

Seeing But Still Blind

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading for today will be taken from Mark chapter 10 verses 46 through Mark chapter 11 verses 19. And they came to Jericho as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd.

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry and say, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried all the more, son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stopped and said, call him. And they called the blind man, saying to him, take heart, get up, he is calling you. And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, what do you want me to do for you? And the blind man said to him, rabbi, let me recover my sight. And Jesus said to him, go your way, your faith has made you well. And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way. Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, go into the village in front of you. And immediately as you enter it, you will find a cold tide on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, why are you doing this? Say, the Lord has need of it and will send it back immediately. And they went away and found a cold tide at a door outside in the street and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, what are you doing untying the cold? And they told them what Jesus had said and they let them go. And they brought the cold to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it. And he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest. And he entered Jerusalem and went in into the temple.

[2 : 31] And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And he said to it, may no one ever eat fruit from you again. And his disciples heard it. And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple. And he overturned the tables of the money changes and seats of those who sold pigeons. And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. And he was teaching them and saying to them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers. And the chief priests and scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him. For they feared him, because all the crowd were astonished at his teaching. And when evening came, they went out of the city.

Well, today is Palm Sunday. It's the day that marks the first day of a week on the church's calendar that is called Holy Week. It's the week in which we commemorate the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I think it's fair to say that Palm Sunday is the most neglected and misunderstood day of Holy Week. And despite all the commemorations that may take place today, people walking in the streets, waving palm branches, you may even get to see someone riding on a donkey. Despite all of that, so little is understood about what happened on that first Palm Sunday some 2,000 years ago.

And so as we prepare for Good Friday and as we prepare for Resurrection Sunday, let's take some time this morning to reflect upon afresh the message of Palm Sunday. Let's pray together. Father, would you in this moment open our hearts that we might hear your word, that we might hear your voice. Would you speak to us, O Lord, from the pages of your word and cause us to hear afresh the message of Palm Sunday when the Lord Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.

And Father, I pray that you would help us to not just hear that message, but may we all respond to it. May we respond to the fact that Jesus Christ is the reigning King and the only proper place for him to reign is first in our lives and in our hearts. And so we ask now in this moment that you would speak to our hearts. In Jesus name. Amen.

Some of you may be wondering why the scripture reading this morning started with blind Bartimaeus as opposed to starting with Jesus riding in Jerusalem on a donkey.

[6 : 25] And the simple answer to that question is that that is where Mark actually started. That is the way Mark gives us the context for Jesus riding in Jerusalem. I think it's important to remember that all the gospel writers had a very specific goal in mind. They were not just giving us interesting stories about an interesting person. All the gospel writers were writing though in different ways with the same goal in mind. They wanted their readers to know who Jesus was so that when they got to the end of their gospel stories and they have him crucified on the cross and risen from the dead that people would know that this one who died is no ordinary man, but that he is Jesus Christ, the long awaited Messiah of the world.

And that was the goal of Mark. That was Mark's goal in his gospel. He is making a case. He is arguing for who Jesus is and leading people to come to that conclusion that this is Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Messiah, the King, who came into the world to give his life as a ransom for many. In Mark's presentation of the gospel, he gives us this account of Jesus encountering a blind man on his way to Jerusalem. Now, I think one of the things that would help us to appreciate how Mark wrote his gospel is to remember that when Mark wrote his gospel, it wasn't separated by chapters and verses. It was one complete account. And so what Mark does is he gives us this account of blind Bartimaeus and he leads right into the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. And so when we consider this passage that was read for us this morning, I think it can be subdivided neatly into two parts. And I want to use those two parts and give two simple headings as we work our way through. And so the first heading is a blind man.

