

Matthew 20:29-34

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[0:00] I think that, there we go. Liz, you have not met. My name is Dave. I'm one of Shoreline's pastors.

! It is my joy to open up God's Word today with you to Matthew chapter 20. We'll begin in verse 29. And as you turn there, I just wanted to check with the deacons.

We set the clocks back an hour today, which means I get an extra hour to preach, right? That was some very nervous laughter. Here's the Word of the Lord.

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 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. 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?

[1:13] 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.

Let's pray. Lord, this is a simple passage.

You have filled it up with a deep richness. Lord, may we see what you have to show us today.

Father, by the power of your Spirit, will you show us your son, the son of David.

We ask that in his name. Amen. What would it be like to go through your life without sight?

Without the Americans with Disabilities Act? In a pre-industrial society, what would your life be like? Couldn't find work.

[2:26] You'd be reduced to begging. Where would that place you in society? What rung on the social ladder?

Well, I think you'd be in the gutter on the side of the road, right, where you sat begging. What would your life be like? Which it means, as we contemplate that, that means that the first thing that stands out about these two blind men today is the contrast between Christ and the crowds.

Right? The crowds are interested in hearing these people, but Jesus is. A beggar is a nobody. They can't command your attention like a police officer, nor do they attract your attention like a wealthy person or a beautiful person.

Right? People do the opposite of paying attention to beggars. Unless you get loud, right, like these beggars. Then the crowds want you to go back to being unnoticed.

That's what the two beggars experience today in verse 31, but not Jesus. Jesus sees them. He hears them. And he doesn't turn them away.

[3:45] He calls them to himself. And perhaps you, too, feel unnoticed or unwanted like these two beggars. Will he pay attention to you, too, in your poverty, in your weakness?

Will he hear your request? Or perhaps today, as many in this room, we're self-sufficient, right? We don't feel anything like those beggars. Do you feel worthy of his attention?

I would invite you to consider that spiritually, we are all more like these beggars than unlike them. As we saw last week, the scriptures are a mirror.

They show us ourselves. Right? And spiritually speaking, we are beggars. We're all naturally sinners, separated from God. And if we're to have any part with him, it's all going to be by his mercy, by him calling us to himself.

And so let's, friends, rejoice as we recognize this passage as a call from the king to come to himself. It's an invitation.

[4:54] Jesus stops what he's doing and gives his attention to the beggars. Beggars like us. And he summons them to himself and he offers them something.

He heals them. Can you imagine that? A king who serves beggars. What a king he is. So, friends, this passage is an invitation.

It's a summons. Right? Just like he summoned the two beggars to himself, he didn't just summon them into his presence. He asked them what he could do for them. And so that invitation to the blind beggars, to us, Jesus invites us to do what?

What does he ask them? He asks them to ask something of him. He's inviting the beggars and us to prayer.

His prayer is talking to God and that's what they're doing. And Jesus is asking us this same question. What do you want me to do for you? How do we know that Christ is asking that question of us as well?

[6:06] Well, all throughout Scripture, that's part of what prayer is. Asking God of thanks, right? Alongside praise and thanksgiving and confession and lament, right?

Bringing our longings to the Lord. is one of the central aspects of prayer. He wants to hear our requests. He commands it. Do you know, friends, that heaven stands open and the King beckons you to prayer?

Not because we're worthy. Remember, spiritually speaking, we're all unworthy beggars. But he invites our prayers nonetheless. He invites our requests nonetheless.

Just as the blind men ask for it, he shows mercy. And while the two blind men had to overcome the crowd's resistance to them, they're like, hey, shut up, right?

They persisted. They would speak to Jesus. Friends, there's no crowd keeping us from going to our King. And in fact, we're seated today amongst a crowd that is designed to encourage us to go to the Lord.

[7:26] Are we not? Prompting each other towards prayer. And Jesus looks to us, looks to you, and says, what do you want me to do for you?

You may ask him anything at any time. The gates of heaven are wide open to his children. This passage invites us to prayer.

And we need to see that clearly. Why do we so often neglect prayer? Well, out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth prays.

