

Have Mercy On Us

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Date: 29 August 2021

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[0 : 0 0] I don't know about you, but when it comes to me, it doesn't take a lot for me to start to worry.

All that has to happen is a number of changes in my life, or a pile up of to-do list tasks, or a university course that I'll only get through by God's grace and the prayers of my church, and I start to struggle. What brings you low? I'm sure it actually comes to mind with warring haste.

Are you struggling tonight? Are you anxious? Are you stressed? Is it the world that brings you concern, your family, your children, or even your very own mind? When I was reading through Luke, looking for a passage to preach from, this little one grabbed me. It's a story so short that it would merely take a few minutes to tell if it were part of a conversation or small talk with a friend or stranger. But within this short passage is condensed some beautiful theological truths, which bring comfort to the believer and hope to the unsaved. This passage speaks into our concerns through the example of a real man at a real time who was brought low through circumstance, and he looked for help. Here in this passage, in its very simplicity, is a man and his glorious saviour. A man, again brought low, has become destitute, and whose very life is reliant on the pity of strangers. Tonight we'll be homing in on three specific important points in the passage. First in verse 38, and he cried out, Jesus, son of David, which for those who are planning to take notes, we will title to be silent or not to be. Then secondly, from verse 39, have mercy on me, titled simply and appropriately, have mercy on me. And finally, from verse 42, recover your sight, your faith has made you well, entitled faith that makes well. First, to be silent or not to be. The sections in this passage starts with

Jesus on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, when he passes through Jericho. There's a crowd, there almost always is near Jesus. To learn from him, or to hear him, hear what he's saying, even just to see Jesus of Nazareth, who is gaining such acclaim. Why is there such interest? Well, let's actually scan quickly through even just the start of Luke alone, to see why the crowd and the beggar have such fascination, and or hope in Jesus. I'll just go through slides. Luke 2, Jesus as a boy teaching in the temple, verse 47, and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. Then Luke 4, Jesus begins his ministry, verses 14 and 15, and Jesus returned in this power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. Also, Luke 4, verse 37, after healing a demon-possessed man, and reports about him went out in every place in the surrounding region. Luke 5, Jesus cleanses a leper, and from verse 15. But now, even more, the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him, and to be healed of their infirmities. Jesus then heals a paralyzed man, in verse 26, also in Luke 5.

And amazement sees them all, and they glorify God, and they were filled with awe, saying, we have seen extraordinary things today. Luke 7, Jesus raises a boy from the dead, verse 17.

[4 : 49] And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and the surrounding country. We move on to Luke 8. Jesus heals a demon-possessed man again, verse 39b. And he went away proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. Then Jesus raises Jairus' daughter in verse 56a of that same chapter, and her parents were amazed. Luke 9, Jesus heals the boy with an unclean spirit, from verse 43. And all were astonished at the majesty of God. Luke 13, Jesus heals a woman with a disabling healing spirit that we mentioned last week. Verse 17b. All the people rejoiced at the glorious things that were done by him. And to bring it home, Luke 17, after Jesus healing 10 lepers, verse 15.

Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. This was the Jesus that showed majesty and power. The spread of his good works and his teaching is the background to where we are in Luke 18, with this crowd and with this beggar. The beggar, likely to be Bartimaeus, as we know from the other gospels. Here's the commotion of the crowd. This is a man who's spent many years on this roadside. However, there is a difference now. This commotion is something new, which brings him to inquire what was happening in verse 36. He finds out it's Jesus of Nazareth nearby.

Man, he will have heard of doing such wonders as I have just rattled through. He wails out in verse 38, and he cried out, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. Then what happens next is there's a drive amongst those near him to silence him. In verse 39a, and all those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. Why is there such a backlash from the people towards the beggar?

The scripture doesn't make clear. It's likely it was the same people who had told that Jesus, it was Jesus, and in so doing, they were embarrassed that they were the cause of that commotion.

Was it selfishness and not wanting Jesus's teaching interrupted? Or their journey to Jerusalem being slowed? Was it fear of the religious leaders? We don't know. But we do know what the blind man's response is to be being put down, which will have happened many times in his life. It's in verse 39b.

[8 : 05] But he cried out, all the more, son of David, have mercy on me. All the more, cried all the more.