Jesus, on his way into Jerusalem, first encounters a blind man. Mark takes the time to tell us about this blind man. We see in verse 46 that Jesus was on his way leaving Jerusalem and he encounters this blind man on the side of the road who's begging. He's not an unnamed blind man. He is called Bartimaeus. We're told he is the son of Timaeus. We don't know how long he was begging. We don't know the duration of it, but we can tell that he seems to have been begging for quite some time. He seems to have been in this blind condition and was begging because he's referred to as a beggar. And this seems to have become his way of life, something that he did in an ongoing way. But there's something about Bartimaeus that does not meet the eye. There's something that we could easily miss about Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus had come to hear and believe in Jesus Christ. Bartimaeus had somehow, though he was blind and he could not have seen Jesus come into Jerusalem and into his region, Bartimaeus had heard the story about Jesus of Nazareth. And somehow he learns at this point that Jesus of Nazareth, who he's heard about, who is the Messiah, had come into his area. This man who was a powerful teacher, who was a miracle worker, who could raise the dead, who can cast out demons, he'd come into this area where blind Bartimaeus was. Mark tells us in verse 47 that as Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was passing by, he began to cry out and say, hey, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. I think we can try to pause to imagine what that must have been like.

It's kind of hard to do since we're not blind, but just imagine being blind and you get news that someone who could help you is in your vicinity. And you can imagine the kind of anticipation, the eagerness, that you will pursue that person with. And so he is just crying out and saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

[11 : 39] And he is no doubt frantic and he is desperate as he is crying out and much to the annoyance of the crowds. And they just tell him, look, shut up. And Mark tells us that the more they told him to shut up, the more he persisted in crying out to Jesus that Jesus would have mercy on him.

Now, why would Bartimaeus be so persistent in crying out to Jesus to have mercy on him in the face of this intimidating crowd, large crowd, that's crying out, telling him to be silent?

I think the reason that Bartimaeus was able to press beyond all of the pushback that he was getting from the crowd is that he sincerely believed with all of his heart that Jesus was the Messiah whom God had promised to send.

And I think this is a very important point to note because the issue was not being aware of Jesus. You could not help but be aware of Jesus if you lived in that region.

Jesus was the talk of the town. Everyone knew about Jesus. Everyone knew about his miracles, about his great teachings, how he had upset their religious orders. Everybody knew about that. But not everybody who knew about Jesus believed in Jesus.

[13:11] Not everyone who heard about Jesus believed Jesus to be who he was, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

But Bartimaeus had come to believe it. And Bartimaeus was not going to be denied the promised Messiah, the Son of David. He gave him that messianic title, the Son of David.

Who was also the Son of God intervening in his situation. One of the promises of the Messiah was that he would open the eyes of the blind.

He would cause the lame to walk. And so Bartimaeus believed this. And because he believed it, he would not be deterred, even by a loud and large, intimidating crowd.

Bartimaeus was speaking from deep-rooted conviction about who Jesus was.

[14:23] And also about what Jesus could do. And so Mark tells us in verse 49 that Jesus stopped. And here again, we have to appreciate the dynamics of this.

One man shouting, a large crowd telling him to shut up. Somehow Jesus hears the man in the midst of all of that. And we can just tell how fervent and strong Bartimaeus had to have been.

And so in verse 49, Jesus stops and he tells the man to come. He had the crowd to bring Bartimaeus to him. Bartimaeus jumps up, throws off his cloak.

He comes to Jesus. And Jesus asked Bartimaeus a somewhat unusual question. He says, what do you want me to do for you? Maybe Jesus just wanted to personally engage Bartimaeus, and so he asked him that question.

But Bartimaeus' response is very insightful. And I think when you consider that Bartimaeus was in this condition, he was a beggar, no doubt, for quite some time.

[15:32] You realize that there are some people in that condition, you say, what do you want me to do for you? And they say, give me a dollar. Give me this or give me that. But Bartimaeus knew that he had come to the Messiah.

He knew that this was not an ordinary person. He knew that this was not just someone who you would take the opportunity to say, give me some money.

He knew the Messiah could do much more than that. And he says, I want to see. He asked the Messiah to enable him to see.

Now, what are the chances of Bartimaeus asking that request of an ordinary person? It would be foolish to do that.