It's a heart issue. Right? We don't desire prayer. We need to see Christ in this passage. We need to see that we're like those blind beggars.

Then we'll want to pray, right? We'll go to him to the degree we think we need him. And here we're face to face with the King who serves beggars.

[8:33] We need to see the beauty of that. Then we'll want to pray. We'll go to him to the degree we think he's wonderful. And if we look, we'll see something else.

Something else to draw us to want to pray. Because this is a very odd question. What should we pray for? Isn't verse 32 such an interesting question?

He says, What do you want me to do for you? At first, that looks like a silly question. Right? I mean, two blind men approach him asking for him to show mercy.

And Jesus asks, What do you want me to do for you? Right? Well, I wonder, Jesus. Right? What do you think they want? They're blind men. Isn't it obvious?

No. It's not obvious. Right? Have mercy could look like a lot of different things. Couldn't it? They could have wanted him to do all sorts of stuff.

[9:41] What do we want? Well, we're beggars. Give us money. Right? That's what they asked of everyone else. But that doesn't fit here. Jesus isn't like anyone else.

Right? So maybe they'd ask, What do we want, Jesus? Well, on the basis of your authority, and remember, Jesus has developed a very unique authority throughout his ministry.

Hasn't he? Right? He didn't come from the traditional rabbinic schools. But he was winning the public debates against the Pharisees. And he was teaching as one who had a unique authority.

And he was drawing huge crowds. He was really popular among the people. And he confirmed his teaching with works of power. He, Jesus had established a unique credibility and authority.

So instead of asking for Jesus to give them money, the blind men could have asked, Jesus, on the basis of your authority, you are this wonder-working rabbi, a prophet among us.

[10:44] On the basis of your authority, command all these other people to give us money. Right? As we've seen them on their march towards Jerusalem, they're moving with huge crowds because everyone is going to Jerusalem for the Passover.

So this would have been an opportune time to get this guy to call hundreds of people to give them money. Or if they were particularly ambitious, they could have asked Jesus, on the basis of your authority, that same authority, command one of these families to adopt us.

Right? Into their household so we're spared in dignity of begging and cared for all the days of our lives. There are so many things that they could have asked for.

The kinds of things you would expect beggars to ask. But when Jesus asked, what do you want me to do for you? They didn't ask for those things. They asked for a miracle.

Which is why Christ's question, though it sounds obvious, actually is very wise. Jesus draws out their intentions. And embedded in their answer is an understanding of just who Jesus is.

[12:02] You only ask for divine blessing from divinity himself. And that's how this passage challenges us. It's an invitation to prayer. But it confronts us with that same question.

What actually is it that you're asking God for? When you pray. What do we ask for in our prayers? The blind men could have asked Jesus for money, the same thing that they asked of everyone else. Instead, they asked Jesus for something that they could get from no one else. Friends, do we go to Christ looking for what only he could provide?

They could have asked Jesus for the same things that they would ask of other rabbis, right? And lots of people today look to Jesus for the same things that they ask of teachers and gurus, right? They look to him for inspiration or ethics or wisdom and how to succeed in this life. Those are the questions our culture and every culture asks its gurus.

[13:12] does Jesus offer those things? Yes, he does. He offers a better story but if that's all we go to Jesus for, well, we miss the best he has to offer.

Do you know that Jesus offers more than any other teacher has to offer? They could have asked Jesus for normal, for reasonable things, but they asked him for the abnormal, the unreasonable. They asked for a miracle. I think, friends, our prayers and mine are too small. Not too big, but too small.

What do you pray for? If I had to guess, most of us in this room, myself included, ask God for too few things and too small.

all too often we're blind beggars who ask Christ to give us a few coins in a tin cup rather than to have our eyes opened. We ask for the ordinary when he asks us, invites us, commands us to ask for the supernatural.

[14:31] Right? And so, friends, let's fix that. Let's fix that right now. Let's, in the midst of this sermon, bow our heads in prayer. Let us ask him right now. Lord, when you confront us with questions like, what do you want me to do for you?

Lord, we want to take you seriously. Forgive us for not asking enough from you and not asking you often enough. Lord, will you, the wonder-working God, do miracles in our midst?

