



## **Mark 10:46-52** **“Merit or Mercy”**

*[46] And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. [47] And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” [48] And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” [49] And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.” [50] And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. [51] And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.” [52] And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.*

Today is an important day in our study of the Life of Jesus in the gospel of Mark. Jesus is going to conclude his lengthy discourse on faith and discipleship and then make his entrance into Jerusalem, the city that will end his life. Jesus has been teaching the disciples what it was going to look like for them to follow him by faith. In the last two chapters Jesus has been getting very specific instructions on how a person is to enter into His Kingdom and then live as a normal Christian in the Kingdom of God.

But one thing you might miss, if you are just reading small chunks at a time (and most of us in our reading usually don't read more than a chapter at a time) is that Chapters 9 and 10 are a lesson in Juxtaposition. Mark has arranged these stories this way for a reason. He wants us to make comparisons. He wants us to see how the children understand Jesus more than the disciples do. He wants us to see how the rich young ruler, a man everyone expected to get special treatment from Jesus doesn't, but a blind beggar does. And so Today we are going to do just that. As we study Jesus' last healing in the book of Mark we are going to see another striking example of the upside down nature of Jesus Kingdom. There's only two primary ways to come to Jesus, one causes a person to walk away from Jesus sad, and the other causes a person to rejoice, and exult, and drop everything and follow Jesus. Not only that, but for those of us who have come to Jesus, there is still only two ways of living in his kingdom, one makes us very sad, and the other leads to joyful obedience.

What characterizes your walk with Jesus more? Sadness, frustration, disappointment, that was the way of the rich young ruler who was disheartened and walked away from Jesus sad. But today, we get a lesson in joy. We learn the secret of joyful obedience, what motivates us and fills us with Joy so that we have a spring in our step as we follow JESUS, even when we follow him into dark, and depressing situations. And this is what our city needs to see. They need to see normal Christians joyfully following Jesus.

V.46 - On the way to Jerusalem, they pass through Jericho. Jericho is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities on earth it lies 20 miles and 3,500 feet below Jerusalem to the Southwest. So they were literally going up, to Jerusalem like Jesus says in vs 33. Jesus is walking to Jerusalem and he has a large entourage following him. The text says, his disciples and a great crowd followed him. It likely looks and sounds like a parade passing through town. And in Jericho, sitting on the side of the road, is a blind man named Bartimaeus, who is begging.

Over the past several weeks Jesus has been teaching us that the Kingdom is an upside down kingdom. The people who would be normally be the most likely to be left out are actually the ones brought in. The demon possessed, the powerless, the outsider, the children, the poor. The last will be first. The great will be servants. The first will be slaves of all. And now we have a blind beggar who is literally sitting on the sidelines, he's unable to follow Jesus, he's unable to even see Jesus. But what's interesting (its kind of little narrative detail that you wouldn't pick up unless you were studying all the gospels at once, which is exactly what I have been doing in my seminary class at Midwestern over the past 8 weeks) is that Bartimaeus is the only person healed in Matthew, Mark, and Luke whose name is given. Mark finds this encounter with Jesus so important, that he wants everyone to know this blind beggars name. Think about that, this guy is literally on the sidelines of life. He's sitting on the side of the road. He's blind. He's so poor he has to beg. It's hard to think of a more powerless and vulnerable situation. Unable to see, unable to work, unable to contribute to society, so you are forced to sit on the side of the road and beg. The man has been dehumanized. He knows he's an outsider. He knows he's unworthy. He's intimately aware of his own insignificance, but Mark immortalizes him by placing his name in the most popular book in the history of the world (the Bible).

So this gives us a hint as to where we are going today. How do those outside the kingdom of God get inside? How do broken, sinful people, get healed and happy by Jesus? How do people who are stuck in life get unstuck? How do we find a purpose in life big enough to live for? -Bartimaeus answers all those questions for us.

V.47-48 - This blind beggar who no doubt has sat in the spot day after day for years has heard a commotion about this Jesus of Nazareth. He has heard of his miracles, he has heard of his deeds. And Bartimaeus does what few others have: He makes a connection, a connection between Jesus' deeds and the OT promised Messiah who would come through the line of David. And so, when Jesus walks by, He calls out to Jesus. He cries out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" But, the poor and powerless, especially beggars are usually seen as a nuisance. Beggars are a black eye on a city. They look bad, they often smell bad, they make people uncomfortable, and here Bartimaeus yelling causes many people to rebuke him. Be Quiet! Stop making a fuss! It seems the large majority of people were content to leave this man destitute on the side of the road. They have more important things to attend to and just want him to be quiet. But Bartimaeus refuses to stop. He yells even louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stops.

