

How to Stop Jesus Christ

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Date: 26 January 2014

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn back to Luke chapter 18, now the passage we read just a minute ago. Verses 35 to the end of the chapter. This incident of Jesus healing this blind beggar.

Virtually every time you walk to Waverly Station in Edinburgh, and many other stations in our cities as well, you will find people sitting, begging, sitting as homeless, covered with a blanket or an old duvet, with their box or with their jar of some kind out to receive whatever people want to drop into it, and making an appeal every now and again to spare some money to those who are going by.

It's a pathetic sight, it's a pitiful sight, it's a sight that many people really find a bit of a dilemma, because you don't know what will do with the money if you give them the money, and yet you would want to give them something.

And Bartimaeus, this blind beggar, we learn from Mark's Gospel that that was his name, Bartimaeus meant in Aramaic or in Hebrew, son of Timaeus.

That was this poor man's name. And he knew what it was like to sit by the roadside begging. At least most people you find in Edinburgh or wherever it is, have their sight.

[1 : 3 4] But this man was begging probably because he didn't have his sight, and therefore really couldn't do much with his life in order to earn some money and earn his keep.

So he had to beg. He had to be dependent on those who were passing by, actually putting something into his cup, so that he would at least find something to eat.

Well, many people, of course, going past beggars on our streets in the cities, a few people drop coins in, people like Bethany, Christian Trust, send their workers out to come alongside him, to try and take them into shelters and so on, but many of the general public walk past, they just keep going, and don't really stop over such a pathetic sight.

And then along came Jesus, one day when this man was sitting, as was his custom by the roadside. Jesus, in this journey that he's taking, that we're following him on, as he goes on to Jerusalem, is now getting very near the end of his journey.

And the nearer he gets to the end of his journey, the more his mind obviously is taken up with what he knows is at the end of his journey, as we've read in the chapter here, verses 31 to 34.

[2 : 5 6] The cross, the sufferings that are waiting for him there, the way in which that is going to be, how his journey to Jerusalem will end.

And yet, nevertheless, he still finds time to perform another two miracles. This one, and the one with Zacchaeus, which is the miracle, of course, of his conversion.

He still finds time to stop and spend time with these two individuals, despite the fact that his own pressing needs are obvious as he comes towards Jerusalem.

This was the best response the beggar ever had. And while Jesus could have filled his jar, his cup with coins, and could have produced enough for him to live on for the rest of his life, what the Lord did was much greater.

He took away the root cause of his begging. He healed his blindness. He dealt with the point of his greatest physical need.

[4 : 08] The very thing that kept him in the condition he was in. The Lord dealt with that precisely. Now we'll see some of the detail from that if we look at, first of all, the beggar's prayer, or we call it a beggar's prayer, because as we'll see, this is really, in many respects, a picture of ourselves in our spiritual condition.

And as we've seen already in Luke's Gospel, the miracles of Christ are designed to lead us to consider our own needs, and our own need of miraculous power from Christ to change our lives around.

And that's why we're calling it a beggar's prayer, because we can apply it to ourselves. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

The message that he heard was very simple. Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Here was a man blind who couldn't see, of course, but he heard a commotion. He knew that a crowd was passing by.

He knew there was a stir, an excitement in that crowd. He was concerned to find out what the reason for that was. And he was told, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

[5 : 25] Now we'll see the importance of that description in contrast to how he himself described Jesus. But that's the message that he was told. And really that's all you and I also need to know, because that basically is what the Gospel is to us.

The Gospel to you and to me every time we're under the Gospel, whether we're just reading the Bible for ourselves, or whether we like just now listening to the Gospel being preached, this essentially is what is happening.

This is what we have to get into our minds every time we come to the Gospel, that we are coming to someone who is passing very close to us.

This one, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus of Nazareth was not because, for example, in the catechisms and confessions way back in those days, when they came to put these things together so as to give us these great theological and helpful productions of the catechisms and so on, you'll remember that this is how they actually thought about what happens in the Gospel.

when, for example, the catechism describes effectual calling and what effectual calling is, that number 31 of the catechism, the shorter catechism, this is how it finishes after telling us that it's to do with God enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ and convincing us of our sin and misery and renewing our wills.

[7 : 06] He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as he is freely offered in the Gospel. Jesus has put himself in the Gospel.

It is his Gospel. That's why Mark, for example, begins his account of the life of Jesus, the ministry of Christ by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul's letter to the Romans, the opening words of the letter to the Romans, that great theological treatise, and yet this is how he begins it. This Gospel of God of which Jesus is the substance.

