

## "The Blind man"

A man's sight left him. He sought the counsel of a trusted medical friend who prescribed a medicine for him. The man took the medicine regularly for four days, and his sight returned to him, but he could no longer remember anything. His friend suggested a remedy for that, too. After a few days his memory came back to him, but he went blind again. This continued for sometime. Eventually his friend said, "It looks like you have to decide which you want--your sight or your memory." The man thought for a moment and then said, "I believe I would prefer my sight. I would rather see where I am going than remember where I have been!"

And I'm wondering do you know where are you going in life?

Large crowds followed Jesus wherever he went, bringing their sick friends and relatives to be healed. On one particular day as he was leaving Jerusalem, he was again accompanied by a crowd of people.

Mark 10:46+47 "As he drew near to Jericho they saw a blind beggar sitting by the roadside. His name was Bartimaeus. He began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Now you can only begin to try and imagine what this was like for Bartimaeus. He couldn't see anything but he probably heard the hustle and bustle from the crowd. And maybe he had a friend who was saying to Him, here is Jesus he's getting closer.

And as Jesus is getting closer Bartimaeus shouts out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Now Jesus was called Son of David simply because he was a descendant of King David who had ruled Israel for 40 years many years before.

But as Jesus is getting closer and the crowd is stirring and getting more and more excited with Jesus' presence. Bartimaeus is shouting to get Jesus' attention but Mark 10:48 tells us, "The blind man's friends told him to be quiet, but he called out even louder to Jesus".

You see loved ones there comes a time when we need to decide who we are going to listen to. He didn't listen to his friends because he was determined that nothing and no one not even his friends were going to stop him getting Jesus' attention.

You know maybe you've got friends that are always putting you down because you go to 'church'. And they are always saying, 'oh just have fun you don't need Jesus in your life.' 'Oh you know that God and Jesus aren't real because no one has ever seen Him'.

Listen guys Bartimaeus was blind and just because he had never seen Jesus at this point didn't stop him from believing in His existence. He wanted Jesus' attention and because he wasn't going to let his friends get in the way, he shouted louder and louder until he got what wanted he wanted. And boy did he get it.

Mark 10:49+50 "Jesus stopped and told his disciples to call Bartimaeus over to him. They said to him, "Cheer up! On your feet! He is calling you." He threw off his coat and came to Jesus".

When we use the big parachute at youth group, we sometimes play a game called cat and mouse, the idea is that two kids will go underneath the parachute and act as mice and then another two kids will go on top of the parachute and act as cats to try and find them. Now when it comes to choosing kids to be either a mouse or a cat, they get excited. And they all start shouting out, 'choose me, choose me'. And when you choose someone they are all excited and throw off their shoes.

You see loved ones you can almost sense the excitement of Bartimaeus. He's been looking forward to this day for such a long time, he's shouted as loud as he could, Jesus' disciples come over to him and said, cheer up, get up on your feet, Jesus is speaking to you.

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And what did he do? In the excitement of it all he threw off his coat, it's almost as if he's saying, 'yeeha it's me, I'm chosen'. But this is it, this is his moment and on one of these rare occasions in the Bible Mark 10:51 "Jesus asked him what he wanted, and he said, "Rabbi, (meaning 'teacher') I want to see."

Here is a man who hasn't has his sight for a long time, here is a man who knew that Jesus was special, who was in the family tree of King David. Listen loved ones that's how faith should be. Totally trusting in God to do what He claims He can do. Here was a man who knew what faith was all about. But how did he know?

Well loved ones, he was blind but he certainly wasn't deaf. Romans 10:17 "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching Christ." He's heard something about this man called Jesus, he's heard of all the wonderful things He has said and done. And that was enough for him to totally put his trust in this man called Jesus.

And I want to raise a small but important point here loved ones. You don't have to know a lot about Jesus before you come to Him. You don't need to know and understand all of the Bible before you come to Him. All you need to know is that Jesus is the Son of God and if you get to the point where you believe that in your heart, then Jesus will accept you just the way you are.