For those of us who are task oriented people, Jesus had a 20 mile hike with 3500 feet elevation gain ahead of him. He was on his way to Jerusalem to, you know, save humanity from their sins... that's a pretty important to-do list, but when this blind man, this nobody, this nuisance, interrupts his entourage, he stops, and calls this man to himself. For Jesus, the interruptions of his work was just as important as the work itself.

V.49 - Jesus stops and "calls him"

V.50 - This is a picture of faith. This is what faith looks like. It isn't mental assent. It isn't just cognitive. People say all the time, I have faith. I just have a private faith. Mark wants us to see that faith isn't inactive, it cannot be. Faith follows. True faith is responsive faith that throws off anything that gets in our way of following Jesus. The text says, he threw off his cloak, and sprang up and came to Jesus. This is faith. Hebrews 12:1, says that we are to "lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race set before us." That's what faith looks like, setting aside the things that entangle us, and slow us down, and keep us from following Jesus, spring up, and follow.

And this is where we start to see what is really going on in this encounter. Look what Jesus asks the blind beggar.

V.51 - That is the same question Jesus asked James and John last week. What do you want me to do for you? And James and John, two of his closest disciples said, we want glory. We want to sit at your right and your left when you come into your glory. But this man doesn't want "glory" – he wants normal. He wants to see. He wants to be a whole human being again. He wants to be re-humanized. I just want to be normal. And what is Jesus' response?

V.52 - This man gets healed. He gets re-humanized. But even more than that, he gets saved by Jesus and removed from the sidelines of life and put into the game. He gets healed and follows Jesus on the way. When verse 52 says that your faith has made you well, that greek word is sozo. It also means to save. This mans faith in Jesus doesn't just heal him of his blindness, it saves him from his spiritual blindness, and gives him the eyes of faith to not just treat Jesus like a healer, but to follow him "on the way" to Jerusalem.

Isn't this ironic? How does a blind man "see" Jesus more clearly than those with 20/20 vision? It takes eyes of faith to really see Jesus and know him as your Savior. And as we said last week, in order to truly know Jesus we must know ourselves, and to know ourselves we must know Jesus. Whats interesting here is that this blind beggar knows himself. What does he cry out? "Jesus, Son of David, have Mercy on me!" This man knows he's a beggar. He's also a spiritual beggar. He has nothing to offer Jesus. He couldn't follow Jesus, he was blind. He couldn't buy his way in, he was poor. He couldn't politic his way in, he was powerless. So he shouted for mercy. He begged for mercy. He was persistent for mercy. And God saved him and healed him, and he

followed Jesus. This is meant to bring us back two weeks to the Rich Young Ruler. The Rich Young Ruler comes to Jesus and says, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" He lived in a meritocracy.

If you come to Jesus, or you come to this church expecting to merit your way in, or expect someone to recognize how gifted you are, how deserving you are, how talented you are, or how you could really "help this church out" because you are so "mature", you are mistaken. I could get in trouble here, but you have to see, maturity really has nothing to do with your age. Nothing. We are probably the youngest church in town, but if you come in here and you're older and you think you're going to tell some people some things, and you're really going to help this church figure some things out, no. This is not a meritocracy, this is a mercy-ocracy. But if you come in here intimately aware of your own weaknesses and you have nothing to offer but the grace of Jesus, COME ON! WE NEED MORE! Because the Kingdom of God doesn't work on merit, it works on mercy.