There's a remarkable thing happening here tonight. It happens here every time the Gospel is preached. The Son of God spiritually is passing by each and every one of us.

Looking for our attention. Wanting to hear our voice as this man did, crying out to him to stop and be merciful to us.

[8 : 21] That's what the Gospel essentially is about. It's not a set of rules and regulations where the Lord is saved to us. If you do these things then you'll be saved.

There is a lot for us to do certainly, but this is essentially what it's about. It's the Lord himself coming to us, passing by us, speaking to us, calling for our attention and seeking that we deposit our faith and trust in him.

And the cry of this man was Jesus of, when he was told Jesus of Nazareth is passing by, he cried out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

Now you notice the contrast. He didn't say, Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy on me. He said, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

Remember the question all the way through Luke's gospel that he wants us to address, that we are finding brought to us again and again is who is this Jesus? And here is a blind beggar who has a greater insight into the person and the ministry and the purpose of Jesus' ministry than any of the Pharisees, than many of the people that are following Christ in his ministry at this time.

[9 : 43] Here is a man who gives Jesus a title that arises from the Old Testament which prophesied of the coming King, the Son of David.

He is told Jesus of Nazareth is passing by and the moment he hears that, he realizes that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, that he is the Savior, that he is the promised King.

So he cries out to him, giving him the title Son of David, have mercy upon me. You go back in the chapter to the middle passage there, the Pharisee and the tax collector.

There is the Pharisee coming as we saw there before God. He has no conception really of who Jesus is at all. You go back to chapter 4 where Jesus was reading in the synagogue the scroll of the prophet Isaiah what we find as chapter 61 which he took and applied to himself knowing that it was about himself.

He gave it back to the person in charge of the service. He then said today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing and they looked at one another and they said is this not the son of Joseph?

[11 : 05] His identity is what those who are doing the Christianity explored course are dealing with all the way through the sections of the course and this essentially is what this beggar is telling us was in his own mind as his view of Christ the identity of Christ to him was far more than just Jesus of Nazareth.

That just said something about where he was brought up. But this says a lot about where he came from. Jesus son of David have mercy upon me.

And it's interesting that that word mercy that he uses is a word that has in it the idea spiritually speaking in terms of its theological meaning it has the idea of someone giving alms to a beggar.

alms the gifts the money whatever that were thrown into a beggar's cup. A beggar begging for alms begging for help and somebody comes and puts something into their cup out of pity whatever but it's a giving of alms it's a giving in mercy it's an act of pity and that is the meaning essentially or part of the meaning of the word mercy as it's applied to God and as God exercises mercy and as Jesus here exercises mercy and as this man calls out for mercy that's the kind of thing that's brought before us in this word in the use of the word it's a beggar appealing for help and isn't that what we all are doesn't this describe us in our spiritual natural state we don't deserve

God's favor if we deserved it it wouldn't be mercy that brings it to us it's through the pity of God that we come to know of his help of his redemption through his mercy and again it's interesting that when you come to the catechism definition of something like repentance that repentance involves as one of the elements in our recognition in our mind as we come to repent of sin that there is a recognition an acknowledgement that there is mercy with God upon apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ we turn from sin to God where would you and I be if perplexed with our sin or coming with whatever problem we know is self made and self created and belongs to us in our natural condition if we weren't at all aware that there is mercy in abundance with God such as we saw in

[14 : 23] Isaiah very recently in the verses seek the Lord while he is to be found call upon him while he is near let the wicked forsake his way for the Lord will abundantly pardon he has an abundant mercy he regards us as beggars that need to appeal to him for help and he doesn't walk by any more than Jesus walked by this beggar Bartimaeus when we appeal to the Lord for help he doesn't walk by he doesn't actually leave us in our condition every single genuine praying repentant appeal for help is heard by him is responded to by him and here is this man as he cries out for this mercy from Christ one of the great miracles that the

Old Testament anticipated being done by the Messiah when he came we read one of the passages tonight in Isaiah chapter 42 was to open the eyes of the blind of course that included opening the eyes of the spiritually blind that's you and I that's everybody but here is a graphic demonstration of it in the natural healing of this man's natural sight you find that there because this is the son of David doing this there is something that tells you the spiritual meaning of his ministry that he has come to open the eyes of the blind spiritually as well and this man is then challenged after having cried out to Jesus those who were in the front of the procession rebuked him they dealt with him severely saying telling him to be silent but you notice he cried out all the more son of