Today, those who are sick, will you, by the power with which you healed these blind men, will you make them well? Today, those who are without hope and without light, will you, by your sovereign grace, Lord, lift them up and heal their hearts and minds?

Lord, I know for a fact there are people here right now who feel like worries are overtaking and overwhelming them, who see no way out from under the weight.

Lord, will you lift it? Will you lead us to ask you for more than the ordinary, for more than the normal, for more than the reasonable, will you lead us to ask you for only what you can provide?

[16:09] And we ask that, Lord, not only for ourselves, but also for our church family and for the city you've placed us in. Lord, will you make

us a people who build each other up in love, pointing each other constantly to Christ.

Lord, that's not a natural thing. Will you do that among us? And will you mature this body of believers by the power of your Spirit and excite us to an evangelistic zeal for our community? Holy Spirit, we ask that you would move in power in southeastern Connecticut. Lord, will you fan the flames even today of revival, awakening men and women to their own sin and their need for a Savior and their need for a Savior of things that they are not naturally inclined to themselves. Lord, will you do this miracle? And will you show them Jesus who offers them the free gift of salvation by his cross and his empty tomb?

Lord, we pray specifically for in our own lives just that, that our friends, our neighbors, and our family and coworkers who do not yet love you. Lord, will, as we call them to mind, will you draw them to yourself to repentance and faith?

[17:32] Will you, Lord, breathe new life, new birth into them and cause them to be born again into a living hope? And will you use us in that process? Will you do the miracle, Lord, of making us a praying people?

A people that prays often and prays big because you, oh Lord, are a big God and worthy of asking big things from.

We pray that in Christ's name. Amen. The first thing that has caught our attention is Christ's reaction reaction to these beggars, calling them, asking them what they want.

And it's so different from the crowd's reaction. That's the contrast that's within this passage, right? Christ and the crowds. There's another contrast that comes from outside the passage, outside of today's selection, spanning from last week's sermon.

And if we see that, we will see something else, something new. This is the second conversation in a row where Jesus has asked, what do you want?

[18:59] If you look back to chapter 20, verse 20, last week, the mother of James and John came to Christ. And in verse 21, he asked her, what do you want?

And this week, verse 32, he asks the blind men, what do you want me to do for you? Now, this can't be a coincidence. Jesus did this on purpose.

And the Holy Spirit led Matthew to record this for our benefit on purpose. We are meant to see here what kinds of requests the Lord will answer and what kinds of requests the Lord won't answer. Right? What happened last week? What was asked for? She asked, oh, Lord, will you glorify my sons here?

Right? He doesn't answer the prayer, at least with a yes, the prayer that says, Lord, exalt me. Me. But he delights with the beggars to answer that prayer that says, Lord, have mercy on me.

[20:12] That's his delight. Now, absolutely, ask Jesus for the things that you desire, and that's actually what the blind men are asking for, right? But he is far more interested in restoring people than exalting them in their own eyes.

Right? He's more interested in growing your soul than your bank account, for instance. Right? And I think we could probably put the difference between these two weeks this way.

Last week, the sons of Zebedee through their mother asked for their own aggrandizement, right? Make us epic. And this week, the blind men ask for restoration.

One request comes from a place of pride, the other from a desire to be made whole. That's the difference. So let's take an honest audit of our prayers, friends.

First, are we praying for anything? That was the invitation. But then are we asking Jesus mostly for our own advancement or for our own restoration and for others as well?

[21:24] Jesus desires and commands our prayers. what are we praying for? What will you ask? What do you ask? The one who can do all things.

To get your own way? For trivialities? That you would be honored and exalted wherever it is that you care about your reputation most?

Are we asking God the things that he wants us to ask? That he would show mercy on us? That he would be our refuge? That for his mission and his kingdom for our enemies?

For holiness? So we see together these two passages show us the prayers that Jesus delights to answer and does not delight to answer. He doesn't answer the prayer that says Lord exalt me.

He delights to answer the prayer that says Lord have mercy on me. And we know that he delights use that word on purpose because of verse 34. And Jesus in pity touched their eyes.

