

## Matthew 20:29–34

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[ 0 : 00 ] Matthew chapter 20, verses 29 to 34. And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him.

And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside. And when they had heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, Lord, have mercy on us, son of David.

The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent. But they cried out all the more, Lord, have mercy on us, son of David. And stopping, Jesus called them and said, what do you want me to do for you? And they said to him, Lord, let our eyes be opened. And Jesus, in pity, touched their eyes. And immediately they recovered their sight and followed him. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning. Morning and welcome to Christ Church Chicago. We're so glad that you're with us here today.

[ 1 : 00 ] This morning we actually finish our fall series titled Following Jesus as King. It began back in chapter 16 when Jesus laid down the first lesson for those who would follow when he said to Peter, take up your cross and follow me.

It concludes here at chapter 20 when you'll see, even looking as you might at the words in the text, verse 29, that by now there is a great crowd that followed him.

Or even the final verse, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him. Following Jesus as King.

Lessons to learn along the way. Let's pray. Let's pray. Started with Peter. Take up your cross and follow me. Let me run the lessons of the fall series before you.

First, get in line and follow me. Listen to him. Have faith.

[ 2 : 22 ] Cause no offense. Be humble. Fight sin. Seek those who have gone astray. Get there together.

Forgive those who fail you. Family matters. Salvation is what real wealth looks like. Generosity is the currency of Christ's kingdom.

It's all about service, not status. And now, today, number 14. Fourteenth and final lesson to learn along the way.

Set your sights on receiving mercy. That's the lesson to be learned. I'm grabbing that from the twice mentioned cry of the blind men.

You can see it there for yourself in verse 30 and 31. They say to him, Lord, have mercy on us.

Again, 31. Although rebuked and told to be silent, they cried out all the more, Lord, have mercy on us.

[ 3 : 32 ] Set your sights on receiving mercy. Evidently, our lesson opens in verse 29 as Jesus and his disciples were on their way, it says, out of Jericho.

Now, we know he's on his way to Passover. That will be the very next text that we'll pick up when the new year comes. But Jesus is now leaving Jericho.

And there's a great crowd following him. Most likely, a crowd that is on their way to celebrate Passover, this annual feast.

I looked at a map to see how far Jericho was from Jerusalem, and it's about 14 miles. It was called a bloody pass.

It was a difficult walk given the terrain in which you traveled. I've never been there myself. So I YouTubed it and watched a man walking along the narrow paths of cliffs and great falls, and one who would have to wind him or herself along 14 miles to get to Jerusalem from Jericho.

[ 4 : 57 ] Evidently, Jesus is now setting out on that path. It was an arduous journey. This last summer, my wife and I had the privilege of walking between two towns along the Ligurian Sea in the northern part of Italy.

And it was only about a two-mile walk. These towns tucked in as they were into the cliffs. And it was challenging. It was difficult.

Well, evidently, Jesus, and now a great host, is leaving Jericho and making their way, probably having to sleep out along the road two or three nights to arrive in Jerusalem for Passover.

And it's there, at that moment, at the outset of that journey, that our story takes place. Notice it says, verse 30, And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside.

It makes me think the journey is just beginning. You know, those who have needs, who stand along the side of the road, do so at intersections of great traffic.

[ 6 : 07 ] Perhaps these two are just outside the city gate of Jericho, and the crowds are now dispensing on their way to celebrate the annual feast down in Jerusalem.

And somehow they hear that the commotion of the normal crowd going by is increased in number. And somebody indicates to them, this isn't just everybody heading to the feast.

Jesus is passing by. It's an assemblage of men and women and children who are now on the road together.

What do we know about these men? What do they make of Jesus? And what do they want from him? What do we know about him?

Behold, verse 30, there were two blind men. That's really all we're told. Mark will give you the name of one. Bartimaeus, Matthew's not concerned that you or I would even know.

[ 7 : 13 ] Two blind men. That's the only descriptor given. They weren't given the gift of eyesight.