But you need to make the effort to come to Him because Jesus is always calling on you to come to Him. Bartimaeus believed and threw off his coat and went to Him. Let me encourage you guys to throw off whatever it is that's stopping you from coming to the Master's call.

Ask yourself what is really stopping you coming to Jesus? Is it what your friends may think? Is it pride? Is it because your sick and tired of people telling you need you need to be baptised? What is it?

Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls out to the Lord for help will be saved." Listen guys whatever it is throw it off and follow the example of Bartimaeus. He went to Jesus and told him exactly what he wanted and in Mark 10:52 "Jesus said, "Go, your faith has healed you." Immediately, he was able to see, and he followed Jesus.

And notice Jesus healing had immediate effects. Bartimaeus didn't have to wait a week or two or pay any money in advance, he was healed immediately. What a happy day in the life of this blind man who had believed in the healing power of the Son of God!

Now what else can we learn from this story? Well the blind man in the story was persistent. 1. He did not give up.

He called out again and again. He would not stop until he could talk to Jesus. You know Bartimaeus kind of reminds me of the story Jesus told in Luke 18:1-8 about a widow who had not been treated fairly and she just kept on going back to the judge until he gave her what she wanted.

Now loved ones, has someone treated you unfairly? Then talk to God about it, and don't give up. He will help. Do you need help with a problem you're facing right now? Well, God wants to hear from you. He loves to hear your voice talking to him. In fact did you know that every time a Christian prays to God everything stops in heaven?

In Revelation 7 we find lots of activity going on in heaven. Christians are been told that they are going to be sealed and safe. They will be taken care of because God knows those who are faithful to Him. So there is a lot singing and praising and all sorts of noises as they are rejoicing in the fact that they were going to be victorious over Rome.

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And now look what happens in Revelation 8:1 "When the Lamb broke open the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour". There's all this singing and praising going on and then silence, why? Revelation 8:2-4 "Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and they were given seven trumpets. Another angel, who had a gold incense container, came and stood at the altar. He was given a lot of incense to add to the prayers of all God's people and to offer it on the gold altar that stands before the throne. The smoke of the burning incense went up with the prayers of God's people from the hands of the angel standing before God."

There was silence in heaven because God's children were praying, in other words God can't wait to hear from you, He longs for you to talk to Him especially during difficult times.

Something else we can learn from this story is that 2. Jesus loves the unwanted.

In Jesus' time the poor could only help themselves by begging, hoping that someone, anyone would be compelled to toss them a coin. This was the case for blind Bartimaeus. But can you imagine how thrilled he must have been when Jesus did restore his sight? By doing this, Jesus fulfilled the promised made long ago by Isaiah that the eyes of the blind were opened. Isaiah 35:5 "The blind will be able to see, and the deaf will hear". So again this is more proof as to whom Jesus is but the question I want to ask you this morning is this, is there something in your life that Jesus needs to heal?

You know I love the film 'The Shawshank Redemption.' Andy Dufresne is a young and successful banker whose life changes drastically when he is convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of his wife and her lover. A crime which he didn't commit. But anyway there's a scene where Andy and his friend Red are sitting on the ground discussing prison life and Red says to Andy, 'prison does strange things to a man, first you hate it, then you get used to it and then you finally learn to rely on it.'

And I'm wondering if there's something in your life which you rely on more than Jesus. It could be alcohol or drugs; it could be pornography or foul language, whatever it is, you rely on those things to help you through the day more than you rely on Jesus to help you through the day.

Oh maybe at first you hated yourself for doing it but after time to got used to it but now your at the point when you realise that you've become dependant upon it. Well loved ones, be like Bartimaeus and don't hesitate to call out to Jesus.

Because Jesus has set you free from the power of sin. Romans 8:1+2 "There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death."

In other words Jesus Christ is above your drug and alcohol problem. Jesus Christ is above your pornography and foul language problem. He set you free from all those addictions so don't let them keep you in prison.