David have mercy on me isn't that itself really a powerful point because this man was challenged as to what he was doing and he was being told stop what you're doing don't say these things don't cry out in this way after this Jesus but the more he was told to be quiet the more he cried out instead of using that as a way of just listening to what he was being told and just sitting dumb and letting Jesus go by he actually it actually only roused him all the more to cry out even more vehemently Jesus son of David have mercy on me now it's understandable that when you cry out after Jesus you're going to be told to be quiet there are powers that don't like you calling out to Jesus as we saw the prayer meeting the passage in Ephesians chapter 6 we don't wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers against the rulers of darkness in the spiritual heights we don't wrestle against ordinary human beings when we're actually coming to give heed to the voice of Christ there will always then be a dark power that is trying to get you to be quiet to stop what you're doing you're always going to be challenged as to the appropriateness for you of all people to come and bother this Christ to come with your condition and in your situation to come to actually make yourself a nuisance to this

Jesus you're going to have many arguments from the world in which we live from people who don't like the Bible who hate the Bible from people who don't want any religion of any kind left in our society and they'll tell you surely you don't want to believe in these fairy stories but the more they tried to keep him quiet the more he cried out you see for this man this was his moment of opportunity he knew that if this moment passed and Jesus the son of David did not stop and deal with him he was going to be blind forever more probably he was going to remain sitting there as a beggar for the rest of his life he had to seize that moment he had to make the most of that moment he was not going to let that moment pass that opportunity pass he was determined whoever was trying to put him off from making the maximum use of that moment he was going to make the most of it if only we did that in our own spiritual lives if only every time the devil comes to whisper in your ear you don't need to pray just now just leave it for a moment leave it till later on you'll have more time for it later on if only we said to him

I want to pray just now because my heart feels the need for it if only we were able to do these sort of things when we hear that dark voice taking us away from what the Lord himself will be pleased with in our doing of it how better how much better our lives would be for it if only we said of every opportunity that comes our way to meet with Jesus and to meet with the power of Jesus whether we're converted or unconverted whatever our situation in life is if only we said of every opportunity we have to know him and to know him better I am going to seize that opportunity I'm not going to let it pass well that's what we must seek to be doing friends isn't it every time we have the opportunity of Christ passing by in the gospel in his word we have to seize that moment and every one of us here tonight must seize that moment are you going to let him pass as he's now speaking to your heart speaking to your heart and your condition whatever the condition is whatever your concerns are whatever your needs are as he's made them known to you whatever age you're at whatever experience you've had whatever your past has been like seize the moment grasp the opportunity don't let him pass by without you crying out and saying this is my great opportunity

[21 : 43] I'm not going to let it pass we all have lost moments we can all look back and say with regret I should have done that I should have done it then even the ordinary things of life there are so many things that we look back on and say I knew I should have done it then and I just didn't get back to doing it at all because I missed the opportunity and I really regret that I didn't do it then well it's one thing to be like that in life and in the ordinary things of life it's a whole lot more serious to be like that when you're dealing with Jesus and it's a whole lot more serious especially when you think of what the Bible calls an eternal regret there will be some who will spend eternity in hell and one of the things that will be most grievous to them was is that they had an opportunity when Christ was near them and they let it go they didn't make the most of it instead of crying out to him as they knew they should have done they let him pass and go on his way and he didn't come back to them seize the moment grasp the opportunity whatever the opportunity is whenever it is make the most of it for your soul's good that's the beggar's prayer and the way that he cried out to Christ and then we find the saviour's answer and it's a remarkable answer because it has a number of components in it when he first of all he stopped

Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him and we've given a title to the study this evening just to really make us think of what one of the main points of the passage is and the title is how to stop Jesus how do you stop the son of God in his tracks you do it by crying out to him out of your need and saying as this man said be merciful to me have mercy upon me that grasp that takes the notice of Christ and he grasps the moment as well as you grasping the moment to stop over you it's a wonderful theological moment as well as an ordinary natural moment he didn't it's not just saying to us that he stopped in his journey literally he did but packed into that is so much spiritual meaning he stops to attend to your needs he stopped to look into his condition he stopped to deal with him he stopped to actually attend to his needs where is there a more wonderful truth than that that the son of