There was an inability to see. This inability to see would present great challenges in navigating life.

The inability to see means that these two weren't able to take things in. That's what the eyes do.

The eyes allow you to take things in.

They allow you to perceive what is in front of you. They actually allow you, in one sense, to analyze what is happening before you.

Your eyes enable you to possess knowledge, a knowing. And this knowing is critical for your navigating.

[ 8 : 19 ] You're able to process the information and make adjustments along the way. They didn't have that. They didn't have that.

They were, in a sense, left in the dark. Ultimately, if they were to set out and try to navigate life, they were dependent on others to help them do so. No perception.

I've got some small, I mean minuscule, sense of blindness.

I don't know if there are any here this morning that suffer from the lack of this gift. I lost vision in my left eye when I was five years old.

As a consequence, those who know me well sit over here when I preach like where Pastor Pace is because they know I can't see him. Can't get my eye on him.

[ 9 : 26 ] I don't have depth perception. I'm a little bit challenged in reading how far things are in front of me. I can't take in the whole range and then make adjustments in light of that.

There are many here who probably have glasses, who have the miracle of science. We've been able to adjust for the lack of some ability.

But these men far exceed any of that. These men are completely in the dark. That's what we know about them. What did they make of Jesus?

Well, evidently, they were there by the roadside. And when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out. It's interesting to just slow down and take a look for yourself at the text in verse 30 and 31 to see what they made of Jesus.

It's found in the title they placed upon him. Can you see it there? Lord, have mercy on us, comma, here it is, son of David.

[ 10 : 40 ] They're rebuked. They're told to be quiet. They cry out all the more. Lord, have mercy on us, son of David. This is an intriguing title. It would have carried its way through the crowd as the place was leaving Jericho.

Son of David. Lord, have mercy on us. Son of David. Son of David. Have mercy on us. This title. You and I are used to titles.

We'll call certain people doctor or professor or coach. And by that, a whole understanding of their person and their role and their function is brought into play.

And so they are saying to him, son of David is the title they bestow upon him. It's an interesting title. What does it signify? You have to know what it signifies if you want to know what they made of him.

Interestingly, it almost came out of Matthew's mouth before he could even get his book underway. Matthew chapter 1, verse 1, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

[12:04] Matthew throws this title on Jesus by way of introduction. Son of David. In fact, the wise men who come in chapter 2 say to the folks, where is he who is born?

What? King of the Jews. Son of David meant that a king had come. David was Israel's lauded historical king.

He would have been the only figure on Mount Rushmore of Israel. David. We're looking for the son of David. Interestingly, this title goes back to 2 Samuel chapter 7, when David himself said, I want to get something done for you, God.

And God says, I'm going to get something done for you. There's going to be a son, your son, who's going to sit on my throne forever.

There was a promise, an ancient promise is what I'm trying to tell you. In the scriptures, that there would one day be a son of David who would rule and have dominion over all that had gone wrong in the world.

[13:28] That's what they made of him. They actually somehow in their blindness felt, perceived, analyzed, knew, and determined that Jesus was this promised savior king.

That's their confession. Yes. And it gives rise to their request. What's their request? Lord, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us. Lord, look with pity upon our plight. Later, they're just actually going to actually state it in verse 33.

Lord, let our eyes be opened. I want to see. I want to perceive. I want to know what's in front of me. I want to navigate life in accordance with what's coming. Lord, have mercy on me.

[14:45] Now, they had good reason to be hopeful. Can I just sit on this for a minute? I mean, why would two blind men who ascribe the title of a king to Jesus indicate through their repetitive cries that he might actually be doing a sight thing from a blind thing?

Where did they get this hope? Where did they get this hope? Isaiah 29, 18 and 19 reads that in that day, that is in this promised day when God's king would come, out of their gloomed darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see.

That there was a promise that when the son of David finally showed, the eyes of the blind would see. In fact, that would have given them hope, but we don't know that they even knew that.