It reminds me of a TV show that Hannah enjoys watching on Netflix. It's a survival show where the basic premise is it talks through real life examples of people getting into distress in various different wildernesses and speaks of how they should best survive with what is around them. Generally starts with the phrase, they've gone somewhere they don't know. Without a map, their phone battery is diminishing and they forgot to bring a jacket. Specifically though, what stands out to me is the screaming, shouting along with the waving when they hear a helicopter, for example. Which my response always is, a helicopter won't hear you. So save some energy and just wave instead. Here in the passage, this man is looking for rescue. He can't see, so isn't able to wave in the direction of Jesus. So he cries with every word, expending just as much energy because he knows Jesus could possibly hear him. He shall not be silenced when Jesus is near, no matter the strength of the multiple able-bodied adversaries he has.

What's the lesson we can learn from this man? Two things jump to mind immediately. First, he's on the roadside begging. He didn't remain home in self-pity, but he went to a place where he could get help.

He was in need and was in a place where it could be met. How different would this man's life have been if he had stayed home that day? It's a lesson for us. We are always in need of grace from God, help, growth, or to be sympathized with. Coming to church, being with believers, hearing God's word, hearing God's word, read and preached, is this more likely where your needs will be met than staying at home. What would the beggar say? Secondly, he cries out to Jesus.

He has a need and he calls out to the Lord for help. He doesn't call to the crowd, have mercy on me. He calls out to the crowd, inquired, cried out.

[11 : 25] And after an attempt for his crying out to be put down, he cries out all the more. In relation to his crying out, what is the first thing Jesus does? Verse 40.

And Jesus stopped. He didn't command, then stop. He stopped. This is the geography of grace.

Jesus, whilst on his way to Jerusalem, stops. This section previous to this, Jesus tells his disciples of his up and coming death. And this surely will be on his mind, but he still stops. His momentary priority is to be near this man who cries out for aid. Is this not beautiful reassurance for the struggling Christian? Then, this geography of grace continues. And he commands for him to be brought to him, not nearby him, not nearby him, but to him. And he waits until he is before him before he speaks.

This man's eternal soul is at stake. And Jesus will not take any chances in caring for the true needs of this man. The final geography of grace here is later. When Jesus restores his sight, what is the first sight he will see?

The face of our Lord. Can you imagine this? Going from being blind to seeing the loving, caring face of Jesus with all the purity that only he can have?

[13 : 13] I digress. Joyfully so, but do. What's the man's cry? In both verses 38 and 39.

Son of David, have mercy on me. Note the title the beggar appeals to here. Son of David. Not Jesus locally understood's designation of Jesus of Nazareth, which he's informed of by the crowd.

Lord, let me recover my sight. It's his messianic title. We know from the text in verse 41, Lord, let me recover my sight. Verse 42, recover my sight. And verse 43, and immediately he recovered his sight. That this man once had the ability to see and now does not. We don't know how this loss of sight happened, whether medically or otherwise. We don't know what job he did prior to his disability.

How much of the scriptures he had read. But whether it was through reading the books of the Old Testament or via hearing the word spoken in or near synagogues. We know from this title that he gives Jesus that he was capable of being able to put together from the scriptures and the testimonies that we read through at the start of the sermon, that this Jesus of Nazareth isn't alone Jesus of Nazareth, but God incarnate, God man, son of David. This title will be inspired from 2 Samuel 7, in verses 12 through 13, which is God speaking through his prophet Nathan, these covenantal words.

Jesus is the covenantal fulfillment. He is who the Lord is the covenantal fulfillment.

[15 : 36] He is whose throne will be established forever. Words spoken of God a thousand years previous. Take encouragement, because this any promise that God makes, he will follow through. This is just one example. This Jesus is who the beggar ascribes both hope to recover.

His sight and also his hope that the God of all the universe and this man Jesus will have mercy on him. It was his plea. Let us, let you, let me, never tire of coming to Christ with that plea from our very own hearts. Son of David. Son of David, have mercy on me. Jesus has mercy on him when he stops. He has mercy on him when he brings him to himself. He has mercy on him when he speaks to him and he has mercy on him when he heals him.

Son of David, have mercy on me. Thirdly, and lastly, faith that makes well.

Let's examine Jesus' work in this man's life and the faith that the beggar has before and after his life-changing encounter.

We have already looked at his sheer determination to be heard and his call for help. We've heard how he believed Jesus as the future hope for Israel and that he believes Jesus is the God-man whose throne will be established forever.

[17 : 31] But what about his personal faith? It's one thing, for instance, to trust the NHS and to have faith in them generally.

However, it's a different thing being on a bed in an operating theatre, ready to breathe in anaesthetic before literally putting your life in the surgeon's hands, going under his knife.

Yes, the beggar is not going under a knife, but he's putting his personal and active faith into Jesus who is in front of him and whose voice he has heard.