God should actually stop over your life or my life and ask us what do you want me to do for you what a moment that is in the experience of this man this Jesus that he knows as the son of David has stopped he has actually got his attention now he's commanding him to be brought to him and when he comes he says what do you want me to do for you what a moment that is and it was his cry that stopped him just as Jesus is stopped by your cry and mine and isn't it amazing that Jesus would stop in his journey with all that is in his own mind at this time of what is ahead of him at

Jerusalem and then Golgotha and Calvary that he would stop for a beggar that a beggar would arrest him in his journey that he would take time with so much on his own mind and his own sufferings and his own needs that he would actually look at this pathetic creature in his blindness and holding out his cup and crying and making appeal to him as he had appealed to the crowds many other times that he would stop there and then over this creature what does that say to you about who this is about the quality of his ministry about the wonder of his person the graciousness of his attentiveness to people in need this is no fairy story this is no myth this is no made up stuff by disciples or by the church long ago this is exactly what happened on that great day

Jesus stopped and then Jesus commanded him he exercised his authority and he asked him then when he was brought near what do you want me to do for you isn't that interesting Jesus could have just immediately said here receive your sight he knew that he was blind he knew that was his greatest physical need he knew that in all likelihood that's what he would actually say anyway in response to the question what do you want me to do but he asked him why did he ask him because that is the way that Christ deals with ourselves too he doesn't just act in a way that takes no account of our own expression of our need of our own putting to him what our need is he brings it out of you brings us to confess our sin to him he brings us to tell him of our need of mercy he brings us as believing people day by day to fall at his knees and say thank you lord i love you because you heard my prayer he brings it out of us he brings this to the fore and therefore he makes us participate in that way much more meaningfully in all that is going to take place much more than if he had just quickly done the miracle and not got the man to speak at all and you know that's again such a great moment isn't it in anybody's experience when

[29 : 16] Jesus brings you to that moment when you go on your knees before him and you tell him that you need his mercy you appeal to him for his mercy for his forgiveness that's a moment that registers in heaven itself as one of the big moments in your life especially the first time you or I come really meaningfully for ourselves we all remember it at the beginning of our Christian walk when we came for the first time to bend our knees obediently to Christ and pray to him not with the prayer that we learned as a child though there was nothing wrong with that but a prayer that arose from a sense of our need of this Jesus for ourselves our need of a personal relationship with him a need of his pity a need of his mercy a realization that nothing short of that would do for us we tried all the alternatives or many of them anyway we went from one to the next we went through stages in life where we thought that things other than just a complete commitment to

Christ would actually do the job for us and Christ again and again destroyed our ideas and he brought us to the point where we come to recognize there's nothing else for it Lord I can't do it in any way myself to forgive my sin to find a place in your favor Jesus son of David have mercy upon me that's a great great great moment now can you look into your own life and say yes I see that moment I know that that's been my experience I know that that moment came even if it was over a process of time when I came to acknowledge the supremacy of Christ his ownership of my life and my need of his mercy what do you want me to do for you

Lord that I might recover my sight a lot of people will say why didn't you say Lord that I might be saved that I might have my sin forgiven but of course what you find there is that in terms of the man's physical need there was no greater need in that respect than the man would actually no longer be blind and Jesus said recover your sight your faith has made you well we'll come back to that made you well in a minute but that's what Jesus did he healed and you notice that he spoke first before the actual miracle took place there are words from the mouth of Christ that go ahead of the actual performance of the miracle receive your sight or you might say that they're simultaneous that they're really at the same time that the words are accompanied by the power that opens the man's eyes that gives him the sight but it's very instructive just as you find at the grave of

Lazarus that before Lazarus is raised to life again words from the mouth of Christ actually address this dead body in the sepulcher Lazarus come forth that fits in with who Jesus is he is the God who by his word creates things and creates life I am the resurrection and the life he said to Martha and by that he meant if I speak creatively then what is in my mind to bring about happens recover your sight just like God at the beginning of the creation said let there be light and there was light recover your sight and there was sight Luke was a doctor and Luke would have known very well if this had just been some kind of gimmick there's no doubt whatsoever that this man as Luke writes immediately he recovered his sight and even with the most sophisticated surgery today that deals with eye problems you still need a process of time for your eye to heal most cases we understand that there are even patches of coverings on your eye that are only taken away gradually here you go instantly from total blindness to complete sight there's nothing in between there's no period of semi sight or semi blindness it is just one moment he's totally blind and then in a split second as soon as

