

Blind Bartimaeus-Seeking and Receiving Help

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Tonight, I want to talk to you about blind Bartimaeus. And I'll read a passage from 10th of Mark: When 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. 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. 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. 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. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 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. 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, verse 46, says they came to Jericho. And if you will remember, Jericho was the city of the curse. It was so known as the city of the curse; Joshua had declared it to be so. That if ever rebuilt by the firstborn of the man who had built it. And it so came to pass and became the city of the curse. And yet here was the great God Almighty, that had formed the earth in the hollow of His hand. That had, as the poet said, flung the stars to the most far corners of the night. And here was this great God Almighty, and he was walking into the city of Jericho, the city of the curse.

And I don't know, but it would be the last place you'd expect God to be. You know, brothers and sisters, we sissified Christians imagine that God only goes to church. There isn't a harlot house in this town, that God isn't present at tonight. There isn't a smelly, smoke-filled saloon in Chicago, that God Almighty isn't there. And there isn't a jail in this whole city, where the Lord God isn't. Because it says in verse 45, the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.

Now, that was why the great God Almighty was in the city of the curse, because He was the Son of Man, part and parcel of the human race, for better or for worse, and it turned out of course, to be for better. And He came to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. And there wasn't any depth He wouldn't go to. There wasn't anywhere that He wouldn't be found.

So, this great God Almighty, comes into this city of the curse. And as He traveled along and went out of Jericho with His disciples and the great number of a hangers-on following along behind

them, why, we come to blind Bartimaeus, junior, he was, because to me, this was his father's name and Bar means he was the son of. So he was to me his junior and he had been born blind. Poor Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus.

Now I don't want to press this, my friends at all. But I wonder whether there isn't something subtly suggestive about this fact that this man was the son of somebody and was found in the city of a curse and was found blind and was named after his father. That's sort of indicating a hereditary descent. I don't know that the old gentleman was blind, but I know that his great great great grandfather Adam was. I know that Adams eyes were put out in that hour.

When he looked upon the fruit and found it very desirable and did take and did eat and knew that he was naked. In the hour that he saw that he was naked, he ceased to see God and eternal things. And here all down the centuries later, there was one of his poor, blind descendants still blind and this one physically blind, and he was sitting by the highway side begging. Now not everybody in Palestine was a beggar, though there were many of them. And not everybody in Chicago is a beggar when it comes to the the economic or social side of it. But everybody is a beggar. After all, when you go really back to the root of things, I wonder where we get our pride. Human pride grows like dandelions or ragweed. It doesn't have to have any reason for growing.

Moody told about the little girl who took chips and strung them on a string and put them around her neck in the slums and strutted around among the other little girls who didn't have any little string of chips around her neck. And Moody illustrated the fact that human pride doesn't have to have an origin or a source nor a reason, it just grows there indigenously. It doesn't come from anywhere. It's simply there.

And there isn't a one of us, not a one of us from President Eisenhower down to the poorest tramp that's sitting tonight with his feet hanging over the curb, half-drunk down on Skid Row, not one, but is a supplant at the gate of God Almighty. He sits a beggar on the highway of life. He sits in this great city of the curse, a blind man begging. There isn't a one I tell you, the prince of Monaco or the Queen of England, or any of the great and mighty whose names are on the front of Time Magazine and in all the newspapers, not a one of them, but dwells in the city of the curse and is blind, and begging. Because they beg every breath of air from God and there isn't a breath of air that God doesn't give them.

And God says their breath is in their nostrils. That Old Testament passage was always to me, the most, most significant and meaningful passage. He told the man of God, he said, don't be afraid of that fellow. His breath is in his nostrils. Take his breath out of his nostrils for a minute and a half and he's finished. That's all there is to him, His breath in his nostrils. And where does he get it? He borrows it from God Almighty, begs it from God. And the water that composes his body, 70% of it

he gets and begs from God Almighty. And the food that he takes in to nourish his tissues, he begs from God Almighty.

