

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabile.org.

Date: August 9, 2009

Title: Restoration of Bartimaeus’ sight

Text: Mark 10:46-52 (Gospel Parallels – Matthew 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43)

Theme: What do you think of Jesus?

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

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Introduction:

This is the last event in Mark's narrative before Palm Sunday and the beginning of Passion Week.

Up until the very end of His public ministry Jesus does the work to which He was called. Everything about Him openly declares Him to be God's Hero. From Mark 1 through Mark 10 "Jesus healed many who had various diseases." The only means of silencing Him will be to put Him to death. Other than this direct assault, there is no stopping Him.

The electricity in the air had to be all consuming. The pull of His person and work compelled a response. No one could possibly remain neutral. All would come and all would conclude. In his famous book *Mere Christianity*, Lewis makes this statement, "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us."

On the surface this episode would appear to be no more than an additional report of a healing miracle performed by Jesus, but in view of the fact that this entire sequence has focused upon Jesus' teaching about the identity and nature of the Messiah as well as of true discipleship and upon the utter failure of the disciples to understand this teaching, we must wonder whether this healing of a blind man is not intended by the evangelist to bear the same sense as the healing of a blind man at the end of the previous sequence (see 8:22-26 and note 40 there). If this is so, then it indicates that there is still hope for the blindness of the disciples to be healed, even as Jesus has indicated to James and John that they would drink his cup and undergo his own baptism. Thus the sequence telling of the journey to Jerusalem, the repeated predictions by Jesus of his coming suffering and execution and the repeated demonstrations by disciples that they have not understood what Jesus has been teaching them nevertheless ends with a hopeful sign that Jesus can and does indeed heal human blindness.¹

What about the city of Jericho?

The "City of Palms." It is the lowest city in the world (more than 1,000 feet below sea level), and also appears to be the oldest. The city fell under the power of God in Joshua 6 as Joshua led the nation into the land promised to them by God. It was a cursed city, "Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with the loss of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son he shall set up its gates" (Joshua 6:26). "For over 400 years Jericho lay in ruins until Hiel of Bethel rebuilt the city. The city was rebuilt at the cost of Hiel's firstborn son, Abiram, and was fortified at the cost of his second son, Segub."²

"In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; he laid its foundations with the loss of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun" (1 Kings 16:34).

- It is the setting for the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30).
- It is the setting for the story of blind Bartimaeus (Luke 18:35-43).
- It is the setting for the story of Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10).

"Soon afterward, Jesus headed west, entering the Wadi Qelt which carried the main road to Jerusalem, climbing from about 850 feet below sea-level to around 2,500 feet above sea-level, an elevation gain of some 3300 feet over a distance of about 17 miles."³

He left Jericho for Jerusalem on Friday, just a week before his crucifixion.

THE BIG PICTURE:

Jesus' Ministry in Judea and Perea (ch. 10)

- Teaching concerning Divorce (10:1-12)
- Teaching Concerning Saving Faith (10:13-31)
 - Children (10:13-16)
 - The Rich Young Man (10:17-31)
- A Request of Two Brothers (10:32-45)
- **Restoration of Bartimaeus's Sight (10:46-52)**

Passion Week and Resurrection Sunday (Chapters 11-16)

The Problem:

Although many heard Jesus, not all believed Jesus. Regardless as to why we have heard, God wants us to accept who He is, what He has done and who His people now are because of it.

The Storyline:

Prophecy fulfilled, the Hero's arrival - "Misery is the object of mercy, his own miserable case he recommends to the compassion of the *Son of David*, of whom it was foretold, that, when he should come to save us, *the eyes of the blind should be opened* (Isa. 35:5)."⁴

⁴"Say to those with anxious heart, 'Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.'⁵
Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah" (Isa. 35:4-6).

In the arrival of Jesus, the promise is being fulfilled.

