

Jesus Heals the Blind Man

Mark 10:46-52

Leaving Jericho on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus had gathered a crowd. Bartimaeus' blindness didn't prevent him from hearing the ruckus of the approaching crowd and from asking who was creating all the fuss. When he found out, his cries of "Son of David" in addressing Jesus were not just a way of identifying Jesus' lineage. Since the term "Son of David" is clearly a reference to the Messiah, Bartimaeus was shouting to both the crowd and to Jesus that he believed Jesus was the promised Messiah. Also, his persistence, even when people tried to hush him, showed that he was convinced Jesus could heal his blindness.

Matthew's and Luke's versions of this event differ slightly from Mark's. Matthew says two blind men were healed, while Luke suggests Jesus was entering Jericho instead of leaving it. Both of these seeming discrepancies have understandable explanations. First, though Mark and Luke tell of the healing of only one man, that doesn't mean there couldn't have been another. Certainly Jesus did many things that were not reported. And from Luke 19, we see that Jesus had passed through Jericho when he met Zacchaeus and then returned to Jericho with him for dinner. So it is likely just a matter of perspective whether Jesus was leaving Jericho or entering it when he healed Bartimaeus.

Although Jesus was surrounded by a crowd and was set on reaching his destination, his ears and heart were attuned to the cry of one calling out for mercy. Perhaps some of the people around him were just interested in following a celebrity. Others may simply have been curious about Jesus. But Bartimaeus needed Jesus' mercy, and Jesus heard his cry.

In acknowledging Bartimaeus' identification of him as the Son of David, Jesus was also making a statement. Earlier in his ministry he had avoided being identified as the Messiah. But now, as he was making his last trip to Jerusalem, where he would be crucified, he was ready for his identity to be known. And what better way to make that announcement than to heal someone who had faith in him!

It's interesting to note that Jesus didn't force any agenda on Bartimaeus. He asked what Bartimaeus wanted. We can learn a lesson from that: Although God is in control of all the resources in the universe, he wants us to express our needs to him. He wants us to acknowledge our dependence upon him and seek his mercy, which he generously bestows on us.

Notice also that Bartimaeus' faith in Jesus initiated his healing. Jesus didn't say, "Because you've lived a good life in spite of your hardship, I'll heal you." He didn't say, "Because your parents were so faithful to me, I'll give you your sight." Jesus responded to Bartimaeus' faith. Things haven't changed: Jesus responds to our needs on the basis of our faith, not because of anything good we've done or any specific set of words we repeat. Jesus shows us he cares for us by taking care of our needs as we acknowledge our dependence on him and trust in him to meet those needs. And what Jesus asks in return is that we do as Bartimaeus did and follow Jesus along the roads of our lives, no matter how old or young we may be!

Devotion for Teachers

The One Thing: Do you have a good friend who you usually talk to about your problems? Jesus is the ultimate friend. As Bartimaeus learned, we can speak openly to Jesus about our needs!

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: When have troubles made life dark for you? Like Bartimaeus, will you call out to Jesus? Pray with your eyes closed about your needs, speaking honestly to Jesus about the darkness they may be causing in your life. Then open your eyes and pray, thanking Jesus that, just as he gave Bartimaeus sight, he'll meet your needs.