From verse 41, Jesus asks, What do you want me to do for you? What is his response? Lord, let me recover my sight.

Again, note his use of O Lord, repeating his understanding, showing his inferiority and Christ's total supremacy.

[18 : 36] Note also that his request is simple and it's completely reliant on Christ. It is not, I could do all these things if you'd heal me.

Or, this is the reason I deserve to be healed. He, like ourselves when we pray, is doing something very active and coming to Christ in prayer, whilst also being equally humble and proclaiming God's sovereignty by the very fact we're coming to rely on him.

Every time we pray, we proclaim his sovereign rule. We show our belief that he is always in control. Jesus is relational.

He knows exactly what the beggar needs. He knew it before he started off on his way to Jerusalem. Even knowing this, he invites the beggar to participate in faith and asking for what he needs before going on to grant it.

It's the same in prayer. We, as Christians, are in an active, constant relationship with him. And he invites us to pray and participate in active faith by asking him for our needs continually.

[19 : 59] Knowing that God knows our needs should never be a reason not to turn to him in prayer. But it should be the very reason itself to come to him in prayer with the joy and assurance of putting our faith in a sovereign God always in control of all things.

What happens next? Verse 42. And Jesus said to him, Recover your sight. Your faith has made you well.

Jesus isn't saying his faith itself is the power to heal. But the genuine faith he has means that God, who has the power to heal, will joyfully have mercy on him, responding to his cry for mercy.

What does the scripture tell us about the quality or quantity of the beggar's faith? Not a lot. Apart from the fact he had it, Christ saw it, and it was found true and genuine.

Jesus does not say, Your perfect faith has healed you. He says, Your faith has healed you. Looking elsewhere in scripture, what else is mentioned in respect to the scales of faith?

[21 : 23] In Luke 17, Jesus' teaching is informative. From verse 5. The apostles said to the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If you had faith like a grain of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, Be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you.

Here, Here, the disciples have a worthy hope. However, Jesus wants the focus to be on the quality, not the quantity of their faith.

small, small, but true and genuine faith, and an almighty God, is a powerful, powerful thing. Mark 9, sees Jesus' interaction with a desperate father of a demon-possessed son, in the very spurs of his distress.

from verse 21. And Jesus asked his father, How long has this been happening to him? And he said, From childhood. And it often casts him into fire and into water to destroy him.

But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. And Jesus said to him, If you can, all things are possible for the one who believes.

[22 : 46] Immediately, the father of the child cried out and said, I believe. Help my unbelief. All things are possible for the one who believes.

Small, true faith in the hands of God, once more, proves life-changing. We have all these real-life examples, historical examples, of how Jesus intervenes powerfully in the lives of his people.

That same Jesus still lives, who heard the blind man's cry and granted his request. The same Jesus we pray to. The same Jesus who continues to intervene for us.

R.C. Sproul, when speaking on faith, it said, The issue of faith is not so much whether we believe in God, but whether we believe the God we believe in.

I'll say that again. The issue of faith is not so much whether we believe in God, but whether we believe the God we believe in.

[23 : 56] The question is, what do we learn from this? Our faith, it may be feeble. Our sins, they may be great.

And our prayers might seem like a stammer. But having little faith that turns us to prayer, that little faith will be acceptable to God, and he will hear us.

Always go to God, rather than waiting for your little faith to grow in our own strength. Psalm 51, 16 through 17.

For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Let your true faith be true, however little, and rely on a great big God. Where does our strength come from?

[25 : 05] Us, or the son of David? In conclusion, the beggar was low. Through his circumstances, he had little, but true faith in the Christ, the son of David.

He cried out with everything, son of David, have mercy on me. His true faith, put in the right place, brought restoration, to his life.

And his reaction is right in verse 43. And immediately he recovered his sight, and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

He leads off with glorifying God, and rightly so, because he can see, I once was blind, but now I can see.

Then the multitudes, like all those who'd gone before, were amazed at what they saw. And in that wonder, and in that awe, they turned to the praise of God.

[26 : 11] Let us reflect on what God has done in us, and let it turn us, and let it turn us, to the praise of our God and Savior. There could not be, a better use of your time, than like the beggar, turn to the Lord and praise.

We, we're often broken, we're often brought low, we do get anxious, and we do get stressed. Even when our very own minds, seem to defeat us.

Hear the truth. Hear that Jesus, the son of David, will have mercy on us, when we cry out to him, whatever situation we're in.

Don't be silent. Be like the beggar. And turn to God, in your distress. Though your faith may be small, your God, is almighty.

Amen.