

## Ask Jesus for mercy and come to Him

Mark 10:46-52 - Littlebourne November 7th 2021

*Parallel passages: Luke 18:35-43, Matthew 20:29-34*

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This is the last time in Mark's gospel that we'll see a physical healing episode like this. Matthew and Luke both tell this story of the blind crying out to the Son of David - but only Mark gives a name, Bartimaeus.

Remember Mark was writing for an audience not familiar with the semitic languages used in Palestine - hence he explains Bartimaeus' name means 'son of Timaeus'. Similarly, we've seen in chapters 5 (v41) and 7 (v34) and will see in chapters 14 (v36) and 15 (v34) that Mark explains the Aramaic terms for things.

### v46

*46 And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside.*

They came to Jericho. Jericho a day's walk northeast of Jerusalem, it's the last stop before they reach Jerusalem, which we'll see in next weeks passage.

The roads to to Jerusalem would have been packed with pilgrims - many Jews went to Jerusalem for Passover, if they could. Luke 2 tells us that Jesus and his parents went every year to Jerusalem for Passover - this was no uncommon thing. It's estimated that Jerusalem's population expanded to six times its size during Passover each year. Deuteronomy 16 (v 5-7a) tells us why:

*You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, 6 but at the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, at the time you came out of Egypt. 7 And you shall cook it and eat it at the place that the Lord your God will choose.*

The pilgrims were travelling to give their sacrifice at the temple - to do as commanded in this passage and celebrate the Passover where God dwells. At the time of writing in Deuteronomy, this would have been the Tabernacle, the tent that housed the Ark of the Covenant and mirrored the temple in purpose. In Jesus' day, Jews travel to the temple at

Jerusalem to offer Passover sacrifices.

The road through Jericho was one of the main highways to Jerusalem, so the crowd we see probably weren't all there because they heard of Jesus - but they soon became aware.

This healing takes place as Jesus is leaving Jericho. Mark doesn't tell us this, but Luke records (Luke 19:1-9) that Jesus talked to Zacchaeus the tax collector and went to his house. Remember the crowds were such that short Zacchaeus had to climb a tree to see Jesus at all? Now Jesus is leaving Jericho and he may have caused a stir whilst he was there, such that Bartimaeus has heard the commotion.

Luke's account tells us that the blind man heard the crowd and asked what it meant. He's told that it's Jesus of Nazareth passing by. (Luke 18 v 36-37)

## v47-48

*47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

As soon as he hears that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by, he cries out. He's presumably heard about Jesus - his healings, his power, maybe what happened earlier with Zacchaeus.

Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet. The crowd no doubt felt that he was being a nuisance, or that possibly Jesus couldn't or wouldn't help. Bartimaeus in shouting above the crowd, in ignoring the ways of the world around him, shows his faith.

"Son of David" is what Bartimaeus call Jesus. Next weeks passage, the crowds will talk of "the coming kingdom of our father David". Here, we see a similar link to David - but this is more direct. Now it's not clear that Bartimaeus makes the complete jump to Jesus being the messiah, the Christ, like Peter did in chapter 8, but the association is there.

The messiah was known to be of David's line. Isaiah 11 (v1-2), talking of the messiah, says:

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.  
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

The stump of Jesse - Jesse was David's father. Similarly, Jeremiah 23 (v5-6):

*“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’*

(See also Ezekiel 34:23-24)

Whilst Bartimaeus doesn't necessarily know that Jesus is the messiah, what we do know is that Bartimaeus thinks he can get healing from Jesus - that he is powerful and a way of getting God's help for him.

The messiah or Christ, meaning the anointed one, was the one who would lead Israel as King, being a descendent of David, saving them.

But saving them from what? The common conception, then as well as for Jews today, is that the messiah is one who leads politically, who commands an earthly kingdom, who frees people from earthly oppressions and enemies. In the first century, people are expecting a man that will lead the revolt against the Romans. Jesus is by that standard not very messiah like - no wealth or political power.

But Jesus is not messiah in the way people expected him to be - he must, as we read last week, suffer and be put to death in order to fulfil his messianic role. He is not saving people from the romans, or from any other conquering earthly power, but from the much deeper problem we all face - our sin.

When we get to chapter 14 (v 61-62), Jesus is asked if he is the Christ by the high priest, and says yes. But the high priest says that this is blasphemy. Jesus was not at all what Jewish people were expecting.