Take a look at this picture of some flowers. Isn't this a beautiful bouquet of flowers? Can you imagine what it must be like to be blind and never see the beauty of things such as these beautiful flowers? The gift of sight is one of the most precious of all of God's gifts. Bartimaeus had never seen the beauty of a bouquet of flowers, because Bartimaeus was blind.

A friend of mine called Glynn is physically blind and I remember one time when he was preaching at Summer Lane he begun his sermon by saying, 'please don't feel sorry for me being blind, it could be a lot worse, I could be spiritually blind.'

You see loved ones whatever it is we have in our lives which stops us depending on Jesus everyday, actually stops us from seeing the freedom we actually have in Christ.

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So not only are there things which need to be thrown off because they are stopping us coming to Christ but there may also be things in our lives which need to be thrown off because they are hindering us from serving Christ properly.

But isn't it good news that God wants those who are unwanted? Isn't it good news that God will save anyone who truly wants to be saved? Isn't it good news that Jesus has such a simple way for people to be saved?

D. L. Moody says: "God has put the matter of salvation in such a way that the whole world can lay hold of it. All men can believe. A lame man might not perhaps be able to visit the sick; but he can believe. A blind man, by reason of his infirmity, cannot do many things; but he can believe. A deaf man can believe. A dying man can believe. God has put salvation so simply that young and old, wise and foolish, rich and poor, can all believe if they will."

The plan of salvation is so simple if people were only willing to follow His plan. Now unfortunately, stories about the blind don't always end up like Bartimaeus story. There are many blind people who want to see, and yet they are never healed but just because they are not healed doesn't mean that God can't use them.

Fanny Crosby was one of those people. When she was only six weeks old, she was left blind by an illness. Even though she was blind for the rest of her life, she was never bitter or complaining. Instead she made the most of her life by using the other gifts that God had given her. She had a wonderful gift for writing poetry and during her lifetime, she wrote over 8000 poems. Some of her poems were set to music and many of them are still in our song books today.

One day a well-meaning minister said to her, "I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when He showered so many other gifts upon you." "Oh no!" she replied. "If I could have only one request, it would be to be born blind." "Why?" asked the surprised minister. "Because," she said, "when I get to heaven, the first face that these blind eyes will ever see is the face of Jesus, my Savior."

Some, like Bartimaeus, receive the gift of sight. Some, like Fanny Crosby, are blind their entire life. One thing is certain, when we get to heaven, we will all see Jesus.

The Second Book of Kings and the sixth chapter tells us of an interesting event. Elisha, the prophet of God, was given knowledge of the planned activities of the Syrian King to destroy Israel. Elisha warned Israel, which angered the Syrian King, who then sought to kill Elisha. The servant of Elisha awoke one morning, looked out and saw the Syrian army surrounding the city. He became very frightened. But Elisha was not afraid because he could see the Lord's protection. Then, in verse 17, "Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of the servant that he, too, would see what Elisha saw".

In this prayer, Elisha was not referring to physical sight. The servant already had that, for he could see the army, but he had no spiritual sight to see the Lord's protection. Now there are many people who have perfect vision in the natural eyes, but they are blind spiritually, just as this young servant of Elisha.

And our story today tells us that that it's only the Lord that can give people spiritual eyes to see their lost and ruined condition. It's only the Lord that can show people the holy wrath of God against their sin. It's only the Lord that can reveal the glory of a beaten, scourged, and crucified Christ. It's only the Lord that can give people a revelation of the exalted, risen, Christ, ruling the universe and providing for, protecting, and caring for His redeemed. Because without this revelation, no one will come to Christ in saving faith.

Have your eyes been opened to see the glorious person and work of the blessed Son of God?

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The young servant of Elisha could not see the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire around Elisha until the Lord opened his eyes. And neither can the sinner see the glory of Christ until the Lord opens his blind eyes.

If you're a Christian this morning I pray the Lord will open your eyes so that you can see if there's anything in your life which is hindering you from truly serving Him. If you're not a Christian this morning I pray that the Lord open your eyes so you can see Jesus for who He really is and obey His commands.

Maybe like Bartimaeus today is your moment; let me encourage you to grab it today.