

Blind Bartimaeus

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When we hear that statement that Jesus Christ can wash our dirty lives clean, usually there is one of three words that comes to our mind. For some of you it's fantasy, "Sure, right." For others it's doubt, "You don't understand how dirty I am." But for some of us, it's reality. Can I encourage you this morning that if you find yourself in the fantasy or the doubt column that today may the declaration be that it is reality? That Jesus Christ can clean up whatever mess that we've made of our lives.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, as we prepare our hearts today to hear from your word, Lord, what a declaration that our dirty messed up lives, that you can make clean. Help us, O God, to realize the gravity of our situation but also realize the grace that you're willing to bestow. God, may we come desiring to be clean but being clean before you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark 10 and today is a day that about 2,000 years ago we celebrate as Palm Sunday, the day where Jesus Christ donned the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and they declared, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." This event that is celebrated and remembered for now two millennia and yet to come, today I want to look at the event that immediately preceded Jesus walking in, or shall I say, riding in on that proverbial donkey that day. In fact, in Mark 10, we're going to meet a character by the name of Bartimaeus. You may know him better by the adjective that describes him, Blind Bartimaeus, and as we look at his life in Mark 10, beginning in verse 46, it serves to prepare us for the Lord's Supper. It serves to prepare us for remembering the death and the crucifixion and the pain that Jesus Christ underwent for the forgiveness of our sins and the salvation of our soul.

Mark 10, beginning in 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; for he calls you. 50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What would you that I should do unto you? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your faith has made you whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Today as we celebrate the Lord's Supper on this day that we know as Palm Sunday, what a great opportunity for us to look at the person and the event and the conversation and the miracle that Jesus enacted moments before that fateful Palm Sunday celebration.

What does Bartimaeus have to do with today? What does his life, what does this story, how can it speak to us today? First, I think we need to realize that Bartimaeus had a reality check in his life. He's blind. He's by the wayside and he's begging. In other words, he understood that his life was not as he had desired, and not just him only, but it says he was the son of Timaeus. In other words, they understood his blindness. They understood his struggles. Also when the disciples bring him forth, they know who this blind man is, not just because he was crying out but we get the idea that he had a reputation, that everybody knew his predicament, everybody knew his story.

Maybe today you identify with the reality of Bartimaeus. Maybe you've got a life, maybe you have a reputation where when you walk in the room, people smirk and hang their heads. Maybe you have a life that your family, your co-workers, your friends, whoever your sphere of influence may be, that you realize that it's not what you desired it to be, it's not what you'd hoped it to be, in fact, if you were to be honest with yourself, you look at your life in the spiritual mirror and you say, "It's a mess." But maybe today your reality check isn't what those communicate to you on an everyday basis, maybe it's that which you've never personally dealt with yourself.

You know, oftentimes we focus on the messy lives that we see on the exterior, but some of you well know that you're a mess on the inside but you're putting on a show on the outside. You know that deep down inside things aren't what they should be. You're struggling. You're doubting. You're questioning. You're rebelling. You're holding the emotions of anger or bitterness or whatever it may be, and you know deep down inside you're really no different than Bartimaeus, it's just that nobody else knows it. Today, can we have a reality check? Can we all just admit that some how, some way, at some level, all of us have got some spiritual junk that we need to have cleaned up? Others may know about it and many may not, but we all find ourselves in this position.

But Bartimaeus also had a realization. When Jesus comes by, coming out of Jericho, what does he declare? He says, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!" He doesn't just say it once, he says it twice. In other words, he understood something that we desperately need

to grasp in our culture today, that no matter what our mess is, no matter what our life looks like on the outside or if it's just an inner turmoil, only Jesus can solve the issue.

I have a feeling that Bartimaeus had seen all the experts. I have a hunch that he had received all the earthly wisdom that a man could receive but he cried out and he said, "Jesus, have mercy on me!" Whatever you're struggling with, whatever you're going through, whatever your life may look like either on the outside or on the inside, please understand the lesson from Bartimaeus: only Jesus is going to fix it, nobody else can do it. In fact, one of the verses that we've quoted over and over and over again the last few weeks here is John 15:5 where Jesus said, "I'm the vine, you're the branches. He that abides in me and I in him shall bear much fruit for apart from me, you can do nothing."