A meritocracy is a kingdom that is built upon merit. The good achieve greatness. Hard work is rewarded. You merit your way into it. But Jesus says no, you cannot merit your way into my kingdom. My kingdom is for those who have realized they don't have the merit, they need mercy. Jesus kingdom is a mercy-ocracy. The Rich Young Ruler says, what must I do to be saved. Bartimaeus says, "Have mercy upon me!" Jesus tells a story about this very same thing in Luke 18:9-14, Two men enter the temple to pray. One is moral, one is not. One obeys all the rules, one does not. And the one who lives in the meritocracy, looks at the other one like a spiritual noob. He thinks he's a big slacker, and he says to God "God Thank you, I am not like other men, especially like that crook over there." But the crooked man, beat his breast and would not even look up to heaven and cried out saying "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" and Jesus says, the immoral man gets saved. He gets justified and freed from the penalty of his sin and the other man does not. Why? Because the kingdom of Jesus is mercy-ocracy and not a meritocracy. That prayer is almost identical to Bartimaeus' prayer and throughout the centuries has come to be known as the Jesus prayer. "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner."

This is the gospel. This is the essence of knowing Jesus for who he is, and knowing the reality about myself. Jesus is the LORD, He's the perfect son of God, and we are sinners in need of His mercy. If you come to Jesus expecting to merit your way into his kingdom or you expect him to recognize how deserving you are, or how gifted you are, and how you could really help his church out, you will never find the healing that this blind sinner found. That's why the Rich young Ruler walks away from Jesus sad. He wanted to Merit his way in, but Jesus gave him a standard that he couldn't obey. So he goes back to his money and his wealth, sad. But this poor blind man finds the only door into Gods kingdom, the mercy of Jesus. And he gets healed, saved, and then leaves everything and follows Jesus.

Bartimaeus goes From blind beggar to "called by the King" And this is the pathway for every Christian. All Christians transition their life to follow Jesus. See there

is no real disconnection between evangelism and discipleship. Bartimaeus shows us that saving faith takes us from spectators to participators: It saves us and sends us. He went from “by the roadside” to “on the way following Jesus”. This is a thrilling aspect to life with Jesus. He doesn’t just save us, and leave us the same way he found us. Jesus, as the author of all life, writes us into history (HIS-Story). When a person puts their faith in Jesus, they literally become a part of the greatest story the world has ever known. A story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Future Restoration. God is remaking the world, the entire Cosmos, and those who embrace Jesus Christ by faith get to play a part in that. They are no longer just spectators, they are now actors in Gods drama of redemption. - Or are you the starring role in your own story?

Starring in the role of your own story is like me telling my daughter after says she wants to be on Broadway someday, “Broadway is really hard... how about this baby, you get your neighbor friends, you go to the garage, you put on a play and we will come watch!” So we go, and we watch the play, and what is it? It’s TERRIBLE right!? Sure, it’s cute. But the props are a broom, moms sheet from the bed and other junk from around the house, it’s just a little kids program, right? But guess what? She had the starring role! Her name was (almost) up in lights (only it was just on written in sharpie on daddy’s white board). This is what you writing your own story looks like. But when you give up your story, the little play you can put on in the garage, and you become a part in God’s story, your name isn’t up in lights (though Bartimaeus name was immortalized forever), but you get a cameo. You get 30 to 40 years on this earth as a cameo in the story of God. But would you rather have a cameo in the greatest story ever told, or be the leading star in your garage performance? Because that is the reality, if you live for yourself you will die and be forgotten. But if you live for God you live for eternity in ever increasing joy and happiness! Do we have to deny ourselves? Yes we do. But we get drafted into the story God is writing and we get to tell others about life in the Kingdom, and see the become a part of it.

So, have you placed your faith in Jesus? Are you following him? Have you transitioned your life to follow Jesus? What does that mean? That means being an active part in His body, the church. It means doing life with a group of believers, reading the word, and letting it dwell deeply in you. It means sharing your faith with others and being a missionary to our city. Christians aren’t spectators, we are participators. This is one reason we do liturgy, because everyone participates.

Have you ever asked yourself why we get Mercy? When we cry out to Jesus, Have mercy on me a sinner! Why does He give us mercy? Why does say yes? Why does He grant mercy? Because Jesus Christ cried out on the Cross for mercy, and God said no. Jesus cried out, “My God, My God why have you forsaken me?” See, that’s what makes mercy possible. The punishment that we deserve for our sin, was placed on Jesus, and Jesus didn’t get any mercy. Jesus got strict justice so that we could receive mercy. That is why it’s so offensive to reject that mercy, and try to relate to God through your merits. You are saying to Jesus, your sacrifice wasn’t needed. I’ll figure it out on my own.