

Deliverance From 'Stuff'

Deliverance

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Bible Text: Mark 10:17-22; Mark 10:46-52

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Mark, the second book in the New Testament, to chapter 10, and as you're turning to Mark 10, if you're a guest or visitor with us or maybe you haven't had the opportunity to be with us in some while, allow me to kind of catch you up to speed that we are walking through the gospel of Mark not simply for the purpose of seeing the chronology of the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ, not simply to see the biographies or various people whom Jesus impacts and changes literally forever, but we're doing so with kind of this theme of deliverance.

Now I understand it's one of those words that particularly in our culture causes us to be a little bit uncomfortable at times but allow me to remind you what that word means, it means to be set free, to means to take whatever is holding you back and to have it broken. In some cases, it can mean to be taken from a situation that is detrimental and be placed in a situation that is desirable. As we've been walking through the gospel of Mark, each and every story, each and every chapter, we've seen case study after case study that it doesn't matter what the issue is, what the struggle is, or who the person is that Jesus Christ is able to deliver us from anything that has got us in bondage or in the shackles of life.

Today as we come to chapter 10, two things I want to call your attention to before we begin our reading. The first is this: you're one chapter away from what we know as Palm Sunday. You are days away from the crucifixion and eventually the resurrection of Jesus Christ so chronologically speaking, it's been about 3+ years, we're toward the end of the earthly ministry and here in chapter 10 as Jesus Christ prepares to go to his cross, we meet two people that could not be any more different. In fact, we're going to begin in just a moment in verse 17 with a story of the man whom we collectively call the rich young ruler. Why do we refer to him that way? Because there are three accounts both in Matthew, Mark and Luke that when you combine his resume, he was a man of great resources, he was a man of great influence, he was a man of a means to accomplish on earth that which he desired to do anytime he so chose to do so. Then in verse 46, we're going to meet another man, in fact, his life could not be any more different than the rich young ruler. His name is Bartimaeus, in fact, the Bible records that he's been blind since birth. He's never had the opportunity to see the environment that which is around him,

and when we find him in verse 46, he's going to be on the side of the road as people are pouring into Jerusalem for what we know as that Passover season. He's got but a small blanket and he's begging for money.

If you and I were to look at these two men on the socioeconomic scale, there could not be two men who are more dramatically different than these two but yet what we discover today is that both of them had the same thing they needed to be delivered from. Today as we read their stories, there's going to be this natural inclination to say, "Well, that doesn't sound like me. I sound like the other guy," or vice versa, or maybe you say, "You know, I'm not on either extreme. I'm somewhere in the middle," which means that you're on the spectrum, today we're going to discover that no matter who you are or where you've come from or what your struggles may or may not be, all of us today need to experience the deliverance that ultimately Bartimaeus experienced.

Beginning in verse 17 of Mark 10 it says,

17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. 19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. 20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. 21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. 22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

Fast forward to verse 46, it says,

46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. 50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Now upon the first reading, we recognize these are two guys from two completely different backgrounds and strata of life. In fact, as their story ends, we see that their departure is very different as well. But it might surprise you as we kind of peel away the layers today that both of these men, though as different as they were, both struggled with the same bondage, they both struggled with the same shackles. What was the concern that was brought forth? Now this may sound like just a good old "Southern word" but it's actually a biblical word. Both of these men struggled with stuff. Now can I define for you stuff? According to the dictionary, stuff is that which is of a material possession, that which is tangible in our lives that can be handled or in some way we can collect it. I mean, we think about the stuff of life. Each and every one of us whether we're the rich young ruler or whether we're Bartimaeus, everyone here today, everybody listening to my voice has some level of stuff in your life. We all have it, the question is how do we handle it?

That's the definition, let me describe for you in the Bible stuff. Did you know that in the Old Testament the word "stuff" is used at least 12 times? It's an interesting word to use but it's first used in Genesis 39, there's an individual who's relocating their life from one place into another and they said, "Hold on. Allow me to get all my stuff." Now we've said that before and some of you have got more stuff than other people have but nonetheless the stuff are those material items in life that though tangible are near and dear to us, that which we would want to take with us wherever life may have us to go. As I mentioned, in the Old Testament it's utilized 12 times. In the New Testament the word "stuff" is not used but Jesus himself transitions and uses the word "mammon" and he told us, he said, "You cannot love God and mammon at the same time." It's impossible.