It would be overbearing to put that burden on an ordinary person. But Bartimaeus had come to believe, though he had never seen Jesus, he had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

[16:34] And the Messiah could give him his sight. And so when Jesus comes to him, there he was at first begging, and Jesus says, what do you want me to do? He says, I want to receive my sight.

He says, Rabbi, let me recover my sight. And Jesus heals him. And Jesus tells him, go your way. Your faith has made you well. In verse 52, we're told that Bartimaeus recovered his sight immediately. And then he followed Jesus on the way.

Upon receiving his sight, Bartimaeus, who his life had been relegated to begging because of his blindness, who could not enjoy whatever there was to be enjoyed of life at that particular time, Jesus says to him, go your way.

Bartimaeus doesn't. He follows Jesus on the way to Jerusalem. And he does it because he realizes this is the Messiah.

[17:50] That is the only proper response when you meet the Messiah. That is the only proper response to the Lord Jesus Christ when we have an encounter with him.

We follow him. We don't get from him what we want to enhance our lives and then run on our way and live our lives for ourselves. He could have done that.

But he didn't do that because the only proper response for those who have encountered Jesus is to follow him and to live a life in service to him.

And Bartimaeus demonstrates that not only were his eyes opened in a physical sense, but he demonstrates that his heart was transformed because he followed Jesus.

And brothers and sisters, this is a picture of what it looks like to encounter the Lord Jesus Christ and then we follow him on the road of self-denial, on the road that is marked with suffering because Jesus does not only give us spiritual sight so that we can live for ourselves, he does so so we can live for him.

[19 : 13] And so that's the first part of this passage. It's about a blind man. And now we come to the second part of the passage, which begins in verse 1 of chapter 11.

It's about a blind crowd. And this is the way Mark has laid out his gospel. He gives us this picture of Jesus encountering a blind man and now he's going to give us a picture of Jesus encountering a blind crowd.

In verses 1 to 10, we have this account of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, crowds of people throwing their cloaks on the road, spreading leafy branches that they had cut from the field on the ground.

And some went in front and some followed behind and they were shouting, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Jesus comes to Jerusalem and if you follow the narrative, he is walking and all of a sudden, he decides when he goes into Jerusalem, he's not going to walk in Jerusalem, he is going to take a donkey.

[20 : 39] And it wasn't because he got tired all of a sudden, it was because Jesus was doing something very intentional. What Jesus does is he depicts or he fulfills a prophecy about the Messiah that any faithful Jew would have been aware of and waiting for that manifestation.

And so what he does is he tells his disciples to go and find this donkey and bring this donkey to him and he sits on the donkey and he rides into Jerusalem.

The prophecy that Jesus was actually fulfilling in a deliberate and intentional way is Zechariah chapter 9, verse 9.

This is what it says, So the one who was riding on the donkey in that moment was the Messiah. He was fulfilling that ancient prophecy right before the eyes of the people who were shouting, Hosanna, blessed is the coming kingdom of our Lord.

[22 : 10] Hosanna in the highest. Jesus was powerful enough to commandeer a horse.

He chose a donkey. He chose a donkey to show the nature of his kingdom that it was different. And so Jesus is helping this crowd to understand who he really was.

If you step back a little bit and try to think about it this way, it's kind of like being in an exam and the teacher actually is kind of giving you the answer to the question, giving you some help along the way.

Jesus deliberately fulfills the prophecy of the Messiah before them. And what we have in this passage is we have a contrast in blindness.

We have the blindness of Bartimaeus and we have the blindness of the crowd. Bartimaeus, who could not see physically, but through hearing and believing the good news that the Messiah had come, he saw Jesus for who he was.

[23 : 26] But the crowd, though they could physically see, though Jesus even ran out of his way to fulfill before their very eyes an ancient prophecy of the Messiah, they still didn't see the Messiah.

Bartimaeus just heard a message. Bartimaeus heard that the Messiah is going to come. He couldn't see the Messiah when he came. But he was told the Messiah is here and he believed, he saw in a spiritual sense that this is the Messiah, he believed in him.

And here we have this crowd who is seeing, but they're still blind. They have physical eyes to behold the Messiah. He goes to the extent to intentionally reveal who he is.