How many times has the world failed us in its false attempt to solve the issues of our life? He realized not only that he was messed up, but he also realized that Jesus was the only answer, but today before we participate in the Lord's Supper, I want you to see his response. Notice verse 50, "casting away his garment, he arose, and he came to Jesus." You see, this picture of verse 50 is what we're about to experience as a family of faith. In just a moment, we're going to participate in what we know as the Lord's Supper and maybe you're not real familiar with this or maybe at some level you're somewhat, "Well, I've heard about it. I've been a part of it once or twice but I don't quite grasp it." Allow me to share with you what we're about to do. What we know as the Lord's Supper is a time where those who are believers in Jesus Christ, those who understand that they are a sinner and need Jesus to forgive them and save them, according to 1 Corinthians 11, until the day he returns, that we are to gather together and we are to remember his death until he comes. This is a celebration for believers in Jesus Christ to, again, remind ourselves of what he was willing to do on our behalf; remind ourselves of his grace, his mercy, and his love for us. In fact, what we're about to do is very similar to what happened in Bartimaeus' life. Jesus called and he arose. In other words, today Jesus is asking us as believers, "Will you remember, will you think upon my incredible grace and love for you?" And you're going to rise to the occasion because in just a moment as the elements are passed out, you're going to remember, you're going to participate, you're going to reflect on who he is and what he's done.

But I want you to notice what Bartimaeus did that sometimes just falls by the wayside of the story. It says he cast away his garments. You may be thinking, "Why is that so significant to the story?" Obviously he's going to get up and go to Jesus. He has to leave some... This man was blind. He had been blind for a long time and everybody knew it. He is at a time, what we know as Palm Sunday, where tens of thousands of people are along the side of this road. This would have been a heavily congested time period not just in his life but the entire city's life, and here he is in the middle of it all having a conversation and the healing touch of Jesus Christ. Let me ask you a very rhetorical yet practical question: how is a blind man in the midst of 10,000 strangers going to find his way back to his coat? You do realize that that garment was his livelihood, you realize that garment, there was probably some type of container that held the coins of people's generosity, and you know as soon as he got up, it was pillaged by whoever was sitting next to him.

How was he going to get back? How was he going to find his place? He's going to lose his livelihood and everything and therein lies the lesson for each and every one of us today. That which is dirty in our lives, that which we want to be made clean, as we rise at this occasion to celebrate the Lord's Supper, can I give you a challenge and drop the garments? Drop them? Say, "I'm not going back there again." Can we make the decision, can we make the commitment, can we rise to the challenge today that whatever the struggle is, whatever the challenge is, whatever the difficulty is, whatever the emotion is, that this day we drop it and say, "I'm not going back again."

You do know that's the definition of repentance? Repentance means to be headed in one direction and to turn and go the opposite. In just a few moments, we have the privilege of taking what we know as the Lord's Supper. We have the opportunity to reflect on the goodness and the grace and the mercy and the love of Jesus Christ for us. What better way to celebrate than to take whatever spiritual baggage we've got, whatever stuff we have like Bartimaeus, and at this moment just cast it off and say, "Jesus, I'm not going back to that again. I'm not going to experience that again. I'm not going to do that again. I'm not going to live that again. I'm not going to think that again. I'm not going to feel that again. I'm going to turn it all over to you," believing that once he met Jesus, he would have no need for his garment again. Bartimaeus on the way to what we know as Palm Sunday gives us an incredible challenge as we remember the Lord's death this day.

In a few moments I'm going to pray. As I'm praying, the individuals that are going to help us distribute the elements are going to make their way up to the front. As they are passed throughout the congregation in a moment, you'll see one of the ways in which you'll receive them, there's actually two cups that are joined together one on top of the other, the top cup has the juice, the bottom cup has the bread. I just encourage you, all you need is to grab one set in each of the slots, but that one set contains all the elements to celebrate what we know as the Lord's Supper.

Let us pray together and we will remember together.

Lord Jesus, as we gather at this time, there is no amount of our words or actions that can somehow give proper gratitude to your love and your grace and your willingness to forgive. But God, you told us to remember. You told us to reflect. You told us to look back. You told us to think upon that which you did on our behalf. So Lord, as we do so, help us not just to remember your grace and mercy but, God, help us to leave and cast away the garments of our old self and our struggles by the roadside. Help us, O God, to just let you be you at this moment. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.