Perhaps they knew what had emerged when John the Baptist himself wondered, are you the one we're supposed to be looking for?

Are you the son of David? And Jesus told John's disciples, will you go tell John that the blind see? In other words, Jesus, maybe they had heard the stories that John the Baptist was solidified in his own sense, that Jesus was the coming king because the blind people saw.

[16:14] Maybe they didn't know anything about John or Isaiah. Perhaps they did know something, though, about two other blind men in chapter 9 that Jesus had already healed.

I mean, you know, in smaller communities, word travels fast when a cure is found. And we've already seen in chapter 9 that two other blind men were healed.

Perhaps the word just got out on the street. It traveled from town to town. Two guys who were blind had actually been healed. And now they know Jesus is coming by.

This is their moment. You've got to feel their desperation. This is it. He's on his way. When he's out of the sound of my voice, the hope goes with him.

Lord, have mercy on us. Son of David, son of David, have mercy on us. They had hopes. If only he would hear.

[17:11] Well, what do we know about the men? They were blind.

What did they make of Jesus? They thought he was their only hope. No Mayo Clinic on the backside of Jericho. And what did they want from him?

Mercy. Eyesight restored. It's an interesting contrast. You know, just take a look at Jesus' line. He evidently stopped.

Verse 32. And I'm sure the crowd backed up with him. You know how that happens. The freeways stall. And he says, what do you want me to do for you?

He heard. Everybody grows silent. The road is now settling in its dust.

[ 18 : 15 ] What do you want me to do for you? A contrast, isn't it, from last week? John's and James' mother coming to Jesus.

And he says to her, what do you want me to do for you? And she says, oh, when you get into that kingdom, let my boys be on your right and on your left.

What do I want you to do for me? I want power. I want might. For my own. To these blind men, though, I want mercy.

John's sons, I want status. These two, without sight, I just want to see. What a contrast.

Can I lean into where I'm going later? What do you want Jesus to do for you? After hearing them, and they say, we want our eyes to be opened, I love verse 34.

[ 19 : 29 ] And Jesus, in pity, touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight. He evidently didn't just call out to them. He's now made his way through men and women.

The ways have parted. The people that were on the side of the road that everyone wanted to rebuke and retain in silence. He's now right next to them. He's leaning over them or standing by them.

And he touches their eyes. And they see. It says in pity. Literally, in compassion. This goes back to Jesus' disposition.

He cares for people who have needs that cannot be met. He cares for people who are trying to navigate life in a world gone wrong.

He heard them. He walked to them. He touched them. He healed them. Remember, he had said that the crowds were like sheep without a shepherd, and he had compassion on them.

[ 20 : 37 ] Remember, when he saw the sick in chapter 14, it says he had compassion on them and he healed them. Remember, in chapter 15, when he saw the 4,000, it says he had compassion on them and he healed them.

He had compassion. He had compassion and he heals them. And it says they followed him. What do we know about the men?

They were blind. What did they make of Jesus? That he was some mysteriously promised king that would make right all that had gone wrong.

What did they want from him? Mercy so that they could get along with their way. Let me run those back over you now. What do we know about ourselves?

What do we make of Jesus? And what do we want from him? I won't have to belabor it.

[ 21 : 44 ] What do we know about ourselves? After all, you're not blind. If any here today. Not many are blind.

A number of my good friends with glasses. Not many are incapacitated like this. Not many are impaired when it comes to seeing or perceiving or having the ability to take things in, to analyze things.

You have the ability to process things. You have knowledge. You have the ability to set a direction for your life. And yet, we would all do well to consider something that ancient philosophers talked about a bit more than we do today.

They would say things like, the eyes are the window to the human soul. Now, by that, they didn't simply mean that what you're looking at indicates your desires.

What they meant was, the soul functions as do the eyes. As the eyes in the material world allow you to take things in, perceive and set a course of action, so too the soul allows you to perceive things, take things in, analyze things, determine things, decide what you're going to do with your life things.

