

Glorifying God

Bible Background • MARK 10:46-52; LUKE 18:35-43

Printed Text • MARK 10:46-52 | Devotional Reading • JAMES 5:13-18

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will COMPARE and contrast spiritual and physical blindness, APPRECIATE how God is attentive and responds to our needs, and PRACTICE reaching out to those who are marginalized by society.

In Focus

Herman and Shelly Johnson had just moved to the area two months ago. They hadn't even been able to find a church family yet before the tornado hit. The Johnsons had lost so much. Their roof had blown off, drenching everything inside, as Herman and Shelly huddled in the re-enforced basement.

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, the Johnsons prayed for a few things they specifically needed. There was no way they could pay to repair the damages without a steady income, which was proving difficult since both the beauty shop where Shelly had worked and Herman's instruments had been destroyed in the tornado. Daily, they prayed together for a guitar so Herman could perform at gigs again and an open chair where Shelly could continue work as a beautician. God came through with just what they needed. The woman who worked in the chair next to Shelly invited them to her church where the Johnsons were welcomed into the new church family.

Now, a year later, Herman and Shelly were finally finished recovering their losses. It had required persistence with their insurance company to get them to pay all they were supposed to, but the Johnsons had stood up for themselves. They could never replace the exact things the storm had blown away, but they were going to praise God for helping them back to their feet. They would live their lives here on out more thankful for God's blessings.

How has God answered a specific prayer of yours?

Keep in Mind

"For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands" (2 Corinthians 5:1, NLT)

Words You Should Know

A. Cry out (v. 47) krazo (Gk.) — To shout out loudly

B. Hold His Peace (v. 48) siopao (Gk.) — To keep quiet, stop talking (even though you have something to say)

Say It Correctly

Bartimaeus. bar-tih-MAY-us.

Perea. peh-RAY-ah.

KJV

Mark 10:46 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.

NLT

Mark 10:46 Then they reached Jericho, and as Jesus and his disciples left town, a large crowd followed him. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) was sitting beside the road.

47 When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

48 "Be quiet!" many of the people yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

49 When Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, "Tell him to come here." So they called the blind man. "Cheer up," they said. "Come on, he's calling you!"

50 Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked. "My Rabbi," the blind man said, "I want to see!"

52 And Jesus said to him, "Go, for your faith has healed you." Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus down the road.

The People, Places, and Times

Jericho. A city about fifteen miles east from Jerusalem, near the Jordan River, Jericho was the home of a large population of priests who served the temple in Jerusalem. The tax collector Zacchaeus also lived in Jericho (Luke 19). It was the first city Joshua's forces destroyed as they occupied the Promised Land (Joshua 6:20). Joshua spoke a curse upon anyone who dared to rebuild it, but it was rebuilt anyway, again becoming an important trading center.

Jesus' Titles. The crowd calls Him "Jesus of Nazareth" (v. 47), recognizing His humanity and the city of His upbringing. Bartimaeus calls Him "Son of David" (vv. 47–48), recognizing His Jewish heritage and perhaps His royal lineage. Bartimaeus also calls Jesus "Rabboni" which means "my teacher" (v. 51). Rabbi is the highly respected position of a master spiritual teacher in Jewish society. Bartimaeus calls himself Jesus' pupil, even though they have not met before. The only other time this title is used in Scripture is when Mary Magdalene first recognizes Jesus after the Resurrection.

Which of Jesus' names and titles are striking to you and why?

Background

As He leaves Jericho, Jesus is closing the second phase of His ministry. He is on His way to Jerusalem where, as He has prophesied, He will be condemned by His own people and then handed over to the Roman authorities who will treat Him cruelly and crucify Him. However, Jesus assured His disciples that His death was not His final destiny and that on the third day He would be resurrected (Mark 10:33–34). In a sense, Bartimaeus's blindness is a metaphor that can be applied to all of Chapter 10. In the discussion of divorce in 10:1–12, the Pharisees and the disciples were blind to God's view of the importance of the family. In 10:13–16, the disciples were blind to the significance of children; in 10:17–31, the rich, young ruler and the disciples were blind to the importance of the kingdom; and in 10:32–34 the disciples were blind to the meaning of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection (see Luke 18:34). Immediately before Bartimaeus's account, the disciples again display their blindness in their desire for supremacy in the kingdom of God (Mark 10:35–45). So the healing of Bartimaeus's blindness is a fitting close to this whole chapter on blindness.

In what ways is spiritual blindness like physical blindness? Where does spiritual blindness leave you?

At-A-Glance

1. Faith Uses Available Resources (Mark 10:46–47)
2. Faith Answers Objections (vv. 48–50)
3. Faith Makes Specific Requests (vv. 51–52)

In Depth

1. Faith Uses Available Resources (Mark 10:46–47)

We do not know if Bartimaeus was expecting Jesus or if he just happened to be in the right place at the right time to exercise his faith. It seems obvious that he knew who Jesus was and had probably heard about His healing powers. Jesus was already known to heal diseases with seemingly no cure, like the deaf and mute man from Decapolis (7:31–37). He had even cured the blindness of another man in Bethsaida (8:22–26). When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he used his available resources to get Jesus' healing. He could not see, but he could hear. So he used his ears. He could not see, but he could think. So he used his brain to recall Jesus' reputation. He could not see, but he could use his voice. So he cried out loudly, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me" (10:47).