So we see this kind of thread throughout the Bible that we have stuff and sometimes stuff can be our struggle. Allow me to use two biblical examples. A man by the name of Hezekiah in Isaiah 39, one of the kings of Israel, in fact, he was the king that ended up leading them into captivity and why is that so? Because there in Isaiah 39, he had a whole lot of stuff. In fact, the Bible talks about all the riches and all the gold and all the jewels and so what did he decide to do? He was so proud of the stuff that God gave him, he decided to show it off even to those who desired to eradicate the Israelites off planet earth. In fact, Isaiah comes to him and says, "Because you have bragged about, because you have cherished, because you have honored the 'things of this world,' then you and Israel together, we're all going to be taken captive."

On the other side of the equation back in the book of Joshua 7, we meet a guy by the name of Achan. Now the Israelites had just gone into the Promised Land. Everything seemed to be going the way that you would hope it to, they're winning battle after battle, but all of a sudden something happened: the victory didn't come as they had expected; the favor of God was not on their life as everybody had hoped. So they began to do a search and a man by the name of Achan had done that which God told them not to do. When they won that battle, he said, "Don't take the spoils. Don't take the gold. Don't take any of that stuff. Just win the battle and move on." But do you know what Achan did? Achan decided to basically put a little bit of it in a knapsack, took that knapsack and he put it under his pillow, and because of that victory could not be accomplished, because of that

eventually through the movement of God not only Achan and his family saw the end of their lives but Israel never saw victory again until that stuff was rendered.

Why is that all important kind of as a long introduction here? Because I think sometimes we say, "Well, I don't have a whole lot of stuff so I don't have a problem with stuff," and sometimes we say, "Well, I don't have much stuff so I know I don't have a problem with stuff." But yet what do we discover? It doesn't matter if you've got a whole palace of it or if you've got a simple knapsack of it. Can I delineate it for you for just a moment? Here's the question I want to ask you: it's not how much stuff you have, it's how much does your stuff have you? That's one of those Meyersisms you can write down if you want to. It's not how much stuff you have, it's how much does our stuff have you? You read the life of Solomon, a man who honored the Lord at least in his early days, and he had more stuff than anybody. He had a whole lot of stuff. And yet you see stories of people who struggle, in fact, 1 Timothy 6 it says that the love of money is the root of all evil. You and I today, whether we want to acknowledge it or not, we're probably not Bartimaeus and we're probably not the rich young ruler, we're somewhere in the spectrum in between and what we're going to discover today is that even though their lives were so different, they actually had the same problem.

So allow me to show you how they compare to each other, okay? I want you to see their attitude toward the things of this world. We're going to begin with the rich young ruler. I want you to go back to verse 17 and I want you to see the attitude that he has when Jesus is in the wayside. What does it say? He came running to him. A little different than Zacchaeus in Luke 19 who crawls up the sycamore tree waiting for Jesus to come by to see if he can get a glimpse. The rich young ruler doesn't want a glimpse of Jesus, he wants an audience with him. He actually tracks Jesus down and desires to have a personal conversation with him. Here's the question I have and we don't have the answer: how long and how fast did he run? Because when you are desperate and you know that something is not right, you will move heaven and earth to get the answer to whatever your struggle is.

This guy came running to Jesus. Now flip the page to whom we know as Bartimaeus. What does it say in verse 47? He began to cry out. You say, "Well, why isn't he running?" How are you going to run if you're Bartimaeus? You're not able to see. You're not able to navigate. There's thousands of people around you. But where he could not run, he just began to scream and it obviously wasn't as effective as whom we know as the rich young ruler because then it says later he even screamed louder. I want you to see these men had the exact same attitude, they needed an audience with Jesus because they needed to know where they stood with him. They needed to know where is my life according to you? They were willing to run, they were willing to shout, they were willing to make, if you allow me to say, a fool of themselves just to simply get some time with Jesus.