And the light of reason that blazes in his brain is borrowed or begged from God Almighty. And everything that he has he got from God. That's why, it seems to me that pride is a cancer on the human soul. Because it is a wild indigenous growth that doesn't belong there and shouldn't be there. Because there's nobody that has anything to be proud of. Why should the spirit of a mortal be proud? Like a fast flying meteor, a fast flying cloud, flash of the lightning or breaking the wave and he goes from his home to his rest in the grave. That was one of Lincoln's favorite poems. And it's still true. So, what have we to be proud of? And isn't that the way all of us are?

Now we're living in high times, and everybody's making more money than he should. And we're spending it faster than we should and we're living, we call it the American way of life and a high standard of living. Our fathers would have called it extravagance carried to the point of sin. But be that as it may, we're very likely to get the idea that we amount to something. And one of the sweetest and most wonderful things that can happen to you and me is to find out we're not. That we dwell in a world that lies under the shadow of a curse.

It's hard to believe that this beautiful land of ours with its broad highways and its flowing rivers and its smoking factory chimneys and its millions of automobiles running into billions of dollars and its great halls of learning, ivy clad and its great newspapers and its music and its radio and television and all the rest. It's hard to believe that this lovely, great world of ours lies under the shadow of a curse, but it does. For God's said to man that the day that thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die and said to man afterwards, with the sweat of your face you shall earn your daily bread.

So, we live under the shadow of a curse. We ought to live our lives remembering that. Don't let anybody kid you out of it. Don't let any positive thinkers or any of these pepper uppers and cheerer uppers think you out of it. We live in a country and in a land and in a race that's under the shadow of a curse and a threat of judgment to come. Well, that was Bartimaeus. That isn't the type and I don't claim it is a type. It's merely an illustration and that's all I'm doing with it tonight. But here was the man Bartimaeus. And he heard it was Jesus of Nazareth. When he heard it was Jesus, I tried to think tonight about this and how many there were that heard it was Jesus of Nazareth?

I remember a passage that moved me very greatly. I can get blessed. The old brother said, God blesses me on slight provocation. And I can get blessed on some of the most unlikely passages. There is one in the fifth chapter of Acts that said that when He had seated Himself, He opened His mouth. And I thank God for the last, I guess, 25 years that Jesus Christ ever opened his mouth? What would it have been like if Jesus kept His mouth shut? If He had never opened His mouth. If He being God Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible, had

been incarnated in the form of a man, who had grown to manhood, and then looked the human race over and been shocked into silence. What a tragic, terrible, irreparable loss to the human race. But He opened his mouth.

Thank God, He opened his mouth. And He opened His mouth, and He taught people and He said things. He opened His mouth, and He corrected the errors. He opened His mouth, and He spiked lies. He opened His mouth and He let in life. He opened His mouth, and He informed us. He opened His mouth, and He instructed us. He opened His mouth. Now, I'm blessed on that passage that Jesus Christ came to the world and opened his mouth.

But why wouldn't He? He was called the Word. And the Word was made flesh to dwell among us, and why wouldn't the word open His mouth? There is no such thing as a silent word. How could there be, since that word means an uttered thought, not a word printed, but an uttered thought? Then he had to open His mouth. And when He opened His mouth, you know, the first word He uttered? Tell me. In that fifth chapter, blessed, blessed, blessed. The first word He uttered was blessed. Of course it would be blessed. Here was the Blessed One come from the realm of the blessed to bless mankind. So, His first word He uttered when He opened his mouth was blessed.

Well, now I see another passage here that he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth. And I have been wondering how many there were that heard about that, that Jesus was in that city of the curse. He would have been morally justified if He had withdrawn from the city of the curse and gone to the temple and gone to the holy place and sat down between the wings of the cherubim. The Ark of the Covenant was not there at the moment. But He could have gone into that holy place, and there dwelt the only clean and living place there was, but He didn't. He was seen walking around among people seeing where the people were.

