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Mark 10:46

**“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”**

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>48</sup>Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>49</sup>Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." <sup>50</sup>Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup>"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." <sup>52</sup>"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” These are powerful words filled with honesty and emotion. They are so powerful that Christians, for the past 2000 years, have used these words in the worship service. We sing these words in the Kyrie: “Lord, have mercy.” We say these words in the prayer, “Lord, in your mercy...” Even in the confession, we ask for God’s mercy.

Yet, I wonder if we actually know what these words mean. What are we asking for when we are asking for mercy? What is the mercy of God?

In our gospel reading, we see a picture of God’s mercy in the person of Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus is blind. Being blind, he has no position in society. He has no wife, no children, no future, and no chance. His life consists of sitting on the side of the road begging for alms. He is a beggar.

Bartimaeus is also a believer. We know this because of verse 47: “When Bartimaeus heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’” Notice what it says. The crowd said Jesus of Nazareth was coming; Bartimaeus replied, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”

“Son of David” is a theological phrase filled with great hope and expectation. In the Old Testament, the prophets spoke about David’s descendant who would bring both salvation and healing to his people. Ezekiel tells us:

You [the leaders of Israel] have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally... [because of this God says] I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice... I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be

their shepherd. I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken (Ezekiel 34:4, 16, 23-24).

Bartimaeus is making a huge claim about Jesus. Jesus is not simply a special person from Nazareth; Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of David.

How does Bartimaeus know this about Jesus? Is this a matter of dumb luck? Hardly! Faith comes by hearing. Sitting on the side of the road, Bartimaeus has been listening to the stories about Jesus. He knows that with Jesus there is more than meets the eye. He has heard about the teachings, miracles, and exorcisms. He has heard about Jesus' first sermon in the synagogue where Jesus said:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19).

Bartimaeus has been listening.

The irony is that Bartimaeus, who is blind, sees Jesus for who he is whereas the crowd sees Jesus as the teacher from Nazareth. Verse 48, "Many rebuked Bartimaeus and told him to be quiet..." Isn't this just like the crowd to get in the way of Jesus. It seems that people are always getting in the way of Jesus. It was a group of elders who tried to stop Jarius from bothering Jesus (5:35). Earlier in chapter 10, the disciples tried to hinder the children from coming to Jesus (10:13-16).

Are we any better? We do not hinder people from coming to Jesus; do we bring them? Do we go out of our ways to invite them?

On Wednesday, we had a funeral at the church and many people attending the service were not churchgoers. In fact, many wanted to stay in the narthex because they did not want to enter the sanctuary. Here we have the best news in the world. They get to hear that God loves sinners and that he conquers the grave. People should flock to hear this news. It was sad that so many did not want to enter the sanctuary. However, I was proud of the Fredrickson family for going out into the narthex and bringing people into the church. I was proud of Priscilla and Matt for playing music that was so inviting.

The crowd got in the way of Jesus. Thankfully, this did not hinder Bartimaeus. Verse 48 continues, "But Bartimaeus shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me" (10:48).

How can Jesus not have mercy? Jesus is the one who said, "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:9-11).

Jesus calls Bartimaeus and asks him what he wants. Verse 51, "What do you want me to do for you?" This is the very question Jesus asked James and John earlier in the chapter (10:36-38). They wanted to sit in glory on Jesus' right and left. They did not know what they were asking for. Bartimaeus did.

Bartimaeus does not want glory. Bartimaeus is pleading for mercy. He is doing what Moses did when God wanted to destroy the people. Moses stood before God and said, "Wait a minute, you made a promise and you are going to keep it."

By calling for mercy, Bartimaeus is holding God accountable for the promises that God has made. God you said on the day of salvation there will be healing of the blind. Jesus is your son. He is bringing salvation. So where is my sight? Where is your mercy?

Mercy is not wishful thinking. Mercy is asking God to deliver on his promise. This is why we use the world all throughout our service. In the confession, we are asking for mercy. We are asking God to forgive our sin just as he has promised to forgive it. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). In the Kyrie, we are asking for God's peace that he has promised to us in Christ Jesus. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). In the prayers, we are asking for God's assistance as he has promised, "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:19-20). God has promised these things. When we cry out mercy, we are simply asking that God deliver on his promise.

Reformation, cry out for mercy. Cry out for mercy on Sunday as well as the rest of the week. Hold on to the promises of God like Bartimaeus did.

**In Jesus Name,  
Amen**