

Blind Bartimaeus- Mark 10:46-52

- As Jesus was once setting out on a journey,
 - A man ran up and knelt before him, and asked,
 - ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’
 - Jesus said to him,
 - ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.’
 - You might remember this story from the gospel reading a fortnight ago.
 - It’s the story of the Rich Young Ruler and his attempt to justify himself to God.
 - You might also recall how the story ends,
 - With Jesus telling him to sell all he owns then come follow him.
 - Mark says the man went away sad because he had many possessions.
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- Last week’s gospel reading was of James and John coming to Jesus,
 - And making him the request so well known to parents everywhere,
 - ‘We want you to do for us whatever we ask.’
 - And Jesus,
 - Like experienced parents everywhere,
 - Makes no commitments as he responds,
 - ‘What do you want me to do for you?’
 - What James and John are wanting are to have the top jobs,
 - And all the status and perks that go with those jobs when Jesus comes in his kingdom.

- What a contrast to our story today,
- The story of a blind beggar sitting in the dust on the outskirts of Jericho.
- Blindness was quite a scourge in Jesus’ day.
- Bartimaeus obviously wasn’t born blind like the fellow in John’s gospel,
- Because he later requests to be able to see again.
- But regardless of how long he’d been without sight,
- The reality was that to survive he had to turn to begging,
- And calling on the generosity and grace of others.
- He was totally dependant.
- His day-to-day needs had to come from outside himself,
- There was nothing he could do for himself in his situation.
- Now that’s a contrast between the rich young man and Bartimaeus isn’t it?
- Wealthy, confident, self-assured,
- Poor, blind, reliant.
- It’s even a contrast to James and John the small businessmen,
- Seeking a promotion!!!

- Sitting by the road he must have been wondering what was going on,
- As a crowd started to build up in front of him.
- Obviously his blindness didn’t affect his hearing,
- Because he picks up that the crowd’s gathered around Jesus.
- So he cries out;

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Mark 10:47

- That title Son of David is only used three times in Mark’s gospel,
- And two of them are on the lips of Bartimaeus.
- The third time however gives us an insight into what that title means.

- A couple of days later,
- After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem,
- Jesus begins teaching in the Temple courts,
- And he asks a deeply perplexing theological question;

“How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.’ ³⁷ David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?” Mark 12:35-37

- The Jews expected that the Messiah,
- The conquering king who would come,
- Overthrow their enemies,
- And establish the kingdom of God,
- Would be a direct descendant of King David,
- That is, he'd be a son of David.
- And yet in Psalm 110 David calls this Messiah 'my Lord',
- And God exalts the Messiah by saying 'sit at my right hand.'

- Just as an aside,
- Can you see how inappropriate it was for James and John to request to sit at Jesus' left and right hand?

- Jesus' question is a perfectly logical one,
- If David recognises the Messiah as his superior,
- As sitting at God's right hand in heaven,
- How could he possibly be the earthly son of David?
- Well Jesus knows how that dilemma is resolved,
- It's through his own death and resurrection.
- Jesus was a physical descendant of King David through his mother Mary.
- And he's told the disciples that he would be put to death but rise again.
- That resurrection would be followed by his ascension and exaltation to heaven.
- Here on earth Jesus is the Son of David,
- After his ascension he'd be the risen Lord.
- So the name Son of David is no mean title.

- Now whether Bartimaeus knew all the complexities of that is probably unlikely,
- But what he does know is that Jesus can help him,
- And his cry is that Jesus would have mercy on him.
- The rich young ruler didn't appeal to Jesus' mercy,
- In fact when Jesus listed some of the commandments,
- He claimed he'd kept them from his youth.
- Here was a young man very confident in his own righteousness before God,
- His own self-sufficiency.
- But not so Bartimaeus,
- And that's reinforced by the crowd when they hear him shouting.
- 'Shut up' they say,
- They rebuke his boldness,
- How dare he, a beggar, interrupt this great teacher.
- But that only encourages him to shout louder,
- Jesus hears him, stops and calls him over.