One of the tricks of the devil is to frighten us by self-accusation. We always think other people are better than we are. And that if everybody was like us there wouldn't be any Christians. And we know ourselves so well and we know our faults and flaws as sinners. And then we say, well, surely God wouldn't be interested in you and me. But the simple fact is that is exactly what Jesus Christ came to get interested in. He was interested and that's what brought Him to the world in the first place because we were sinners. For He said in verse 45, again, I repeat, the Son of Man didn't come to be ministered unto and be carried around on a golden chair. He came to minister and give His life a ransom for many and naturally He went wherever they were.

Hospitals, nobody wants to go to a hospital. I don't like the smell of a hospital. It's a clean smell but it's suggestive of pains and nausea and troubles. And I don't like jails, but I'm sure the Lord Jesus Christ mingled there. I'm sure He's there. A lot of people don't hear that he's there. But this fellow heard this, Junior here, this Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus. He heard about it. And he heard the Jesus of Nazareth passed by.

I wondered what the history of the world would have been like if nobody had ever heard that Jesus was passing by at all? I've never heard if Washington hadn't heard and Lincoln hadn't heard and Franklin hadn't heard, although Franklin never became a Christian. He was yet very far over on the side of God, because he'd heard that Jesus Christ passed by. Emerson never was a Christian, in the sense of being a born-again Christian. But somebody had said that if Emerson went to hell, the migration was set in that direction. He was such a wonderful man because he'd had all the influence of Jesus who passed by.

And so, we have Jesus of Nazareth. Up in heaven, I'm sure somebody's going to compose a song if they haven't done it already. And I'm sure that among the ransomed up there, the name Jesus of Nazareth is going to be the theme of some great, great oratorical--Jesus of Nazareth. And this man heard about it, and so he began to cry out. He began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

Now, here was a blind man and yet he was crying for mercy. He had theological and spiritual insight enough to know that no matter what he wanted from God, it had to come by mercy. David said, have mercy upon me, O Lord, and hear my prayer. Why did he say, have mercy upon me and hear my prayer? My brother, it's the mercy of God that every inclines His ear unto you. You've never earned it. And even as a Christian, if you are a Christian, even as a Christian, you have not lived so as to put God under obligation to hear you. If God hears you at all, it will be because He's a merciful God.

My old friend Tom Hare said, I don't believe in merit praying. I don't believe that anything comes because we have meritorious prayer. And he said, I don't believe in meritorious faith. He said, everything flows out of the goodness of God. And if we would see that our prayers would be stepped up in quality and quantity vary greatly, if we would only realize that everything flows out of the goodness of God. You don't have to beg a fountain to flow. The fountain flows because it wants to flow, and God gives because He wants to give an answer because He wants to answer. And it's all of His mercy that all these things are done. Jesus of Nazareth had come, and He cried, Son of David, have mercy on me.

And here was a poor blind man trying to get delivered. A poor blind man wanting help from God and not knowing how. He had never seen a sunset. He had heard the song of a bird and only had to imagine what it looked like. He'd heard the voices of his friends and had to imagine what they looked like. His was a world of the imagination, and he had never seen the sun rise nor go down. He'd never seen the waves lap and play on the lake or flow on the Jordan. He had never seen anything, and he was blind. He knew that he didn't have anything to offer God and he didn't come and whimper to God and complain. And he didn't come and say, Lord, why did you treat me like this? And he didn't come and say, Lord, I'm not such a bad fellow.

You know, lots of people go to hell because they say they're not so bad. They're not so bad. And if anybody starts to pray and make a sinner out of them, they bristle up and their hackles rise up their back. And they say, now, wait a minute here. Don't condemn me. I'm not a bum. No, but here was a man who wasn't a bum either, but when he came to God, he said, have mercy upon me, O God, have mercy upon me. He asked the Lord's mercy. He didn't bring a thing.