So what's the action? What did Jesus do? How did he respond? Go back to the rich young ruler. It's interesting in verse 21 it says that he beloved him, he loved him, he beheld him, he looked upon him, he loved him. You know, it's interesting if you kind of want a visual of what that looks like, have you ever been in a conversation with somebody that was of

such a magnitude and so important that you needed to share the information that was so vital to them, you didn't do it in a casual fashion of, "Hey, hey, you might want to pay attention to this," what do you do? You grab ahold of somebody, you look into their eyes, you have that piercing conversation. That's what we see happening here. You actually get the idea that Jesus said, "This is so important that we talk about this, I'm going to make sure you don't run away while we're talking. I'm going to hold you, I'm going to behold you right here."

So what did Jesus do to Bartimaeus? It's really interesting in verse 49 it says Jesus did what? Stood still. Where was Jesus going? To the cross. He was on his way to Mount Calvary, this man starts shouting out and it says he stood still and commanded him to be called. Now why is this important for us? Because if you and I today will understand the struggle that we have with stuff, and we are willing to have an audience with the Lord, if we are willing to come clean before the Lord and say, "Hey, this is an issue for me," no matter how little or how much it is, what happens? When we have that attitude Jesus stops everything. He stopped the rich young ruler in his tracks and later on he stopped tens of thousands of people. You see, Jesus was on the way to the Passover, what we know as Palm Sunday is in chapter 11, tens of thousands of people. When Jesus stood still, he stopped everything to have a conversation with this man.

The reason this is so significant is because this issue is so easily justified, it's so easily rationalized, it's so easily excused, but what we're about to see is this rich young ruler, and we know this, he had a real issue with stuff and Bartimaeus did as well. So how were they different? How can we contrast their lives? Go back to the rich young ruler. Jesus has approached him and he's asked him, he said, "Have you obeyed these commandments?" Now by the way, just for the sake of time and energy, allow me to communicate to you that Jesus does not even share with him half of them. He shares the commandments about how we "treat each other." He doesn't ask him if he's worshiped the Lord his God only. He doesn't ask him if he's had idolatry. He doesn't ask him if he's taken the Lord's name in vain. And this is what's important, he hasn't asked him if he's coveted which involves a lot of stuff, does it not?

I want you to notice how the rich young ruler responds. Verse 20, he answered and he said unto him, "Master, all these things I've observed from my youth." Now if you are here this morning and you were raised by one or more parents or you have one or more kids, you know he's lying. When's the last time any of us could say, "I've never messed up"? That's what he's saying. In fact, one of the things I love, when the Lord allows me the opportunity to counsel particularly with children who they're talking about the things of eternity, they're talking about salvation in Jesus Christ, I love the opportunity at times just to have a personal conversation and one of the things that I love to tell the parents is as your child and I are talking, you're going to be "outside the door," I want you to hang out around the corner because you might be surprised what you hear.

I remember one time I had a young cute little boy, he was probably fourth grade. He and his parents had been talking about getting saved for a long time. He comes in, we start talking and I said, "Hey, do you know what sin is?" He said, "Oh yeah." I said, "Can you

define it for me?" He said, "Sin is when you do something you shouldn't do, when you break one of the laws of God." I said, "That's a pretty astute answer from a fourth grader." Now his parents are right around the corner. I said, "Let me ask you a question, have you ever sinned?" "Nope." I heard the gasp from the hallway. I said, "Don't you have a little sister?" "Yes, sir." I said, "Have you ever been ugly to her?" "Never." I said, "Have you ever lied to your parents?" "Nope." I mean, I kept giving example after example after example. Why? Because when what we're being measured against is that which we can easily conform to, we have no problem affirming it.