[22:37] Right? So Jesus is not too lowly or too important to love the lowly. He isn't annoyed by blind men and their problems like the crowds are.

And he isn't put off by them. He's not put off by you. He sees. He knows. He cares.

You can go to him with your infirmities and cry Lord have mercy on me. And even if you don't get immediate relief you will have spoken to the eternal God which that access this is a mercy isn't it? And been able to cast your cares on him. A mercy. Because he cares for you. What mercy? He invites our prayers.

And it has been just that compassion that has characterized and driven Christ's whole mission from beginning to end.

[23:51] Where were you October 28th 2018 almost exactly a year ago? We were preaching through Matthew chapter 9 at that point and this moment bears a striking resemblance to that passage.

Matthew 9:27 see if you can spot the similarities. As Jesus passed on from there two blind men followed him crying aloud have mercy on us son of David.

When he entered the house the blind men came to him and Jesus said to them do you believe that I am able to do this? They said to him yes Lord then he touched their eyes saying according to your faith be it done to you and their eyes were opened and Jesus sternly warned them see that no one knows about him.

They went away and spread his fame throughout all that district. These passages are so similar that some people think that Matthew basically just copied and pasted.

Once towards the beginning once towards the end was a good story so let's hear it again. But these are not the same story. By my counting there are something like nine significant differences between them I'm sure you can find more.

[25:11] I want to draw our attention to one key similarity and one key difference between Matthew 9 and Matthew 20. First the similarity.

They both call him the son of David. Now Israel's great king the prototypical king is David.

He's the one he's the first good king. And he's the one that years after Israel inhabited the land who finally conquered and took Jerusalem the capital where Jesus is going today.

And Jerusalem is where Israel had been promised a king to rule on David's throne forever. And so this title son of David is not just something about his genealogy, his family heritage.

They didn't just print something off of Ancestry.com and say, hey, see, son of David. They're saying, you're that king. They're saying, you're the one promise.

[26:19] You're the faithful shepherd king who will rule forever. Now that is quite a title. And we see it in both of these healings. things. But in chapter 9, Jesus has a very interesting response.

And here's where we get to the key difference between the two passages. In chapter 9, verse 30, Jesus sternly warned them, see that no one knows about it.

And in today, he makes no such warning. Now to understand why that's so important, we need to recall why Jesus has been throughout his ministry occasionally warning the people not to declare who he is.

Right? He occasionally, and sometimes even often, when he healed people, or cast out demons, or even to his own disciples, he told them to keep his messianic identity silent.

Now, he explained why that was in chapter 17 of the transfiguration. Matthew 17, 9, as they were coming down the mountain of transfiguration, Jesus commanded them, tell no one the vision until, and here's the key part, the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

[27:44] The main thing that Jesus was here to do was not to heal blind men, or to feed the crowds. It wasn't to teach.

The main thing, the heart of his ministry, from beginning to end, well, from the beginning, Matthew chapter 1, the angel said, she will bear a son, you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

That's the point and the purpose of his ministry. And at the end, that's the beginning, from the end, as he instituted the Lord's supper, he said, drink of it, all of you, this is my blood of the covenant,

which is poured out from many for the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus came to pour out his blood to save his people from their sins. And so Jesus didn't always command silence at his miracles, but he always did when the messianic titles were applied to him. When the demons called him the son of God, he silenced them. When the blind men called him son of David, he commanded them to silence. When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ in chapter 16, Jesus strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ, and then we just saw in 17, he did the same thing until the resurrection.

[29:06] Why? So that people didn't think that the promised Davidic king was here chiefly to cast out demons, or to heal diseases, or even to receive glory.

He was here to win a victory for his people, the victory over sin at his cross, and death at his empty tomb. But Jesus, with these beggars, these blind beggars, who call him son of David, he doesn't silence them here.

This is the first time a messianic title is applied to him and he doesn't command their silence. Why? friends, we are so close to Christ's death and resurrection that the need for secrecy is gone.

One of the first things that these men will see less than a week later, with their newly opened eyes, was their healer lifted up on a cross to heal their sin-sick hearts, and then they would see an empty tomb.