Here Mark tells us the name of this "blind beggar". Bartimaeus makes a politically charged statement: Jesus is "Son of David" (v. 47), King of the Jews, and Messiah. Elsewhere, Jesus orders silence on the matter, but not here: his time is approaching. For the first time, a sane person immediately proclaims Jesus' true identity. The "cloak" (v. 50, garment) Bartimaeus throws off is probably the cloth he uses to receive handouts; in Mark, *garments* often indicate the *old order*, so Bartimaeus has accepted the new. Jesus' question in v. 51 is the one he asked James and John when they sought status in the kingdom (10:36), but Bartimaeus' approach is different: he comes in humility ("My teacher", v. 51). Jesus simply tells him that his "faith", (v. 52, his receptivity of God's healing word, "has made you well" (also meaning *has saved you from impending destruction*.) Bartimaeus is cured immediately and becomes a follower of Jesus ("the way", v. 52).⁵

Questions:

1. Notice the contrasting stories with the Pharisees, the Rich Young Ruler, James and John and blind Bartimaeus.
2. Notice who comes and what appears to be their motive for coming?
3. What phrase does the blind beggar use to identify Jesus?
4. What does he ask for?
5. What does verse 48 tell you about his manner in asking?
6. Did Bartimaeus care much for what the crowd thought?
7. What was our Lord's response to the persistency of Bartimaeus?
8. How does the crowd react to our Lord's request?
9. Notice Rabboni. It is an intimate term.
10. His request was simple, "I want to regain my sight." What are you asking Jesus for? Is your request as simple for the Son of David to fulfill?
11. On what basis did Jesus heal his blindness?
12. Notice the direct connection between God willing and its execution.
13. What did the blind man do after his sight was restored?

14. Does the Bible ever speak in a cultural or historical vacuum? Does it speak in a moral or religious vacuum? How does His answer correspond to the Hebrew Scripture?
15. Why do you think Mark dropped this passage in his narrative?
16. How does this passage relate to the overall flow of Mark's story?
17. What part does this paragraph have to the storyline of the Bible?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know God is merciful and powerful to meet our needs.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Him as the healer of our needs.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in Jesus only and alone for all our needs.

Markan scholarship has long recognized that a literary relationship exists between 8:22-26 and 10:46-52, as these two episodes are the only healings of blindness in the gospel. **Just as the first healing sits in front of the first recorded disclosure of His impending death, so the second sits in front of the beginning of Passion Week.** After this miracle, everything compels us forward toward the looming cross-work. Why does Mark place this miracle just before the upcoming momentous event?

This event also sits in contrast to the continued "heart fog" of His closest disciples. Their understanding of the moment was often blurred, but here sits "blind" Bartimaeus whose "faith sight" is 20/20.

Also notice the contrast in the question's response. Both groups were asked the same question, "What do you want Me to do for you" (vv. 36, 51)? With James and John the request was for power, prestige and glory. With blind Bartimaeus it was to alleviate human suffering and to picture the gospel. What we find here must be viewed in dramatic difference to the story that precedes it.

Again we meet the multitude, this swelling fickle mass of humanity. Here they follow Him for what He can give. Later they will cry out for His blood.

Outline:

- I. The nature of his condition - He was blind (v. 46)

Matthew 20 speaks of two blind men. Mark and Luke note only one. In Mark and Luke the other was present but perhaps less prominent. In addition, although both were present in Mark's account, only the one was necessary to make his point.

"Beggars would often be found at the city gate where people are passing in and out. Like the crippled beggar at the gate of the temple (Acts 3:1-3), he is probably used to calling out to those who pass by, asking for money, begging for alms."⁶

“Bartimaeus”: In Aramaic, *bar* means *son of*. It is unusual for Mark to name the person healed.

Church Father Augustine gives this interesting and insightful observation.

Mark has recorded both the name of Bartimaeus and of his father, a circumstance which scarcely occurs in all the many cases of healing which had been performed by the Lord. . . . consequently there can be little doubt that this Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, had fallen from some position of great prosperity, and was now regarded as an object of the most notorious and the most remarkable wretchedness, because, in addition to being blind, he had also to sit begging.⁷

It would appear that Bartimaeus was locally known, and thus, when referenced was recognized.

His blindness dominated his life. It affected every area of his existence. Years ago I needed a root channel done. I remember the intense pain I was in. The pain dominated my life. There was nothing I could do without thinking about the tooth. And I was willing to go to any lengths to stop the pain.

