to us through his word. Let's read the word just now. This is God speaking to you through his living word.

But Jesus also uses you and me. He uses his people. And trust me, we all feel and recognize how weak and how useless we are in many ways as Christians.

[21:05] We feel how inadequate we are, how uneloquent we are. And trust me, nothing makes that more clear than standing somewhere like this. You realize how faltering, how failing your words and your thinking actually is.

But we have the glorious reality here that God makes use of his people. Jesus told those around him to call him. And we see in verse 49, they call this blind man.

What do they say to him? They tell him, cheer up on your feet. He is calling you. That is incredible, wonderful beauty and duty of the Christians here today.

The gospel call has not changed. The call that these men gave to Bartimaeus is the same call we share to those around us this day.

As Christians here this morning, this is the call we are commissioned to give to those around us, our family, our friends, those we work with, those we study with, those we just meet and interact with on a daily or weekly basis.

[22 : 13] The call is simple. Get up on your feet. Take comfort. He is calling you. It's a somber call.

It's a serious duty we have. What a wonderful privilege. It should give us joy that we can point those around us to the one who can save them.

Never pointing to ourselves, never saying that we can help them, or we can save them somehow.

But always pointing out, on your feet, get up, be comforted. He is calling you.

The one who changed my life, the one who saved me, he is calling you. As we go out, as we share that simple gospel message, as we point people to Jesus, as we see him do the work, him receive all the glory, it's an incredible thing.

Take heart. Cheer up. On your feet, he is calling you. An important call, a solemn call, but also one that should give us joy.

[23 : 23] Right here this morning, if we are Christians, regardless of how able we may feel, regardless of how useful we may feel, God has for us this job, to share his life-giving gospel.

That is no small thing for us this morning. So the crowd calls out to Bartimaeus, cheer up on your feet. He is, excuse me, calling you.

So what's the first thing Bartimaeus does? And again, as Janangus in ETS always says, there's no wasted words in scripture. What's the first thing Bartimaeus does in verse 50?

Well, throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. He froze off his cloak. We could say that this symbol perhaps, or it wasn't a symbol, it was a real thing for him.

This, this, this thing he used that represented his old life. This thing that covered him, that perhaps he collected his money in. This cloak, this, this symbol of, of all these years of suffering and blindness.

[24 : 28] It's gone. I don't need that anymore. That's long gone now. He jumps to his feet. And he comes straight to Jesus. And Jesus calls us to himself.

Our old life, it dies. Jesus makes us new creatures. He gives us a new life. And second Corinthians five, 17, that verse we know so well. And sometimes we find ourselves looking for the old things, looking for the old life.

But reality is, like Bartimaeus, that old life, it's, it's thrown aside. And we jump up and we must always come straight to Jesus. We're given a whole new start, cleansed and made perfect in our savior.

And then we have this beautiful question. Jesus asks this man. That's a strange question, really.

So he throws off his cloak, he jumps up, and he comes to Jesus. And Jesus says to him, what do you want me to do for you? Perhaps this question seems familiar, and so it should.

[25 : 44] We just read it in the previous section, and when Jesus is talking to James and John, in verse 36, verse 35 and verse 36, we see that James and John say, teacher, they said, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.

Then Jesus replies, the same question, what do you want me to do for you? In terms of contrast, it's a massive contrast we have here in front of us. In that section, they come to Jesus with a selfish and misguided question.

Here Jesus asks the same question to this man. He's called out, Rabbi, son of David, have mercy on me. Jesus says, what do you want me to do for you?

First of all, this question perhaps reads as if it was response of a servant.

What can I do for you? How can I help you? How can I serve you? And perhaps that kind of idea rubs us the wrong way, just now you think, well, that's not right.

[26 : 58] And of course, again, as we read in the last few verses, in verse 45, a reminder that the son of man didn't come to serve, to give his life as a ransom for many, to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

At this time, Jesus is, of course, heading towards Jerusalem. He is heading, as we'll see next week and the week after, heading towards the cross, heading towards the point where he will lay up his

life for his people.

And here we see Jesus asking this man, what do you want me to do for you? Unlike, unlike even the best servant in the world who asks this question, Jesus and his response is not going to be limited by anything.

This is the question that's being asked by our servant, Savior. It's a question that just overflows with power.

Boy, I'm an answer, Rabbi, I want to see. I think the actual healing takes place in a second, doesn't it? There's no theatrics, there's no incense, there's no singing, chanting.

[28 : 17] Verse 52, Go, said Jesus, your faith has healed you. Immediately, that's a strong, strong word being used there, immediately he received his sight. It's done.

The power of our Savior has transformed this man's life in a real sense, in a practical sense, but also, as we'll see, in a deeper sense too.

In an instant, Jesus has cured this man from the blindness, the darkness that have been plaguing him, we presume, for all, if not most, of his life.

Here we see just the serving nature of our Savior. He stops and he helps. He's on his way to suffer and to die a painful, agonizing, unthinkable death.

We saw in the previous section of James and John, he's already suffered this selfish question from these two disciples who are asking him a pointless question about service and who's going to reign beside you and who's going to rule alongside you.

[29 : 32] They're not getting it. Jesus explained his death and they ask that and now he's walking to Jerusalem and we might think that his mind's going to be focused on what he's going to head towards, where he's going, what awaits him but instead Jesus stops and he takes the time to listen to this poor beggar and then the time to actually heal him, to change his life.

Go, said Jesus, your faith has healed you. Immediately he receives his sight. Go. Go where? Jesus tells us, go, go, done, go your way, quite literally.

Jesus gives a simple instruction. The man could have quite easily grabbed his cloak again and sat back down and started begging again after all, this was the only life he ever knew.

What actually does this man do? he goes way of Jesus. Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

This man was now going his own way. He was now following the way of his Savior. He recognized that this was the only way he could now go.

[31 : 01] There was no going back. There was no going back to his old life. He had been transformed and changed by his Savior. The Savior had given him sight but also, as is clear, had transformed his whole life.

The way of Jesus, the way of Christ, was now his way too. And we'll close with this thought.

As we sit here just now and as you're perhaps considering who this man is, as you think about, as we saw in his text, the power he seems to have over the lives of these people.

That this man, Jesus, has a power not only to heal but also to save, to change a whole man's life.

Our prayer and our desire is that you would also come to ask the same thing that Bartimaeus here asks.

That question that Jesus asks you, your answer would be, I want to see. Jesus, let me see. Jesus, open my eyes. Jesus, let me see the reality of who you are, of what you've done for me, the reality of what your salvation means for me.