The Lord had received you if you come bringing nothing. You go and pick up some scraps and try to bring God a present, the Lord will reject you just as He rejected Cain. He received an Abel because Abel brought a lamb, but the Lamb has been brought once for all and you don't have to even bring a lamb. You only come because the Lamb was there. He died and rose and lives again.

Well, notice again now that many charged him that he should hold his peace and I've wondered about this. Here was a poor blind fellow. He wanted to see more than he wanted anything else in the wide world just then. And here was Jesus surrounded by elders and deacons, potential elders and deacons and secretaries and big shots and people that more or less fronted for Him, self-appointed fellows, officious Peter, and officious John. They were fronting for the Lord, you know, like a small-town policeman when the big, important person arrives. And they were running ahead for Jesus.

And here through all the noise and the excitement, there went the high, thin voice of a blind man, Son of David, have mercy on me. And of course, that wasn't right. It wasn't the way it said in the books of discipline. And it wasn't the way our dear beloved Brother so and so used to do it. And so they said, hush, hush, hush, and Peter ran over and they ran over and said, quiet there boy, quiet there down, down, don't you know Who this is? Now, why is it that society will stand by and let you go to hell and oppose you as soon as you start to cry out, God have mercy on me. I want to ask you why that is? Anybody here knows that.

A family rearing a young fellow, they let him go out and play pool and never put a block in his way. They let him go out and bowl and run around nights and come in three in the morning and never say no. And they let him go down and stand on the corner and smoke and run with a gang he shouldn't run with and never say no.

But if it gets converted from listening to the Salvation Army and comes home with a New Testament and says I've been saved, they look at each other shake their heads and say, what's happened to our boy? I know because that happened in my house. My dear old Presbyterian Mother, God bless her memory. She's in heaven now. She got converted later. But she was horrified beyond all measure when I started seek God and testify on the street and preach the gospel.

And here we have it. He was lying there. He's lying there blind. They never looked in his direction, never once looked in his direction. There he was blind, and nobody said, poor, blind fellow. Peter didn't say to John, isn't that too bad, that fine looking boy there blind. Not a one of them, not one of them. And nobody cared that he was blind. Nobody cared that he was blind. They only cared when he started to ask God to deliver him from his blindness. Nobody cares that a man sins provided he doesn't sin by taking something away from them, or endangering them. But as soon as he starts to talk about mercy and grace in the blood of the Lamb, everybody raises his eyebrows and says, something wrong there. What's the matter? Let him alone. Let Jesus alone.

Jesus didn't come into the world to be let alone. He came into the world to be surrounded by blind men, and touched by blind men. And touched by women with issues of blood. He came into the world to touch the dead and make them live and touch the deaf and make them hear. That's what He came into the world for. He's not as touchy as church deacons, Brother, and he's not as hard to get to as pastors are. He came in to the world; He was here. The Son of man, He didn't come to be ministered unto. He came to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.

Well, there we have the picture. Many charging that he should hold his peace. And you know, that's the end of it for some people. They hear a gospel sermon. They hear something on the radio. They read a tract, or they hear the testimony of a friend and they get concerned. They go home and mention it to their parents, or a man hears it mentioned to his wife, or a wife hears it mentioned that to her husband, or a brother mentions it to his sister, a sister to her brother and a frozen countenance results. And immediately they draw in and say, well, I'm not going to cause trouble in my home. That's the end. That's the last you hear of him, but little old Junior, thank God, you couldn't stop him. Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, named after his dad. You couldn't stop him. So, it says here and I'm glad this is here.

I think God had a smile on his face when he told Mark to write this. But Bartimaeus cried the more, a great deal. All you had to do to get him to yell louder than ever was try to silence him. All he knew was nobody had been interested in him before. But now that he was asking for help from God, everybody suddenly got interested.