II. The nature of his appeal – He was unwavering (vv. 47, 48)

A. He called to Jesus, Son of David, Rabboni (vv. 47a, 51)

To call someone “Son of David” as a title is equivalent to calling someone, “Messiah,” for it signifies to the Jews a person who is the promised descendent of David who will sit upon the throne of Israel (2 Sam. 7:11-16; 1 Chron. 17:9-14; 22:1-19; 2 Chron. 6:5-17; 13:5; 21:7; Ps. 89:19-37; Isa. 16:5; 22:20-25; Jer. 23:5; 33:15-26; Luke 1:32-33).

“Son of David,” this title designates Jesus as heir of the promise made to David through Nathan: see 2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; Psalm 89:28-37. Up to this point, except for Peter, only demons have recognized Jesus’ true identity.

Blind Bartimaeus of Jericho is the only figure in Mark's gospel to address Jesus with the Messianic title of “Son of David.”

B. He called for mercy, give me sight (vv. 47b, 51)

Notice his appeal. He did not cry for justice. He cried for mercy, and He cried out to the only one who could grant him his request.

C. He called out shamelessly (vv. 48, 50)

Let us place ourselves on this dusty road leading to Jericho. We are a part of the seething mass of humanity and from among the mass there is one who with unavoidable energy cries out to Jesus. Are you annoyed? Are you offended? Do we see the situation for what it is? Are we glad and joy filled that one who is blind is now confronting the one who can make him well?

What if you were blind Bartimaeus? All of us present have a need that is overwhelming us. Each of us is crippled in some way or another. How bad do you wish to be delivered? Are you willing to appear foolish by your peers? Stop thinking of the physical and reach for the spiritual.

Bartimaeus threw aside his garment. He left that which comforted and provided. Although we think the rich man had more to give, the blind man gave all that he had. Let us not think that what the blind man left was any less significant to him than what was asked of the rich man.

The belief of Bartimaeus drove him to Jesus. Jesus was not simply a name or an idea, but a very real and tangible person.

III. The nature of his response – He was obedient (v. 52)

A. He had faith in Jesus – “your faith has made you whole”

“The demand is for *faith*. A wise writer has said, ‘We must ask people to think, but we should not expect them to become theologians before they are Christians.’ Christianity begins with a personal reaction to Jesus, a reaction of love, feeling that here is the one person who can meet our need. Even if we are never able to think things out theologically, that response of the human heart is enough.”⁸

B. He followed after Jesus – “he began following Him on the road”

“He leaves his begging (the cloak would be spread on the ground to receive money; Jericho is seldom cold enough for anyone to wear a cloak during the day).”⁹

Jesus asked the question not because He did not know the answer but because it revealed the content of their hearts.

“He began with need, went on to gratitude, and finished with loyalty – and that is a perfect summary of the stages of discipleship.”¹⁰

IV. The nature of God’s invitation

“The gracious invitations Christ gives us to come to him, are great encouragements to our hope, that we shall speed well if we come to him, and shall have what we come for. Let the guilty, the empty, the tempted, the hungry, the naked, be of good comfort, for

he *calls them* to be pardoned, to be supplied, to be succored, to be filled, to be clothed, to have all that done for them, which their case calls for."¹¹

- A. His mercy - He withheld from the man what he deserved - judgment/blindness
- B. His grace / compassion (Matt. 20:34) - He gave to the man what he did not deserve - freedom/sight
- C. His power - He did for the man what only He could do - He gave Him sight

Somewhere along the way you and I stopped believing God for the impossible. We stopped believing in His mercy, His grace and His power. Again let us raise our sights. Who do you know who is unsaved and appears as if they will never get saved?

"Made you well," The Greek word was a technical term in early Christian circles for salvation and resurrection life, so it may be that early Christians took this healing as an anticipation of the resurrection life of Jesus and of those who believe in him.¹²

What do we do with, "Go; your faith has made you well"? Is the presence of faith or its absence the only reason Jesus does or does not heal? Dale Neumann believed faith would heal his 11 year old daughter, Madeline. She passed away and he is now charged with murder. Apart from him living with tremendous guilt for his lack of faith, was his premise sound?