As a matter of fact, when you follow the gospel narrative, up to this point, Jesus is actually concealing his identity very intentionally.

He's telling people, don't tell them who I am. He is hiding himself. But now, as he is going into Jerusalem, he openly reveals who he is.

[24 : 39] He is the Messiah fulfilling this ancient prophecy that the Messiah would fulfill by riding in Jerusalem on a donkey.

And this crowd is seeing it all and they're blind. And the reason the crowd is blind and in truth, not just the crowd, the disciples of Jesus as well, is that they wanted not the salvation that Jesus was offering, but they wanted salvation from Roman oppression.

They wanted a kingdom that would fulfill nationalistic pride that they harbored in their hearts, that the Messiah would come and put them to their place of prominence in the world.

But instead, Jesus came into Jerusalem as the Messiah riding on a donkey. He came as a suffering servant, as one who would give his life as a ransom for many.

He didn't come to kill the Romans and to take their lives, but he came to give his very life. so that he would purchase a people for his own possession, not just from the Jews, but from every tongue and tribe and nation.

[26 : 04] And he would do so to meet their greatest need, which was their salvation from sin and to give them reconciliation to God.

But this was a confusing crowd. When you consider the words on their lips, the Hosannas, and that the kingdom of David was coming, it doesn't add up that they did not recognize who Jesus was.

They didn't see him as the Messiah they sang about, despite the fact that he intentionally revealed himself to them. they were seeing, but still blind.

Mark tells us in verse 11 that Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple and when he looked around at everything, it was already late, so he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

This act on the part of Jesus was a very deliberate act. This was not the act of someone who was sightseeing and came to look around at the temple and observe all of its grandeur.

[27 : 25] No, this was someone who enters the temple, the place where people were to commune with God and to pray to God and he sees what he already knew, that the worship being offered there was blind and corrupt and pointless.

And Jesus is burdened, he is grieved, and he is righteously angered by all that he sees. And we know this because of what he does the very next day.

The very next day, when he enters the temple and he overturns the tables of the money changers and those who were selling pigeons and he would not let people traffic through the temple because he was righteously angered by how they had corrupted the place of prayer, a place that God had determined was to be a house of prayer for the nations and they had made it into a den of robbers. But Jesus also knew that that earthly temple with all of its sacrifices pointed to him. He knew that he was the true temple, that he was the true place of worship where God would now meet with man. He would now be the meeting place where God would meet with every human being. No longer in that temple where people would come and bring sacrifices.

[29 : 03] He knew that he would be the true lamb that all those offerings of lambs had pointed to. He knew that he was the true instance who would be offered up to God in worship.

Jesus knew that he was all of that. He knew that he was the true temple who was going to be destroyed by the death of crucifixion and in three days would rise again.

and he also knew that the place the temple had become a place of religious corruption and it was going to be destroyed as he would later predict in Matthew 13.

And so just as the king had come into his city the lord had now come into his temple and just as the crowds did not see him in the city as the promised messiah those in the temple who were going about their corrupt business and all their observances they did not recognize him as the lord of the temple though he was right there in the midst of them.

Even as they offered their lambs the true lamb was there they did not see him. what's quite amazing about this account of the crowd of people is the way Mark accounts for it that it seems like somehow the shouts and the screams just stopped and we don't know why we know we don't know what happened but no doubt somebody started it and maybe the person who started shouting Hosanna blessings who comes in the name of the lord just stopped shouting and one by one everybody else stopped shouting perhaps it was all crowd dynamics perhaps it was crowd psychology which is very different from personal discipleship and what we see is that when Jesus goes into the temple he is all alone where's the crowd where's the crowd that were shouting all of these wonderful accolades to him and when he goes into the temple all the shouting and everything else has ceased

[31 : 45] I think it's easy to miss the point that Mark is trying to make the account of blind Bartimaeus he was one man shouting above a very large and loud crowd telling him to shut up and Jesus encountered Bartimaeus Bartimaeus encountered Jesus on the road and he followed him and then we have this account of the large crowd shouting Hosanna to Jesus Hosanna in the highest no opposition to them but soon their shouting stops and they don't follow Jesus they don't follow him into the temple they don't follow the Lord of the temple into the temple because as