Jesus says recover your sight he sees everything and usually there's a period of adjustment people who have been blind all their lives for some reason that can be attended to with surgery when they receive their sight there's a period of adjustment they need dark glasses because of the light that invades the eye then can be overpowering overwhelming this man had everything fixed right in that split second his eyes were opened his sight was restored and he was able to see things normally that is what Jesus does and only he can do it when he restores our spiritual sight to us when we are like John Newton says in amazing grace I once was blind but now

[35 : 52] I see the Lord actually gives us our sight completely you go from being blind to being able to see fully in the moment of his regenerating power you don't have to spend a number of months or years until you are then able to see things properly your whole perspective is instantly changed you see and he did say to him your faith has made you well now the words made you well are in Greek literally has saved you your faith has saved you made you whole saved you same word as for saved in other contexts and it's very deliberate that the gospels have that double meaning in times in context like this when they use that word because it has that double layer of meaning which means first of all it's made you well it's given back to your physical sight it's made you well physically it's made you whole but because the whole thing has a spiritual meaning to it we as we read it take this meaning from it when you read it if it was translated as really it would have been better your faith has saved you it gives you there an understanding that actually this has something for me as well it's not just incident about a blind man all these hundreds of years back and this is what happened to him it's saying to us this actually is what

Christ does for people today in restoring their spiritual sight to them and it's to do with their salvation because when Christ restores our spiritual sight I once was blind but now I see it's part of a hymn that says amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me it's salvation in spiritual terms that's pictured for you there and that's why the word has a double meaning when he says your faith has saved you that doesn't mean that the man's faith was the reason why he received his sight it doesn't mean that his faith was the ground if you like that was because of his faith or the level of his faith that he received his sight some people you see make misuse of this kind of text and say well the reason you're not really saved yet is you don't have enough faith the reason this hasn't happened in your life as a

Christian something you're praying for is because you don't have enough faith doesn't work like that it's not about the level of faith that he has and it's not about faith being a reason why he is now able to see the reason he's able to see is the power of Christ the means by which he received his sight is his faith he believed in Christ he put his trust in Christ and that was the channel through which the power of Christ was received into his life same for you and for me believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved it doesn't say once you've got a sufficient level of faith as charismatics will tell you then you'll be saved or when you are saved once you top up your faith by various steps then you'll be the kind of

Christian that we are who have come to know the second blessing it's not about the level of faith nothing wrong with thinking of increasing your faith and faith being something that grows but the smallest weakest faith as genuine faith has the whole Christ at its disposal it's not that when you've got a little tiny bit of faith as you see it yourself there's only a little tiny bit of Christ accessible to you that's the great thing about faith as a trusting in Christ it brings the whole Christ into your possession it's the means by which the power of Christ reaches into your life and changes you and turns your life about and then you find finally that after this assurance the outcome was that this man followed

Jesus glorifying God and all the people when they saw it gave praise to God how do you know that his life was changed well not because he went about telling people but because they saw him following Jesus how do you know that person's life has been changed around because they become followers of Christ because they've given their allegiance now and are giving their allegiance to Christ they've become his pupils his disciples he is acknowledged openly as their master that's why we talk about somebody starting following it's really saying the same as that person has come to know the Lord that person's life has been changed there's a change through the grace of God he began to follow the Lord from then on we know nothing about his life after this but he followed him glorifying

[42 : 18] God that's all we need to know but as well as that the people when they saw it gave praise to God and that means that for you and I as well our life is not simply a matter of our own personal development only it also means that our life as it fits into the world in which we live has to be a life that seeks to influence other people and oh how we long tonight that people would come and glorify God not necessarily through us but through the witness that God brings to himself through his people that that's what happened with this man the people glorified and praised God over what they had seen happening with this man that's why we have the services we have in the church that's why we have ABC club that's why we have point to life that's why we have

Sunday school that's why we have a Christianity explored course because we want from it people to come to praise God we want from it praise to the name of God we want increasingly God's name to be exalted let's go home tonight with the smallest the shortest of the Psalms to fit in with what we are just saying Psalm 117 not much to it in terms of words but what a huge breadth of scope it has in its vision praise the Lord all the nations extol him all peoples for great is the steadfast love towards us and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever praise the Lord hallelujah that's what it says praise to the Lord let's pray gracious and merciful

God be gracious and merciful to us we pray grant us your continued blessing in our lives help us we pray as you dealt with Bartimaeus long ago that we too may come for our daily application to your first strength and that we may come to know of you stopping over us to our blessing hear us for your glorious sake Amen whom and and For