Dale Neumann, 47, is a "full-Gospel Christian," who did not know his 11-year-old daughter had diabetes, his defense attorney said. There's also not "a shred of evidence" Neumann knew his prayers would fail to help his daughter or cause her death, the lawyer said. Neumann is charged with second-degree reckless homicide in the 2008 death of his daughter Madeline Neumann, called Kara by her parents. The girl died from undiagnosed diabetes on March 23, 2008, surrounded by people praying at the family's rural home in Weston in central Wisconsin. Someone called 911 when she stopped breathing. Dale Neumann told a Bible study friend he considered his daughter's illness "a test of his faith," Leonhard said. "Dale Neumann solicited the help of numerous individuals to pray," Kronenwetter said. "He did that because of his faith, because he believed that was what would save his daughter."

We see this same idea in Mark 5:34, "And He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction.'"

I will contend that God can and does heal through the means of faith, but that He equally and often heals in the absence of faith. This man's heart is openly seen by the

way he describes Jesus and for what he asks. It is also seen by his ready obedience to come and to follow. The means Jesus used to accomplish the end was this man's faith. God could have healed him in the absence of faith, but here He chooses to heal him because of his faith.

Our faith in God can also be expressed by using the means made available to us. I was reminded recently of a simple story of a man who was stranded on his roof top during an intense flood. While praying to God a helicopter came to rescue him but he waved it away saying he was praying by faith for God to deliver him. In time he died and when he appeared before God he questioned God as to why He had not delivered him. God responded by saying, "I did, I sent you the helicopter."

This is what God can and often does. Yet we also must not forget how the gospel is inclusive. It addresses the entire individual both physically and spiritually. It changes everything. There isn't an area where the gospel does not impact the person. What we have here is a visible picture of something that is invisible. This man's deliverance from physical blindness also speaks to his deliverance from spiritual blindness.

In addition, I believe we might be forcing the illustration to be the point and in so doing fail to get to the meaning and significance. Jesus saves sinners, but He works through their faith. No one is saved from sin and placed into Christ who comes any way other than by grace alone through faith alone. If we move this idea from the physical and to the spiritual, then what Jesus says, "Your faith has saved you," makes more sense.

Luke 18:43 tells us that those who witnessed the miracle gave praise to God.

"Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God" (Luke 18:43).

I am often amazed and saddened at how negative we are of others. Friends, let those who know us see us as a praising people, a people who are deeply in love with Jesus and His church and who make much of Him.

Let us also not forget that Matthew recorded two blind men. What of the other? Should we conclude that he was equally healed? What is said of his response? Matthew tells us that he was also healed and that he, like Bartimaeus, followed Jesus.

Friend, we might not be the primary player in the script of God, but let us not doubt the goodness of God in our own healing and let us like others follow Him.

Shepherding the Sheep (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Where are you at right now? Is it possible you are like the religious establishment and are afraid of losing your place in the eyes of others?
2. Perhaps you are like the political powers that care only about maintaining their place of power and privilege?

3. Maybe you are a common person who has not yet believed?
4. Possibly you are a disciple of Christ, but your priorities have changed slowly to the point where real Christianity makes you uncomfortable?
5. Maybe, just maybe, you are like blind Bartimaeus and today is your day of deliverance from however your need shows itself?
6. Your greatest need is your soul sickness. Only Jesus can heal you. Will you come today?

¹ <http://artsci.wustl.edu/~cwconrad/Mark/mk8notes.html#anchor1788943>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Jericho.

³ http://www.welcometohosanna.com/LIFE_OF_JESUS/wadikelt.htm

⁴ *Matthew Henry* on Mark 10

⁵ <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/archive/bpr30m.shtml>

⁶ http://www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/18_35-43.htm

⁷ Augustine, *Harmony of the Gospels*, 2.65 in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Mark*, 145.

⁸ William Barclay, *Mark*, 262.

⁹ N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 143.

¹⁰ William Barclay, *Mark*, 262.

¹¹ *Matthew Henry* on Mark 10.

¹² <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/archive/bpr30l.shtml>