We've seen Jesus identified as the messiah before, in chapter 8 (v29), but this time he doesn't say to stay silent - unlike when Peter identified him as the Christ, this time he calls the man and doesn't silence him. Next week, people will also make reference to the Kingdom of David - a messianic view of things - and Jesus doesn't stop them. The secretive nature of his identity has been relaxed - but people are not expecting him to be a messiah in the sense that he will be.

Bartimaeus cries out "have mercy on me!" Not, give me justice or give me what I deserve. Have mercy. Maybe Bartimaeus knows that he doesn't deserve healing - that he's not worthy of Jesus' help.

Titus 3 (v4-7):

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Jesus is merciful and he has mercy on Bartimaeus.

## **v49-52**

*49 And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." 50 And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51 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."*

Jesus stops on his way, ignores the crowd's opinions, and seeks out this blind man.

Bartimaeus' response to Jesus' call is dramatic - he throws off his cloak, jumps up and comes to Jesus. He knows he's going to meet someone special.

We've seen in a lot of the healings in Mark's gospel involve a short conversation - Jesus often doesn't just heal without asking some questions, making a point of it. Think about the blind man in chapter 8, who was healed in two steps to make a point about the disciples knowledge, or the man with a withered hand in chapter 3 that Jesus uses to make a point about the sabbath. Because the important things Jesus came to bring are more than just physical healing.

Jesus doesn't exercise his power in an impersonal way either. Why does Jesus ask Bartimaeus what he wants? Jesus knows the answer, but Jesus asks because it shows his faith to out loud ask for healing. Sometimes asking God for something directly, in knowledge that He can help, is what is required of us, rather than merely wishing.

## **v52**

*52 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.*

Jesus answers his request. We've seen different methods of healing from Jesus - sometimes public, sometimes private. Sometimes a word at a distance, sometimes he reaches out and touches. Sometimes he touches, other times people touch him. Sometimes he teaches when he heals, sometimes he warns. Sometimes he is asked, other times he heals without anyone asking.

Jesus doesn't have a one size fits all mentality with healing - he tailors his healings to the individuals involved, he knows us all individually and treats us as the unique persons we are. And he demonstrates through his use of many methods that the healing comes from something greater than the methodology. Healing is not the product of any talisman, spell, or process. Healing comes from the power of God.

Many times we've seen Jesus tell people to keep quiet about their healing - the blind man in chapter 8 was taken away from the crowds before being healed and instructed to keep quiet. This time, the healing seems to be in full view of the crowd and there is no command to keep it secret. We're seeing that as Jesus gets closer to Jerusalem, closer to his purpose on Earth being revealed, he is less concerned about people getting the wrong impression, trying to make him king or anything else. Maybe Jesus was cognisant of the fact that the same people that would welcome him to Jerusalem as King will that very week condemn him to death.

Remember when Jesus was touched by the woman with a bleeding issue back in chapter 5 and Jesus, whilst travelling to heal a girl on the brink of death, stops to talk to this woman who touched him in the crowd. Similarly, here Jesus is on his way to a place and time of great importance - his last week in Jerusalem, before he is arrested and crucified. Again, he stops to heal on his way - one of the marks of Jesus' ministry is that he stops to give time to suffering individuals. He doesn't just heal in his spare time - he goes out of his way even when he's busy to heal those in need.

[[There's another parallel - a slight stretch. 2 Samuel 5:6-10:

*6 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off"—thinking, "David cannot come in here." 7 Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David. 8 And David said on that day, "Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack 'the lame and the blind,' who are hated by David's soul." Therefore it is said, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house." 9 And David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built the city all around from the Millo inward. 10 And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.*

David enters Jerusalem by defeating the lame and the blind outside the city, but Jesus, the Son of David, heals the blind outside the city before he enters. It's not a completely clear parallel, but it's interesting.]]

## Conclusion

John 20 (v 30-31):

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

We mustn't forget that Jesus' physical healings are really the shadow of the greater healing taking place - they pale in comparison to the greater healing, the new life we are given in him today, the coming resurrection of our bodies, the removal of all sickness, death and sin from the world. The healing of this man points us to the truth that we all must be healed of the sickness we experience in our natural sinfulness.

The need for healing is not limited to these people from the ancient middle east. We too need healing. We need to ask Jesus for mercy and come to him.

Ephesians 2:1-9:

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

John 6:37:

*All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*

We need, like Bartimaeus, to ask Jesus for mercy and come to him.