I want you to notice not what Jesus asked him but what he doesn't ask him. Do you know what the last commandment is? Thou shall not covet. Remember what Rockefeller said years ago? They asked him, "How much is enough?" He said, "Just a little bit more." Jesus didn't ask him about that. So then you pick up the story in verse 21 and a lot of people, I think, misconstrue this part of the story when Jesus says, "Okay, go and sell everything you have." Let me tell you what Jesus was not saying. Jesus was not saying you can buy or sell your way into heaven. That's not what he was saying. What Jesus was saying is, "I'm about to reveal that you've got a sin problem you don't realize you have by asking you to do something that would prove you're not coveting." So what did he do? According to the Bible he "walked away."

Now let's move to Bartimaeus, very different. Jesus stops the crowd, verse 51, he answered and said unto him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" What does blind Bartimaeus ask? "I just want to receive my sight." Do you see the difference between that arrogance of the rich young ruler and the humility of Bartimaeus? In fact, there's another good picture of this in Luke 15, we know it as the story of the prodigal son. Do you remember what the prodigal son said? He said, "If I can just go home and be treated as one of the servants. I don't need a room. I don't need a title. I just want to be allowed on the property." Remember what his brother said? "You've never thrown me a party. You've never brought everybody in and killed the fatted calf for me." You get the same idea here, here this rich young ruler is basically saying, "Jesus, you ought to be grateful I tracked you down," and Bartimaeus is saying, "I cannot believe you stopped."

"What do you want, son?" I mean, think about that. You have the Creator of the world 18 inches from you, thousands of people watching and all he says is, "I'd really like to see." Do you know why that's important? It didn't solve his issues. It didn't solve his poverty. It didn't solve his social isolation. He just wanted to be able to navigate life and Jesus is the one who can do it.

Now let's think about their actions for a moment. Go to the last verse of the rich young ruler, verse 22. He departed. Why? Because he had many possessions. You see, the rich young ruler goes a different way, a separate way because he could not get over the fact that his stuff had him. He was guilty of coveting. He didn't want to face the music. He had a stuff problem that he wasn't willing to turn over. It says he departed from him.

Now let's look at Bartimaeus for just a moment. Look in verse 52 and Jesus said, "Go thy way, thy faith has made thee whole, and immediately he received his sight and followed

Jesus in the way." I want you to move up a few verses to verse 50. I don't know if what I'm about to share with you is what I hope it is to be, and what I mean by that, I think it's just one of the greatest verses in all of the Bible. If someone were to ask you what are the great verses, we love John 3:16, we love Romans 8:38 and 39, there's so many what we would call salient verses but there's something about verse 50 that gets me. It says he cast away his garment, he rose and he came to Jesus. Now that may not seem like much to you but allow me to share what it means to me. I'm going to ask you a series of questions. How does a blind man in the midst of 10,000 people, how does he find his garment if he comes back blind again? This man's garment was more than just a piece of cloth. There's no mention of his family. There's no mention of a home. There's no mention of friends. There's no mention of a bank account. He's in the Middle East. When it's hot outside, what's going to give him shade? His blanket. When it's cold at night, what's going to give him warmth? His garment. He couldn't hold down a job so how is he going to earn a living? He sits on this blanket day after day begging people to provide his sustenance.

You see, the rich young ruler probably had multiple houses, probably even had a few lake houses, to use our vernacular, probably had a three car garage with a couple of lifts just in case he got excited. What did Bartimaeus have? He had one piece of fabric. How is he going to find it? How is he going to get back? How is he going to return to? He can't because he understood that if I'm willing to turn my back on all the stuff of this world, I might just be able to see the way God wants me to see. I might just be able to go where God wants me to go. I might be able just to do what God wants me to do. The rich young ruler had more than enough and he wanted just a little bit more. Bartimaeus, in our vernacular, had next to nothing and he said it was too much compared to his sight and he went to Jesus.

You know, there's an old illustration, it's not original to me, but I think today in light of these stories it begs us to utilize again. It's the story of the closed and/or open hand. It's a parable that's been shared many times in many ways, and allow this to be told as it means to you. Your hand has within it all of the stuff of your life, whether that's your possessions, whether that's your financial resources, whatever that may be, just imagine that everything that is tangible, everything that is stuff is in that hand. What is our natural inclination? To squeeze, to hold onto, to make sure, to make it go, and so what do we do? We end up taking all the stuff of life and two things end up happening: number 1, we end up taking everything that the Lord's blessed us with and we stifle it because we squeeze it, and the second thing is this, we can't get anything else in. But what happens when we open our hand? We risk losing everything with the hope that we might just gain more.

