

Son of Timaeus: Mark 10:46-52  
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Mark 10:46-52

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So, throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

### **The Blind Beggar**

Many years ago, in a far distant land there was a man who could not work because he was blind. He would sit by the roadside outside the gates of the city and call out to people to have mercy on him. If they gave him food or money, he could live for another day. Most people ignored him, but a few would toss him a coin or give him food they no longer wanted to eat. If he ever had a name, it was long forgotten. People just called him by his father's name. He was merely the blind son of Timeaus, or in his language, Bartimaeus.

Blind Bartimaeus was like so many poor people through the centuries: forgotten, ignored, despised, insulted. Well-dressed and well-fed people walked past him discussing the important things they were going to do in the city: deals they were going to make, beautiful things they were going to buy, entertainments they were looking forward to. They discussed national politics and who was going to be serving in the assembly or arguing over whether the Roman government was doing a good job. If they noticed the blind son of Timaeus at all, they saw that he needed to be washed. They noticed his filthy rags and that he needed his beard cut. Usually though they would just move away from him and his insistent begging.

Some, perhaps, said a prayer as they walked past the blind son of Timaeus as he begged for food. They thanked God that they had both their eyes and plenty

to eat. Some said, “there but for the grace of God, go I.” Some of the people occasionally tossed a coin to shut the man up, and then they were proud of their generosity. Occasionally a kind man or woman or child would speak to him as they gave him something, but more often the blind man heard insults. He was blind, but his hearing was good.

They called him a sinner. They told him that he deserved his misery; that he was being punished by God. They warned their children not to touch that man or they might be infected. They told him to go back to his father’s house. Stay outside the wall. Just go ahead and die. And on Friday evenings people who had been cruel to this weak and suffering man would go to the synagogue, say their prayers, pay their tithe, and sing praises to God who had so richly blessed them.

People in Jericho assumed that the son of Timaeus was stupid as well as blind. What could he know? He had never seen the world the way they had. He had never learned to read or write. He had never been to school or held a job or traveled. He was just an ignorant, worthless, forgotten man who did not even know his own name.

### **Crying out to Jesus**

But Bartimaeus was not stupid, nor was he deaf. He listened to what the people talked about as they passed. He talked to the other beggars who lived off of the charity of the pious. He kept up with the big news of the day, including the news about a prophet who healed lepers and restored sight to the blind. He had heard the name of Jesus – probably not from priests and business people but from the other poor people. He felt the excitement of the crowd as Jesus came into Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. He knew that many hoped that this Jesus was more than a wandering rabbi. Perhaps he was the messiah they longed for. Perhaps this man was sent by God to bring justice and mercy into the world.

Bartimaeus was blind, but he could hear Jesus and the disciples talking as they walked toward the city. Bartimaeus was poor. He was hungry. He was dirty. But he was not stupid. He seized his opportunity and shouted out to Jesus. He called him the Son of David. He was one of the first people in the Gospel of Mark to call Jesus by this royal title. He was blind, but he could see what others couldn’t see. The Son of David was walking past.

The crowd told the blind man to shut up. Poor people have no right to speak to decent people they said. Sinners have no right to speak to righteous people. Shut up, you fool! How dare this miserable sinner who had no name, no home speak to the Messiah? How dare this dirty man sitting in the gutter living like a dog speak to the prophet? Quit bothering us with your petty needs. Who cares about your suffering? We have business to attend to. We have work to while you sit there all day doing nothing. Shut up, you stupid beggar!

But Bartimaeus would not keep quiet. He was not going to be silenced or intimidated by others. Not this time. Bartimaeus was blind, but he had a voice, and he used it. He called out to the Son of David. "Have mercy on me!" Don't pass me by like all the other righteous people. Don't ignore me and pretend I don't exist. "Have mercy on me!" Jesus' entourage did what entourages always do. They moved to protect their master from those who wanted things, but Jesus pushed them aside.

### **Meeting Jesus**

Jesus did what most of the people in Jericho were afraid to do. He **heard** Bartimaeus. He saw Bartimaeus. He stopped and looked at blind Bartimaeus, poor Bartimaeus, homeless Bartimaeus, forgotten Bartimaeus. He told his disciples to call to this wretched son of Timaeus. Invite him to come to closer.

Bartimaeus was blind, but he wasn't lame. He leaped up from the dirt where he was sitting. No one had ever called out to him with such kindness. No one ever asked him what he wanted. No one ever touched him except to hit him or abuse him. He overcame his fear and approached Jesus, trembling, hoping.

For just a moment it seemed to Bartimaeus that the world had stopped turning; everything was silent. For just a moment the people on the street forgot what they were doing and watched in wonder as the prophet and the beggar met. For just a moment Bartimaeus experienced what we all long for, what we cry for in the darkest hours of the night, what all humans need more than food or shelter. For just a moment, the eyes of the blind man met the eyes of Jesus, and he felt a connection to another human being. He felt loved and respected. For just a moment Bartimaeus knew what it was like to be happy and whole.