Bahamians would say they were not on that run they had their own run we're told in verses 12 to 14 that the next day the day after Palm

Sunday which would have been Monday Jesus cursed the fig tree showing that he was not just dealing with blind religion he was dealing with dead religion that served no purpose and then in verses 15 to 19 he cleansed the temple because its purpose was being abused it was to be a house of prayer for all the nations but it had become a den of robbers brothers and sisters we all need to soberly and honestly evaluate whether we see Jesus as Barimaeus saw him or whether we see Jesus as the crowd saw him if we truly see Jesus as the Messiah as the one who came to give his life as a ransom for many then like

Barimaeus had a personal encounter with Jesus that was reflected in his life brothers and sisters that would be reflected in our lives all of it not just our Sunday life all of our life our Monday through the rest of the week life in whatever endeavor we are engaged in it will affect our lives if we see him for who he is and then we follow him on the road and the road that Jesus was on was the road of death and Jesus knew it he was on that road of suffering and self denial but if we're like the crowd we follow Jesus on our terms looking to him to do for us what we want him to do for us not in terms of a life surrendered in love and service to him the crowd was seeing but the crowd was still blind and that's you this morning if you're here or you're watching by live stream you're seeing Jesus but you're still blind to who he really is the solution to that is we just need to encounter Jesus we just need to encounter Jesus when Bartimaeus encountered Jesus he didn't need someone to tell him now do this now do that no he encountered Jesus and he did what naturally follows from encountering Jesus he followed Jesus like Bartimaeus we need to truly believe and obey the gospel brothers and sisters the gospel transforms our lives it's not just cognitive information it is not just head knowledge that we have the gospel is a transforming gospel our lives every aspect of our lives will reflect that reality and I pray

I pray for all of us this morning that as we reflect on on Palm Sunday that we would be those who truly see Jesus who he is and not just seeing him through religious lens and going through the motions and there is no personal encounter and there is no life change may God use this time to refresh our hearts those who see Jesus for years and may he use this time for those who have yet to see Jesus may your eyes be opened to the fact that he is the Messiah and he is worthy of being followed with all of our lives let's pray oh father we pray that we would not be those who are seeing but still blind may we see

[37 : 22] Jesus as a fulfillment of the long awaited prophecies that you would send a redeemer you would send the Messiah you would send one who would give his life as a ransom for sin and sinners and God may we all like blind bottom may us follow Jesus in love and in service with a life laid down work in our hearts this morning we pray in Jesus name amen!

let's sound for closing song I invite you to please along with me be thou my vision O Lord of my heart not be or else to me say that thou art thou my best thoughts my day or my night waking or sleeping thy presence my life be thou my wisdom and thou my true word

I ever with thee and thou with me Lord thou my great father I thy true son thou in me dwelling and I with thee one rich riches I heed not riches I heed not nor man's empty praise thou mine inheritance now and always thou and thou holy first in my heart high king of heaven my treasure thou art high king high king of heaven my victory one may may

I reach heaven's joy so bright heaven sun heart of my own heart would ever be formed still be my vision o ruler of all heart and heart of my own heart would ever before still be my vision o ruler of all let's pray father we pray that you would truly be our vision you'd help us to see as we ought to see left to ourselves we would all grow up in darkness and so would you be our vision would you be our vision to help us to see the

Lord Jesus Christ as the long awaited Messiah the king of the nations the lord of lords and lord in response to that vision may we all live our lives in humble submission and service to him seeking to bring glory to your name in whatever we do I pray that you would convict us this morning oh lord where Christ is not indeed lord over our lives may we bow our knees to him in every way acknowledging his lordship in all things and now may our God and father fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding that you might walk in a manner worthy of the lord fully pleasing to him and bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of [43 : 01] God for the glory of his great name amen amen god bless you you're dismissed ho