Do you see what the rich young ruler did? He took the stuff of life and he said, "I've got to squeeze a little bit more. I'm not willing to let go of this. I'm not willing to risk, I'm not willing to chance it because I've got it all laid out, I've got it on my spreadsheet and what you're asking me to do, if I don't desire a little bit more, then it's not going to work out the way I planned it." He was squeezing. What did Bartimaeus do? He said, "I'm going to take everything," it was only one thing, "and I'm going to leave it behind and I'm going to trust that God's got more to put in my hand than I've known my whole life."

It's a simple illustration that we can all understand but here's what it boils down to. It's an easy question but a hard question to ask: which one of these men do you want to be? Do you want to be the rich young ruler who walks away because he'll never be satisfied with the things of this world because the grass is always going to be greener on the other side and it never is? Or do you want to be Bartimaeus who says, "Do you know what? I'm just going to give everything I've got to the Lord, allow him to 'call the shots,' and I'm just going to trust that even though I can't see him," you do realize Bartimaeus couldn't see? "I can't see him but I'm going to trust him." Do you ever think about that? Bartimaeus couldn't even see what Jesus was doing. Any of y'all struggle with seeing what Jesus is up to? And that's why we hold on because we can't see that he's got something better for us if we just open up our hand. You see, our struggle is we want to squeeze and Bartimaeus said, "Do you know what? I'm going to give it all up. I'm going to leave it all behind and I might just be able to see."

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe this morning whether here in person or maybe online, maybe even listening on the radio, maybe you're that individual that for whatever reason your life, your world has been consumed with the stuff of this world, and maybe much like the rich young ruler, has kept you from Jesus Christ and maybe today the Spirit of God has taken the word of God through the simple illustration of a man with a blanket and shown you it is time to mentally and emotionally walk away from all that stuff just so that you can have the eyes Jesus wants you to have. Maybe you're that person today who's never called upon Jesus. Maybe you're that person today who's been so consumed with the things of this world you've never even given a thought to what the Lord has for you. The Bible says in Romans 10:13 whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved and maybe today is the day where like Bartimaeus you just walk away from whatever it is and say, "All right, Lord, I need to receive my sight."

If you're that person today, can I encourage you just to have a conversation with the Lord? It doesn't have to be necessarily out loud. It doesn't have to be the same words that I or somebody else might say. It's about your heart's cry that might go a little something like this. "God, today, Lord, I just confess the stuff of this world, the things of this world, they have gotten the best of me. Lord, I've been navigating my whole life just walking through sin and never even thought much about it but, God, today I realize I do have a sin problem and it has separated me from you, and the result of it will be death, and I believe, God, that the only solution is Jesus Christ. God, I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came on my behalf. He lived on my behalf. God, I believe that he bore the marks of the cross to bear the punishment of my sin and shame and, God, I believe that when he rose from the grave three days later, he made it possible for my sin to be forgiven, for my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the struggles, the issues and the problems of life, but this one thing I do know, I know that Jesus Christ is the only one who can fix and solve my sin problem. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, if you're that person today much like those 74 people on Sunday night who had that conversation with the Lord, in a moment I'm going to pray and we're going to stand and sing and we invite you, just like we did Sunday night, just to step out and step forward. We'd love the opportunity to hear your story and to pray with you. But maybe you'd be willing today to say, "Do you know what, pastor? I had that conversation with the Lord years ago, decades ago," but maybe today even as a believer you realize that a lot of stuff has gotten in the way, that hand that used to be open is now clenched pretty tight, and maybe it's not about stepping out and stepping forward, maybe it's about stepping out of here in just a moment with our palms open to the Lord trusting him instead of ourselves.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, thank you, thank you for the illustration of Bartimaeus, thank you that you set the bar where you did with his life to show us what needs to happen in our life and, God, whatever the decision may be, may we at this time just hear your voice. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.