They say if you give the devil enough rope, he'll hang himself and he sure hung and swung high and dry with Bartimaeus because it was the devil that inspired these poor, misguided people to try to silence this man, and he cried out the great deal the more, Son of David have mercy on me. And works like that with some people, oppose him and you've helped them very greatly. They thrive on opposition, Bartimaeus did. So, when they said, shush, be quiet Bartimaeus, don't bother this great man. He said, if he's a great man that's just why I ought to bother him, and he shouted the louder.

What about you, Sir? Ah, you will live in a home where there's not much religion and what it is, it's very formal and seasonal and very proper. But you know, you're blind and you need the mercy of

God. You know there are vistas of truth you have not seen. You know your sins are still on you as a great burden. You know you're still carrying the weight of woe of an ancestral grief upon your heart down the centuries that has come rolling like a great juggernaut, rolling down the years, crushing generation after generation. And you felt the squeeze and pressure of it, enough to kill you.

And you would like to know for yourself that God saved you; you'd like to have help from the Lord yourself. And you start to cry out, O God, please. Is there a God somewhere? If there is, maybe is that what I heard on the air there from Moodys, WMBI, about the Lord coming to save people; that book I read, that tract I picked up, that testimony from that fellow where I work. Lord, is this true? Then immediately your friends, so called, are on your neck.

Let me tell you something, Junior, young fellow, let me tell you something. Anybody that gets in your way and stands between you and Jesus Christ, isn't your friend. Do you hear me? She, He isn't your friend. You say, but she's pretty. So was Eve. Did you ever think what a beautiful woman Eve was? Fresh from the hand of God and God never made an ugly thing. She must have been a wonderful looking lady. Grandma Eve, must have been beautiful when she stood up and shook her long hair, looked up at the sun in the first brightness of her lovely, female beauty. She was pretty too, but she wrecked Adam, and the big stoop was weak enough to let her do it. Weak enough to let a pretty wife ruin him. All he had to say was, woman, get away with that.

Job later had more sense that Adam had. When Job's wife tried to get him to curse God and die, he said, you speak like a fool woman. Why should I curse God? God's been good to me and all I have or got from God, I came into the world naked, and I will go out naked and blessed be the name of the Lord. And she walked off and left him and that's the last she appears in the picture. All Adam would have had to do would be to assert his manhood and the Fall wouldn't have taken place. But she was pretty and that pretty thing stands between you and Jesus Christ is one of your worst enemies.

You say, I'm a woman. I'm a girl. Oh, how I thrill and get duck bumps on my forearms when I look at him, handsome, tall, wonderful, deep bass voice, wonderful. But if he's standing between you and Jesus Christ. Woman, he's not your friend. He's your enemy. Don't call him boyfriend anymore. Call him by his right name. He's your enemy. And everybody that gets in the way of a blind man and a Savior, is an enemy of the blind man. But Jesus stood still, and he commanded him and called, they call the blind man, commanded him to be called, and they called the blind man and then everybody got over on the other side.

Peter ran and said, all right, come on, come on. He wanted to be in it, you know, and said get up. He comes. Come on. Be of good comfort. He's calling thee, and he jumped up, cast away His garments, symbolic, maybe of the robe of filthy rags that all sinners wear by nature, and he came to Jesus. You notice he didn't enter Bible school. You notice that he didn't join the church. You notice that

he didn't study theology. I think it only took three words to say it, and yet it was all he needed at the moment. He came to Jesus.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, what did Jesus answer there? He answered that prayer. He answered that cry. Well, He said, Bartimaeus, what do you want? He didn't just want a vague prayer. Bless the missionary's father and remember all the interest in our prayers, none of that vague woozy praying. He said, what do you want Bartimaeus? And Bartimaeus prayed about the only thing he knew about. He said, Lord, I've been blind and I'm sick of not seeing, that I might receive my sight.

Now, there might have been things Bartimaeus wanted or needed worse, but he didn't know it. And the Lord took him where He found him. So, he said, I want to receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, thy faith has made thee whole.

