

Text: Mk 10.46-52, cf. Mt 20.29-34; Lk 18.35-43

We have already read the accounts of Matthew and Luke that record the event which will conclude our Christmas series, *Light for the Blind*.

Today we are looking at one of the last recorded miracles of Jesus ministry, certainly the last recorded in the book of Mark. There were two more recorded miracles that I am aware of, the withering of the fig tree and the healing of the high priest's servant's ear. These are not recorded in Mark.

In any case, I think we might be safe to say this is the last *public* miracle, and as we have been seeing, it is a miracle with a public meaning: it announces something about the miracle worker, something the Jews should have paid attention to, but did not.

What I'd like to do next is read the account in Mark's gospel, then we'll work through some details about what happened and features unique to each gospel:

Read Mk 10.46-52

The basic facts:

- There was a large crowd of people
- There was at least one blind man (Mt. 2)
- The blind man heard that Jesus passed by
- The blind man cried out, Son of David have mercy
- The crowd tried to silence the blind man
- Blind man cried out all the more, Son of David have mercy
- Jesus called the blind to him
- Jesus asked, what do you want
- Blind answered, we want our eyes opened
- Jesus said, Your faith has made you well (Mk, Lk)
- Blind man 'immediately regained sight
- Blind man began following Jesus

Unique additions / matters for reconciliation

Matthew wrote of two men; Mark and Luke spoke of one. Mark included the name of the blind man, Bartimaeus. Undoubtedly two men were there and Bartimaeus was the more noticeable of the two.¹

¹ Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew," in John F. Walvoord and Roy B Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 67.

- The coming and going issue (Mt, Mk, Lk)
 - Came to Jericho – Mark
 - Approaching Jericho – Luke
 - Leaving Jericho – Matthew
 - Leaving Jericho – Mark

“Scholars have attempted to harmonize this account with the other two in the Synoptics. ... [Some] believe there was only one healing, and it happened somewhere between old Jericho and new Jericho that Herod the Great had built one mile southwest of the old city. I prefer this view since the three accounts are quite similar.”²

“The Jericho of New Testament times, built by Herod the Great as the site for his winter palace, was about 5 miles west of the Jordan River, 1 mile south of the Old Testament city (Josh. 6; 2 Kings 2:4–5, 15–18), and 18 miles northeast of Jerusalem.”³

- Luke: the blind man asks who was going by
- Mark: Crowd encouraged the blind men to go to Jesus
- Mark: Blind man threw aside his cloak
- Matthew: Jesus was motivated by compassion
- Matthew: Jesus touched the eyes
- Luke: Blind man was glorifying God
- Luke: People were praising God

Matters such as these details tend to bolster the notion that the accounts are coming from eye-witnesses.

No doubt the healing of a blind man (or men) was a remarkable thing. But as Jesus is heading to Jerusalem, the healing of a blind beggar on the way, in a public forum, is no doubt a very startling event.

It calls attention to itself, and then the man in his joy is seen in company with Jesus and his disciples, the marks of his poverty and beggary in his clothing, the mark of joy in his face.

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mk 10.46.

³ John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 2:154.

I want to give just a brief message today, contemplating the significant points of this narrative in application with our modern context.

I. Who is blind? (The Many – the crowd – vs. the Few – the Blind)

- A. The blind men were obviously physically blind – no doubt
- B. The crowd, however, attempted to prevent the blind from reaching Jesus
 - 1. All accounts say this was a large crowd
 - 2. The time was Passover, many pilgrims heading for Jerusalem
 - 3. When the beggar began to cry out, many try to silence him
 - a. “Sternly”: a root with a double meaning
 - 1) τιμάω, “to evaluate and to measure out punishment,” “to estimate highly,” “to honour.”⁴
 - 2) The word came to be used as a strong word of judging and rebuke, exclusively the province of the Lord, but often used by men
 - a) When the disciples were rebuking the little children earlier in the chapter (10.13), this is the word they use
 - b) When Peter took Jesus to task for his teaching of suffering, this is the word that is used (but Jesus turns and rebukes him even more strongly)
 - 3) It speaks of a hostile attitude

“Only once is a spontaneous ἐπιτιμᾶν on the lips of men allowed to pass unchallenged. This is the rebuke of the one dying thief by the other in Lk. 23:40 ... But in this case the rebuke is not from a superior position, but from the standpoint of penitence.”⁵

- b. Why should they be stern? Is there no one who sees the irony of the situation? Who is blind?

⁴ Ethelbert Stauffer, “Ἐπιτιμάω, Ἐπιτιμία,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed., vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 623 footnote 1.

⁵ Ibid., 625.

A relative of mine posted something on Facebook recently – I speak with hesitation, and some of you will understand why – the video was of some Muslims in Libya desecrating the graves of Allied soldiers from World War 2. This happened a couple of years ago, in 2012. How do you react?

- Well, it makes us mad...
- But how does our attitude towards these lost people help them to see? What do they see in us?

Who is blind?

C. The doctrine of human depravity: *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* – that includes you and me, but recall the Lord's attitude towards the blind: compassion

II. The single most important thing to see: Son of David, have mercy on me

A. The significance of the title

"Son of David, occurring here for the first time in Mark, designated the Messiah as David's Descendant (2 Sam. 7:8-16) and became a recognized title of the Messiah-King (cf. comments on Mark 12:35-37; also cf. Isa. 11:1-5; Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 34:23-24; Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; Rom. 1:3)."⁶

1. Isaiah 11.1-5 — the shoot out of Jesse
2. Jer 23.5-6 — the righteous Branch
3. Ezek 34.23-24 — the one shepherd

B. The longing of Israel, a theme of Matthew's gospel

1. Mt 1.1
2. Mt 9.27 (the two blind men, after Jairus' daughter)
3. Mt 12.23 (the question [negative] of the crowd after the blind/mute man healed)

⁶ John D. Grassmick, "Mark," in Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 2:155.

4. Mt 15.22 – a Canaanite woman ... so who is blind?

5. Rm 1.3 *this is the gospel*

C. The mind of Bartimaeus

1. He calls for mercy: presupposes a need of mercy

2. He calls for the Son of David: He is clear who he is calling on

3. He calls for sight: He is confident of Christ's power to deliver

This indeed is what men need to see when they see Christ: they need to see their need, they need to see the Saviour, they need to believe that He can save them.

Jesus said of him: "Your faith has made you well..." not the agent, but the instrument; in other words, Jesus did the healing, but would not without the believing.

III. Hope for the crowd (blind man follows, the people praise – did any believe? Did any see?) (Luke 18.43)

NAU **Luke 18.43** Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

A. Bartimaeus immediately reorients his life: he follows him, glorifying God

B. The people likewise are praising God: but what are they seeing?

Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.

John Newton⁷

Conclusion:

Do you have faith in this Christ who came to earth two thousand years ago?

He is no less able to heal your blindness today than he was that of Bartimaeus so long ago.

⁷ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1440.