2. Faith Answers Objections (vv. 48–50)

Some people in the crowd tried to quiet Bartimaeus. He was a lowly beggar in their eyes, and Jesus was an important teacher. But Bartimaeus would not be quiet, primarily because he knew that the people who were shushing him could afford to be quiet because they could see! He continued calling until Jesus responded. When Jesus answers by sending Bartimaeus a call of his own, the blind man immediately tosses his outer garment aside, putting away any hindrance or extra baggage that might slow him from rushing to answer the Master's call. Even though many on the outskirts of society ask for help, we are often too busy to help them. Praise God that He is so grand and important that He can always make time for the lowly.

Bartimaeus boldly ignored the crowd and sought Jesus. How do you do this in your life?

3. Faith Makes Specific Requests (vv. 51–52)

Jesus asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" (v. 51). Brother Bart didn't hem and haw; he said immediately, "I want to see again." Actually, this was Bartimaeus's second request. His first request was for mercy (v. 48). Now that his cry for mercy had caught Jesus' attention, he proceeded to ask for healing. When we want Jesus' attention, we should not scream about our virtues, talents, resources, or assets. Ask Him for mercy. If He gives you mercy, as He certainly will, He will surely give you everything that goes along with it.

Search the Scriptures

1. What were Bartimaeus's two requests (vv. 47–48, 51)?
2. What was Bartimaeus's response when he received his sight (v. 52)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Are you quick to tell others what the Lord has done for you? Practice telling a story about how God blessed you recently.
2. Do you follow Jesus out of gratitude for what He has done or merely out of religious obligation? Is Christianity just an easy path for you or do you follow it with purpose?

Liberating Lesson

Immediately upon receiving his sight, Bartimaeus follows Jesus. People who were once marginalized by society became powerful witnesses for Jesus after an encounter with Him (Mark 1:45; 5:20; John 4:39-42; 20:18). How do we as the Church uplift those in the margins—the learning challenged, the differently-abled, the disadvantaged—so that they can know the love and power of God? Let us seek to introduce people with both physical and spiritual challenges to Jesus, for Jesus says those who have been forgiven much love much.

Application for Activation

Read today's key verse: "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" (Mark 10:51). How would you answer Jesus' question? Pray silently, voicing that desire to God.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Mark 10:46-52

The narrative of Bartimaeus and Jesus in Mark's Gospel is one of two healing stories about people who are blind. Both events are reminders of how the disciples were blind as to who Jesus is as the Messiah. They did not understand that Jesus was headed toward Jerusalem that His purpose as the Messiah would be fulfilled. His impending death and resurrection were closer than the disciples knew or could comprehend. The healing of Bartimaeus's sight occurs during the last three months of Jesus' ministry—between the Festival of the Dedication (John 10:22-28) and his arrival in Jerusalem for Passover. His reputation had been firmly established by that time (vv. 40-42). Jesus and the disciples had crossed over into Jericho from Perea. Before reaching Jerusalem, Jesus and the disciples walked through Jericho. Jericho was a busy city with many attractions for all who visited and lived there. Jericho is also the setting for the popular and painful story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

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.

Jesus and the disciples walked along the highway. As they walked along the road, a man named Bartimaeus, who was blind, was sitting there. He was begging for money. In Bartimaeus's day, it was thought blindness represented that you had sinned, and you were cursed by God. Jesus' restoring sight to the blind is contrary to this belief (cf. Matthew 20:34; John 9:2-3). Three of the four gospels, Matthew (20:29-34), Mark (10:46-52), and Luke (18:35-43), tell the narrative of a blind man, Jesus, and the blind man's healing. In Matthew, he states that he was another blind man begging with him, and Luke identifies him only as "the blind man." Mark is the only writer that identifies the man by name. Scholars have noted that Bartimaeus' name is a combination of Greek and Aramaic. His father's name Timaeus is Greek, meaning honorable or worthy, and the added prefix Bar, meaning son. The combination of a Greek name with an Aramaic prefix is not found anywhere else in the Bible.

Bartimaeus is the son of Timaeus and is sitting by the highway, begging for money. Begging was his full-time job. According to some scholars, he was known in the community. The article "the" before "son of Timaeus" highlights that he is a recognized person. Because he was blind, finding a different type of job would be challenging—most jobs required that you be physically able to move and see what you are doing. As a beggar, Bartimaeus was dependent on the gifts and generosity of others to earn a living. Bartimaeus's status as a blind and begging man was not unusual. Beggars were common in Jericho as well as people who had a debilitating disease or a limiting disability. Seeing beggars on the highways and streets is not a rare experience even today in most cities and towns.

What makes Bartimaeus different from the other beggars are his future actions and how others respond?

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.