The king is about to march into his city. Next week is the triumphal entry. he's about to confront the corrupt rulers and drive them out of his city.

[30:35] He's about to do battle for his people on a cross. And he's about to win the greatest victory the world has ever known. The time is now.

And so notice what the two men do. The last words of our passage are immediately they recovered their sight and what? Followed him. The time is now.

And that points us to the highest blessing of this passage. It's not regaining their sight. Because once they get it they still want something else. Namely Christ to go and be with him.

They want to have their sight and to be with the healer. The highest blessing is being with the one who can do things like open the eyes of the blind.

It's not as if their issue is taken care of and they're good to go. See you later Jesus. We're going to go hang out with our family and our friends and try to get a job now. they want to follow him.

[31:47] If that's what he does, if that's what he can do, open blind eyes, imagine what else he can do. Why would you do something else if you could follow him, if you could be with him?

Go to Christ, be with Christ. That's why he invites us to prayer. He is the giver of the gifts. Go and be with him. Better is one day in his courts than thousands with eyesight.

And friends, the Christian life is lived with Christ. That's why we pray, to be with him, to dwell in his presence, to walk daily with him.

In his word and in prayer and among his saints, we walk with this king. I love how Charles Spurgeon put it as he preached on this passage.

In Mark's gospel, Mark names one of the men, Bartimaeus. And if you grew up in Sunday school, you probably sang songs about blind Bartimaeus.

[32:59] Here's how Spurgeon put it. What would you imagine this man would do as soon as his eyes were opened? He has a father. Will he not go see him? He has a sister or brother.

Will he not long to get to his household? Will he not now want to go and see the temple and the glories of it? Does he not now desire to look upon the hills and all their beauty and behold the sea and its storms and all its wonders?

No, there is but one thing that poor blind man now longs for. it is that he may always see the man who has opened his eyes.

He followed Jesus in the way. What a beautiful picture this is of a true convert. The moment his sins are forgiven, the one thing he wants to do is serve Christ.

His tongue begins to itch to tell somebody else of the mercy he has found. He longs to go off to the next shop and tell some work fellow that his sins are all pardoned. And all he now asks is Lord I would follow thee wherever you go.

[34:07] Let me never lose your company. Make my communion with you everlasting. Cause my love to increase. May my service be continual and in this life may I walk with Jesus and in the world to come all I ask is that I may live with him.

Spurgeon turned to a congregation and said oh may God grant that this story of Bartimaeus may be written over again in your experience and may you all at last meet the eternal light of God shall have chased away all blindness and where the inhabitants shall never say I am sick.

I hope that's your testimony too. Jesus didn't call the blind men over to him and ask well what are you going to give me?

He didn't ask what are you going to do for me? He asked what can I do for you? And that that's the God of the Bible right there.

The ever giving one. and he is on his way to Jerusalem to give the best gift in history his blood for your life.

[35:42] And friends this is the picture of the gospel right? We like Bartimaeus need a miracle right? Like these blind men we don't have the ability to fix our spiritual illness and our poverty.

We can only cry out like they cried out. Their cry must be ours. Have mercy on me. The Lord doesn't turn us away or ask us for a price.

What is the price of their sight? Can you even count it? What then is the price of the redemption of your soul? And he works a miracle right?

These men received sight just for the asking. And we by his cross and his empty tomb can receive new birth and everlasting life and the invitation to go to him in prayer at all times just for the asking. And friends we follow him. Of course they followed him. Where else would they go? What's better than that? Where else will we go? So in this short and simple passage the Lord calls us to prayer.

[37:08] Invites us to pray very big prayers. He shows us what kind of prayer he loves to respond to.

God demonstrates what his posture towards us is. Leaning in to give and to bless so that we will know it is a joy and the highest privilege to follow after him.

Let's pray. Amen. Lord you call us to prayer and so here we are praying.

Will you make us will you make this congregation a praying people? And Lord will you make us the kind of people who pray big prayers because we have a big God one who leans in towards us not exacting a price but paying one for us so that we might be restored and reconciled to you.

Lord help us to follow after the son of David. We pray that in his name. Amen. Please stand.

[38:40] Amen.