Now, here was a transaction; it would have taken three tons of printed matter and three or four advance man and newspaper advertisements and radio announcements and four or five typewriters and three or four mimeograph machines and three or four sounds scribes to get that fellow converted. But Jesus just did with the simplest, most effortless way in the wide world. Here was the perfect setup. God couldn't have done any better. Here was a sinner and the Savior. One came to the other and that was that. It didn't cost anybody. He had died. No offering had to be taken. Nobody had to get up and say, dear friends, it's very expensive. This is very expensive,

There used to be a preacher where I was preaching. He'd get up every night and told the audience, he said, advertising, et cetera, and I always felt, I was young, and he was old, so I didn't, but I always felt like saying, Brother Patterson, why do you use so much et cetera around here if it's such expensive stuff? But he was always taking an offering to make up for the et cetera. Well, pay for the stuff. Jesus didn't have any, you notice. He didn't have any et cetera here at all. Just a blind man and a Savior, a sinner and the Man who'd come to save him; a dying man and the Man who'd come to die, to give him life, that's all there was to it, and you know, that's all there is to it here tonight. That's how simple it is. No handsome fellow to beg like a salesman. We don't need that. We don't need it, the Holy Ghost is here. Jesus came, this Jesus of Nazareth is passing by and here He is. And He's listening in. His ear is all cocked ready to hear that voice, have mercy on me.

He won't ask your theology. He won't say, are you an Arminian, or do you favor the Calvinistic way. He won't ask that. I don't think God ever took those two words into his mouth. I think He would scorn to take them in his mouth. He just wants to know, are you blind and is there something in your heart that wants to see so that you can taste it? Well, that's all you need, Sir. That's all you need. You're a sinner. You're bound by habit. You're beaten and cuffed and kicked around by iniquity. And Somebody's here Who came for that very, very thing to help you. And all He has to know is what you want. A lot of vague praying won't help you a bit. Get down on your

knees and go launch into long prayer you heard a Baptist Deacon years ago deliver. That won't help be a bit.

What do you want? Well, Lord God, I want to be delivered from drink. Lord God, I want to be delivered from habits. Lord, I want to be delivered from sin. Lord, I want to be saved. That's all you have to say. Just say. Jesus said unto him, go thy way. Thy faith has made them whole. And immediately, immediately one of Mark's favorite words, immediately he received his sight.

And then, do you know what followed? Do you know what happened? He followed Jesus in the way. He did it. It was a perfectly natural thing to do, that if you were blind a lifetime and somebody came along and met all your hopes and gave you eyesight and you had known after a life of blindness and nobody caring and you begging on, sitting on a mat begging and you know you had no friends, where would you go? Who would you go to? Wouldn't it be perfectly natural to identify yourself with the one that had set you free and given you sight? Sure, it would.

There's the psychology of Christian discipleship. We find we got no friends. I know better than that kind of English, but it just came out. We have no friends. There just aren't any. Brother, there's One. And when He sets you free, it's perfectly natural to identify yourself with Him. Well, there's one Friend. So, the Scripture says, he followed Jesus in the way.

So, I'm going to close my Bible and ask you to look at that pretty picture. Jesus walking down the street, and his puzzled disciples, off a bit from Him. And right behind Him as close as he could get, a blind man. The handsomest, most attractive and most beautiful thing he ever saw was Jesus' back. He didn't look up and see the blue sky and write a sonnet. He didn't gaze at the mountains there in the distance. He looked at the back of the One he loved. Just the profile of Jesus, as he walked away was more wonderful to him than all the cedars of Lebanon, or the flowing waters of the Jordan. Nothing, nothing was as dear as Jesus. Why? Because he had been blind, and Jesus had made him see. That's the simplicity of it.

Isn't it a shame we get so involved and complicated and all complex and mixed up? When the simplest thing in the wide world is, I am a blind sinner in need of mercy, and Jesus Christ is a Savior come to give me that mercy, and we meet. And I follow Him because He's delivered me. The old bishop said, as I get older, my theology gets simpler. It's this. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. That's all. Will you bow your heads with me.