Bartimaeus does not know who is walking in his direction until he hears Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus' popularity had grown because of His healing, teaching, and showing compassion to many. They believed in Him. Biblical scholars do not know how long Bartimaeus had begged to make a living, but it is clear that he knew about Jesus. Bartimaeus believed that Jesus could change his life if He gave him sight. Although other people were around him, Bartimaeus only wanted Jesus. He cries out (Gk. *krazo*, KROD-zo) to Jesus. He does not weep with tears or whimper in worry; this word means he shouts out loudly. Bartimaeus addresses Him using the title, "Son of David," as he asks for mercy (healing).

The phrase "Son of David" indicates Jesus is from the royal lineage of David. The title also qualifies Jesus to rule as Messiah (Matthew 9:27; 12:23; 15:22). The title "Son of David" is a title that Matthew uses eleven times for his Jewish readers, while Mark only uses it once, and Luke twice. Both Mark and Luke's Gospels are for Gentile readers. Bartimaeus is clear that Jesus is the Messiah who radically can change his life.

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.

Many people standing near Bartimaeus wanted him to “hold his peace” (Gk. siopao, see-oh-PAH-oh). The more they told him to keep quiet and stop talking, the louder and more insistent he became. He refused to stop shouting for Jesus. He repeats his desperate outcry to Jesus, “Thou son of David, have mercy on me,” to the chagrin and irritation of the people around him. Bartimaeus shows us how to come boldly before God with our requests (Hebrews 4:16), without fear of being ignored or mocked. Christ always has time for us. Bartimaeus also reminds us that when we want to have a deeper relationship with Jesus, we should give all of who we are. The boldness of Bartimaeus is reflective of the woman who would not leave until the judge granted her request (Luke 18:1–8) or the persistent neighbor who wanted bread to feed his guest (Luke 11:5–8). Giving up on getting Jesus was not Bartimaeus’s plan or focus. Crying out to Jesus, and Jesus acknowledging his presence and situation, meant something better than what he was experiencing had to happen.

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.

Jesus heard Bartimaeus calling for him and stopped walking. Jesus hears Bartimaeus’s pleading for help despite all the noise, people, and activity happening. Next, Jesus asked for him to come to where He was. Jesus wanted to see him. He also wanted everyone else to witness what would happen. Based on the text, Bartimaeus did not have family or friends helping him. We do not read or hear of any of his friends working together to help Bartimaeus receive his healing. No family or friends, like the courageous friends who tore the roof off of a house so their friend could receive Jesus’ healing (Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26). He was again dependent on the people around him. The same people who told him to be quiet were helping him walk to Jesus. They told him some good news so he could “be of good comfort” (Gk. tharseo, thar-SEH-oh). This word is often used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to translate the phrase “Do not be afraid.” The people who were just telling him to quiet his bold shouts for attention now tell Bartimaeus to be bold and approach Jesus. Nevertheless, he is optimistic because Jesus wants to see him. He needs to get up now and go where Jesus is. Bartimaeus’s determination to call out to Jesus had paid off. He was ready to have Jesus grant him mercy and the healing that only Jesus could give. Bartimaeus throws off his garment (Gk. himation, hee-MAH-tee-on, a warm outer cloak), jumped to his feet, and went directly to Jesus. He did not procrastinate in going to Jesus. Like Bartimaeus, we need to move when Jesus responds to our calls.

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.

Jesus asks Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do?" He already knows what Bartimaeus deeply desires and needs; He is the omniscient God. Jesus would sometimes ask questions of people to reveal the truth of what they wanted or their thoughts. For example, Jesus asked the man at the pool of Bethesda, "Do you want to be whole?" (John 5:16), and the disciples, "Why are you afraid?" during a mighty windstorm (Matthew 8:26). Jesus' questions are questions that we may find ourselves answering today in challenging times. The questions and our answers are prompts to trust and talk to Jesus in our most vulnerable states.

Bartimaeus answers Jesus' question by stating he wants to see. Jesus first responds by giving a direct action to do, "Go" (Gk. hupago, hoo-PAH-go). Jesus expects nothing in return from Bartimaeus; He fulfills his request and tells him to go on his way. Then, he tells Bartimaeus that his faith has healed him. His eyes are opened, and his vision is perfect. Bartimaeus does not walk away or run to the nearest Temple. Instead, he walks with Jesus along the road. Bartimaeus's courage and resolve to interact with Jesus represents character strengths; we, too, can develop and exercise toward Jesus. When we cannot see the end of whatever we are going through, we need to believe that Jesus is with us. Bartimaeus is a guide that sometimes we have to wait for Jesus to respond to our questions, our concerns. When Jesus does answer, we should be prepared to say or do what we want in faith and continue following Jesus.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Blind Eyes Shall Be Opened
(Isaiah 35:1-6)

TUESDAY

Declare God's Glory Among the Nations!
(Psalm 96)

WEDNESDAY

Glory to God's Name Alone
(Psalm 115:1-3, 9-18)

THURSDAY

Only God Is Good
(Mark 10:17-22)

FRIDAY

Greatness through Servanthood
(Mark 10:42-45)

SATURDAY

Praise the Lord, O My Soul
(Psalm 146)

SUNDAY

Praise God for Healing
(Mark 10:46-52)