- It's amazing how Mark has included all these little links,
- Between the stories of the rich young ruler, James and John and blind Bartimaeus.
- The young man wants to know what he has to do to get into the kingdom of God.
- The disciples want to have the best jobs in the kingdom of God.
- Bartimaeus recognizes or at least naively accepts that Jesus is the king of the kingdom.
- The rich young ruler asks what he must do?
- The disciples want Jesus to do what they ask.
- Bartimaeus however only responds to an invitation to come over to him.
- And when he arrives,
- Jesus asks with the exact same words he asked of James and John;
"What do you want me to do for you?" Mark 10:51
- For James and John the answer was;
"Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." Mark 10:37
- They want to be prime minister and treasurer when Jesus becomes the glorious king,

- Ruling over a liberated and renewed Israel.
- Even though Jesus had just told them,
- That rather than being crowned king when he enters Jerusalem,
- He'll be betrayed, mocked and murdered,
- They still have an eye on their own glory and status.
- They're blind to what the kingdom of God really entails.

-When Jesus asks Bartimaeus;

"What do you want me to do for you?" Mark 10:51

-His answer is much simpler;

"My teacher, let me see again." Mark 10:51

-When the rich, young ruler approached Jesus he called him good teacher,

-Jesus gently rebuked him for that appellation,

-Maybe knowing that that was just a customary politeness.

-But Bartimaeus' is much more sincere and heartfelt.

-He addresses Jesus as 'my teacher'.

-Or even more strongly 'Master'.

-And maybe Bartimaeus in his humility,

-Actually did have a greater insight into the meaning of Son of David,

-That the one who held the title Son of David was the Messiah,

-The anointed Lord of the coming Kingdom and that he truly was the Master,

-Who could give a command and expect it to be obeyed.

-And Jesus does give the command;

"Go; your faith has made you well." Mark 10:52

-And immediately he regained his sight.

-Again we see the contrast between the self-absorbed wealthy man,

-Who comes to Jesus asking 'what must I do?'

-And the poor, dependant, blind man who comes to Jesus to see what he will do.

-The contrast is between confidence in self,

-And confidence in God.

-Even the disciples struggled to see that the kingdom of God inverts the values of this world.

-The last shall be first and the first shall be last.

-The great must be the servant,

-And to be first is to be the slave of all.

"For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark 10:44

-And with this story of Bartimaeus,

-Mark indicates how extensive is that word 'many'.

-Jesus didn't come to be served,

-He didn't come with a retinue of servants that probably awaited the rich young ruler when he got home,

-He didn't come to favour his followers with ministerial positions in a worldly kingdom,

-He didn't come for a narrow band of elites and privileged,

-He came for the many,

-For the blind Bartimaeus',

-For the women caught in adultery,

-For the lost, the afflicted, the desperate.

-For those of whom the Psalmist wrote;

**"Here is a wretch who cried and the Lord heard me: and saved me from all my troubles."
Psalm 34:6**

-Well the story ends with one final contrast;

"Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way." Mark 10:52

-Jesus said to the rich young ruler;

"Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." Mark 10:21

- To both men Jesus told them to 'go'.
- For Bartimaeus it was to go knowing that the master had given him what he had asked.
- For the rich young ruler it was to go and sell the very things,
- Which were blocking him from entering the kingdom of heaven.
- The rich young ruler was told to go, sell and then come follow Jesus.
- He couldn't do it.
- He couldn't follow Jesus' simple command to rid himself of his idols.
- But look again at what Jesus said to blind Bartimaeus and his response;

"Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way." Mark 10:52

- Jesus tells him to go,
- But he comes and follows Jesus on the way.
- His trust in Jesus gained him his sight,
- And in gratitude he follows Jesus.

- The disciples were stunned when Jesus told them that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,
- Than a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.
- It caused them to ask of Jesus,
- 'Then who can be saved?'
- Indeed, who can be saved?
- But Jesus' answer was;

"For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." Mark 10:27

- After he was healed by Jesus,
- The man born blind in John 9 said to his accusing Pharisees;

" Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." John 9:32-33

- Two blind men were able to see clearly who Jesus was.
- Who could possibly open the eyes of the blind?
- Impossible for mortals but not for God.
- The blind Bartimaeus could see that Jesus was indeed 'Master',
- And when he was asked he knew clearly what he wanted Jesus to do.
- What do you want to ask of Jesus?
- And do you believe it is possible for him