[ 23 : 16 ] That's what the soul does. You process the information that comes before you. And yet, what we know from the scriptures is that our soul, that internal lamp, that light that enables us to process things is actually in darkness.

Not everybody believes this. We always say, appeal to the better lights that are within us. But what if the lights that are within us are actually dark?

What if our souls don't actually have the capacity anymore anymore to sort out why we're here and what we're to do and where we're to go and how we're to live and what am I to love or who am I to love and when am I doing more love than I'm supposed to or why am I loving things more than they ought to be loved?

I mean, what if our soul is actually dark? According to the scriptures, it is. According to the scriptures, because we have sinned, the internal lamp has been extinguished.

And it's not something you can just flip back on. You've got a wiring problem. According to the scriptures, we're all hunting around in the dark.

[ 24 : 43 ] If you really look at your own life, you've got to acknowledge that's true. We're all hunting to determine what am I here for?

It's almost a confession of sorts that we need to be enlightened. While you and I can see things in this physical realm, in the spiritual realm, we are lost and our souls are without direction.

And that's then the state you've got to understand. You and I are really no different than those two men on the side of the road. But do you know it?

If you do know it, then you're like, I feel like that. Then the thing is, what do you make of Jesus? Jesus. What are you going to make of him?

Is he the son of David? What title are you willing to put on him? What letters are you going to put behind his name?

[ 26 : 00 ] Is he God's king? Are you going to believe Matthew's message? Or not hold in any of this?

If you begin today to know that your own spiritual need is for the light of the world, if you begin to actually realize that you came in here extinguished and we're starting to consider the entrance of light and you're beginning to acknowledge that perhaps Jesus might be hopeful for me to reorient the direction of my soul's loves and direction in life, then the question is, what do you want him to do for you?

Tell him what you want him to do for you. Ask him for mercy. Ask him for compassion.

Let me tell you what he can do for you. The miracles in Matthew are meant to validate the message of the miracle worker.

We learned that early. If you haven't been traveling with us, the first big miracle, he heals a paralytic or he says to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven. People are like, your sins are forgiven.

[ 27 : 35 ] You can't forgive sins. He goes, well, what's easier to say your sins are forgiven or rise, take up your pallet and walk, but that you might know that I can do the hard thing, forgive sins, which is unverified in your presence.

I'm going to tell you to get up and take your pallet and walk. And he heals the paralytic and all of a sudden the guy's on his feet because the miracle was meant to validate the message.

The paralytic walked so that you and I would know he can forgive sins. These two blind men are healed and given eyesight so that you might actually know he is the son of David.

He's the king who can forgive sins. This very word compassion Jesus just used in the parable of the servant. Remember the unforgiving servant? The one who had all the debt.

I'm in debt. I'm in debt. I can't pay my debt. And the master of the kingdom says, your debt is forgiven. See, compassion is the forgiveness of debts.

[ 28 : 34 ] Yes, it's the forgiveness of sins. And this is what you and I should want from him. Yeah, I want a job.

Yeah, I want a good career. Yeah, I want less ailments as I get older. But yeah, I want mercy of a kind that handles the debt of my sin.

And you need to know that this story then might be your light bulb into a relationship with God through faith in Christ. How are you going to get it?

If you believe this with your heart and you confess him with your lips then salvation will be given to you.

Come on, let me just shut this thing down. There's a table in front of us. What do you see?

[ 29 : 47 ] What do you see? I see a meal in the physical realm. But when taken by faith is my confession that his death pays for my sins.

My sins. He will enlighten my life as I get up and follow him. I mean, it's just that clear.

It's just that clear. It just goes like the little old thing used to go. I wish I had Joe on the piano. I'm not telling him to get up there but you know it. He could. He's like, don't tell me to get up there and do this thing.

But if you know it, sing it with me as I get to that table. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face.

For the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

[ 30 : 59 ] Sing it again if you've never heard it. Just try it. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face.

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.  
Amen. You