And then Jesus spoke. He did not give Bartimaeus a sermon. He did not ask him what had happened to him. He didn't ask him who his parents were or

where he was from. He didn't lecture Bartimaeus on how to cope with his disabilities. He didn't tell Bartimaeus to do anything. Jesus asked a simple question: "What do you want me to do for you?" What do you want, Bartimaeus? What do you need?

This was so different from what **we** say to people who need our help. We ask ourselves "what can I do for them?" We decide for ourselves what is best for them. We make them fill out forms and sign papers and provide proof of identity. We ask them if they are one of us or if they are foreigners or illegals and a hundred other questions. But Jesus focused on the man and let him speak.

"Rabbi," he said. Rabbi. Teacher. Master. Wise one. My Rabbi, I don't want food or clothing or money. "Rabbi, I want to see." He did not say "Rabbi, I want you to heal me." Bartimaeus did not ask anything of Jesus, he simply told him the deepest most desperate desire of his heart. "I want to see." I want to see the world that God has made. I want to look into the eyes of other people. I want to be able to work and earn my living. I want to have dignity and purpose in life. I want to escape from the shame that the world has heaped on me because of how I was born into this world. "I want to see!"

### **James and John**

Earlier in the gospel of Mark, two of the disciples, James and John, had come to Jesus to tell him what they wanted. They were not poor beggars in the street. They were honored disciples of the messiah. They had all they needed, but that was not enough. James and John asked Jesus to let them sit on his right and left hand when he became ruler of the world. They had followed Jesus all the way from Galilee. They had heard his preaching. They had seen him heal people and care for people. But they still didn't understand who Jesus was.

They thought that following Jesus was all about power and glory and fame and riches. They thought Jesus was like one of those preachers who promise you that you will be rich if you just give them money. They thought that the gospel was about prosperity, power, and authority over others. The Gospel of Mark shows us that James and John were more blind than blind Bartimaeus.

Jesus had told them "you don't know what you are asking." He told them that he was not going to Jerusalem to conquer it and become a king. He told them that in order to become great, they must be servants of all. Not servants of the

great, but servants of the poor, the suffering, the despised people of the world. If they wanted to follow him, they needed to learn how to care for the neglected, rejected, and dejected people of this world. “The Son of Man,” he said, “came not to be served but to serve; to give his life as a ransom for the world.”

Blind Bartimaeus who had never met Jesus and never heard him teach saw more clearly than the disciples. He called out to Jesus as the Messiah and Rabbi. And Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he truly needed, what would change his life for the better. Bartimaeus didn't ask Jesus to make him a lord over others. He didn't ask to be great or powerful or wealthy. He asked to see.

### **Faith/Following Jesus**

And Jesus was able to grant his wish. Jesus didn't require anything of Bartimaeus than what he had already offered when he cried out to him. Jesus told the blind man that his faith had made him well. Bartimaeus came when Jesus called him. He was brave enough to stand before the Messiah and speak the truth. He was willing to accept whatever answer Jesus gave, and Jesus told him that was all he needed to do.

Bartimaeus, the blind beggar on the street, could see more clearly than others who had eyes that worked. And was healed. Now he could use those eyes as God intended. Bartimaeus He was freed from the shackles of his birth, from the bondage of the past. He was no longer the despised beggar. He was free to go wherever he wanted.

And what did Bartimaeus do? Did he run into the city to see the sights? Did he run off to watch the street performers and entertainers? Did he run up to the people who had treated him badly and tell them off? What did this man who had known little but misery and loneliness his whole life do?

He followed Jesus. Without even asking where Jesus was going, he followed. Without counting the cost, he followed. He had found his Lord and Savior, and he gave his life to him. He followed Jesus on that long road to Jerusalem.

The gospel does not tell us explicitly, but we can assume that Bartimaeus was there with the crowds singing Hosanna when Jesus entered Jerusalem. He was there when Jesus cleansed the temple, when Jesus corrected the scribes and Pharisees. He was there when Jesus was brought before Pilate and cruelly

abused. Those eyes that so recently began to see were filled with tears when he watched his compassionate Savior being mocked and scourged and handed over for execution. He followed Jesus to end. This is the faith that made him well.

### **Conclusion**

Two thousand years later we remember this nameless blind man who could see more clearly than the disciples. Through his eyes we see Jesus reaching out in compassion to those who are suffering bring healing. We remember the son of Timaeus, but do we learn from his story?

Who today is crying out for mercy? How do we answer? What should we do in this time and place? Perhaps we are the ones who are blind because we do not see those who call out to us for hope, for healing. We have eyes, but do we see? We sing praises to God, but do we follow our Lord?