

## Have Mercy On Me

I am not sure why we persist in calling Bartimaeus 'Blind Bartimaeus'. Certainly, Bartimaeus once was blind, but what is much more important is that Jesus healed his blindness and gave him new eyes and instilled a new vision in his soul. Our passage today recounts the wonderful episode on the outskirts of Jericho when the Lord Jesus Christ on His way to Jerusalem to be crucified met Bartimaeus. The encounter changed Bartimaeus forever. I wonder if 'Perfect-vision Bartimaeus' might stick?

### **A blessing for Jericho**

Jericho was an ancient walled city, and a cursed city. It was the first city conquered by the Israelites under Joshua when they entered Canaan. Once powerful, it had been destroyed and rebuilt several times. Now it was smaller and less impressive but today it was also blessed with the presence of Jesus Christ. Another conquering Joshua was passing through on His way to His greatest victory, but this time it was men's souls that were being won. Here the Lord met and saved Zacchaeus, here several individuals received their sight, amongst them was Bartimaeus.

### **The best Bartimaeus could do**

An account of these healings are given by Matthew, Mark and Luke. Luke speaks of a man healed as the Lord entered the city, and Matthew of two more healed as Jesus left the city. One of these two may have been Bartimaeus. He is named in our passage from Mark's gospel. Bartimaeus was blind, and a beggar. As the Jews' Passover was at hand multitudes made their way to Jerusalem to worship at the feast. Bartimaeus the poor, blind, beggar found the best place he could at the side of the road to be noticed by the passing travellers.

### **Jesus changes things**

But this day was different. There seemed to be more people on the road; a large and excited crowd. Bartimaeus learned that Jesus of Nazareth was among them. At once he began shouting, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me'. What a great shout! It was specific, informed and personal. Bartimaeus cried out to 'Jesus', but also called Him 'Son of David', a title characteristic of the Messiah, the Christ. He pleaded for personal mercy. If ever a shout was tailored to reach the Saviour's ears, and gain his attention, it was this.

### **One chance to be heard**

The reaction of the crowd was swift. They wanted Bartimaeus to be quiet. Perhaps the crowd felt Jesus had more important business than stop for a blind beggar, or maybe some were offended by the implications of Bartimaeus' reference to the Messiah and wanted him silenced. Either way, they politely told him to shut up. Undeterred, Bartimaeus shouted louder. He had one chance to be heard, one opportunity to meet the Saviour, and this was it.

### **What do you want?**

Jesus did hear, as He always hears those who call on Him for help and mercy. He stopped, he called for Bartimaeus to be brought and He asked the blind man what he wanted. What to ask for? Money? A warmer coat? A better place to beg? Bartimaeus knew what he needed. 'Lord', he said, 'that I might receive my sight'.

### **The plea of faith**

Of course, such a request revealed that Bartimaeus already realised something about the identity and power of the One in whose presence he stood. We do not know if Bartimaeus ever had use of his eyes or if his blindness was from birth, it does not matter. He was in the presence of the One who created eyes. He wanted to see and he believed Jesus, the Christ, could do that for him. He was right. The words of the Lord were joy to Bartimaeus' ears. The Master said, 'Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole'. Immediately he received his sight.

### **We are all Blind Bartimaeus**

Bartimaeus experienced the Lord's healing power and received his eyesight, but the Lord spoke too, of the power of faith by which blind souls may see their Saviour. Bartimaeus gives us a picture of every sinner's soul; blind and beggarly, without strength and in need. But when the Lord Jesus draws near in saving power, that faith, first implanted by the Holy Ghost, cries out for help, seeks the Lord, and will not go unheard.

**Power to save**

When the Lord Jesus calls a sinner to Himself His call comes with mercy, grace and enabling power. At the Saviour's command Bartimaeus threw off his garment, rose from his squalor, and came to Christ. We rejoice today that the same mercy, grace and life-giving power attends the preaching of Christ's gospel and the hearing of His word.

**Perfect vision**

There is a space where Bartimaeus once sat, and an old rag coat, now discarded. Any passer-by who asks, 'Where is the blind beggar who once sat by the side of the road from Jericho to Jerusalem?', would be told, 'Jesus of Nazareth opened his eyes, gave him perfect vision, and he has gone after Him'.

Amen

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