

Lake Cities Community Church
Pastor Craig Schill
August 16, 2009
Series: On Your Mark

“Blind Bartimaeus”
Mark 10:45-52

How many of you know what this is? That’s right - a zip-lock bag of Amish friendship starter. How many of you have experience with Amish friendship bread? That is great. You, of all people, will then understand that the contents of this bag provide a metaphor of Christian discipleship in that it has three things - growth, transformation and multiplication.



This small amount of dough is not designed to stay small. How does it grow? You feed it. Verily, on the 6th day it is fed flour, milk and sugar and it grows bigger and bigger. That is just like you and I are to grow spiritually by being fed the Word of God. And if you don’t grow, you die. And we have killed several friendship bread starters. And then you have to mash it – which is just like suffering in the Christian life, when we are mashed. And then it is transformed - on the 10th day you add a few more ingredients and transform the dough into delicious sweet breads and cakes. That is the goal, just as you and I are transformed by the Spirit into the image and attitude of Christ. Then the dough is multiplied. You don’t cook all the dough, but only some, and the rest is divided into portions that you give to your friends. You give it to three friends, then they give it to three friends – and within a few years every person on the planet will have Amish friendship bread! Just like discipleship – as the gospel is entrusted to faithful men and women who in turn entrust it others also. Multiplication.

Our text this morning is all about Christian discipleship. So turn with to the end of Mark, chapter 10. We are in verses 46-52. Our story this morning is one that is not well known – the healing of blind Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus will teach us many things this morning about

discipleship – his story is a summary of much of what we have been studying in chapters 9 and 10; and also transitions us to Jesus’ triumphal entry. Let’s jump right into v 46.

Exposition

Mark 10:46 Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar *named* Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road.

First we observe that the man’s name is Bartimaeus (which is a Hebrew name) so Mark tells his Gentile readers, means son of Timaeus. Bar in Hebrew means “son” – Bar – Timaeus – Son of Timaeus. Just like Bar Mitzvah means Son (Bar) of the Commandment (Mitzvah).

And that at least reminds us of the importance of a person’s name. As a pastor I know that if I remember someone’s name who visited the week before – that is very meaningful to them. Someone said, “words have meaning, names have power.” In a name a person is given dignity and honor. A modern proverb reads: “A good man may die, but death cannot kill their name.” When you walk through a cemetery – what do you read? The names, one after another and you are reminded that these were real people – sons and daughters, mothers and fathers. This is a blind, beggar; the lowest of the low in Hebrew society – an utterly forgettable person - yet he has a name, he is someone’s son and created in God’s image.

In fact– Bartimaeus is the only person healed by Jesus in the gospels for whom we have a name. If you think about it - we don’t know the name of the paralytic man who was lowered through the roof by his friends, or the man possessed by the legion of demons, or the woman who bled or even the little girl raised from the dead. But we are given the name of poor old Bartimaeus. And I think the reason for this is because this story is not just a story of another healing, but a story about discipleship. And disciples have names – Matthew the Tax Collector, Peter the fisherman, Nicodemus the Pharisee and now Bartimaeus the blind man. One thing

we learn about discipleship from this, is that Jesus calls individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds. People like you and me.

Mark 10:47 When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Now in order for someone to become a disciple of Jesus – they must first somehow hear about Jesus! Picture the scene with me. What we do NOT have is not a Jesus and his 12 disciples alone on an empty dusty road or in rural Galilee. But rather they are now part of a pilgrimage, with hundreds and hundreds of other people heading up the last few miles to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. So, it could be that Bartimaeus head the crowd talking about Christ “He’s coming, just behind us, Jesus the Nazarene.” *How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news*. Discipleship begins when one person tells another person about Jesus.

And then what does Bartimaeus do? He cries out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” Remember that song: *Kyrie Eleison down the road that I must travel?* That means Lord have mercy! Here the beggar cries; Ἰησοῦ, ἐλέησόν (Iesou eleeson) *Jesus have mercy on me!* Son of David - Anointed One – Messiah – help me. Bartimaeus has what I call assertive humility. He is no wallflower. But he is humble – he cries for mercy and does not demand healing. In the Gospel of Mark we have learned over and over that - Jesus never, never, never, never, never rejects those who come to him humbly, by faith. I don’t care what you have done, how little you have, or how hopeless the situation – if you come humbly to Jesus – asking for his mercy he will receive you.

Mark 10:48 Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

There are obstacles to following Jesus aren't there? Here we are reminded that to be a disciple of Jesus you are going to have to overcome some obstacles. Some people will not want you to follow Jesus. Circumstances will come up that will make it difficult to do so. Pressure to conform to the world arrives and together they shout – “What are you crazy? Be quiet – get back in line. Who do you think you are anyway?” The question is not whether obstacles will come, but what you will do when they do come? And what you should do it to be like Bartimaeus.

In light of opposition he shouts louder: “Son of David – have mercy on me!” He’s got the “eye of the tiger” – He is ready to fight for his faith. He is more concerned with Christ’s presence than the crowd’s pressure. Someone said – “the great oak tree, was just a little nut who held its ground.” Bartimaeus is just a little nutty guy – who is not going to lose his opportunity to meet Jesus. A disciple can’t give up when things work against them, but rather cry even louder to the Lord.

Mark 10:49 And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him *here*.” So they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you.”

Here some unnamed encouragers come to Bartimaeus and say – θάρσει, ἔγειρε, φωνεῖ σε (Tharsei, egeire phone se): “Tharsei – “Cheer up!” Egeire “Stand up!” Why? Phone se - Jesus is calling you! I would like to think that these encouragers are the 12 disciples who have finally learned not to keep people from Jesus, but to escort them to Jesus. Fortunately, not everyone is against our pursuit of Jesus. In life, some people discourage and other people encourage. Make sure you find those encouragers in your life and spend time with them.

Think for a moment, about how powerful encouragement has been in your own life – We desperately need people in our lives saying: “You are doing the right thing. Keep up the

good work. Don't worry about those critics over there – stand up – cheer up - keep going." If discipleship is like a ship – discouragement is a strong current pushing us backward, while encouragement is the wind that fills our sails. You and I both need encouragement, and we need to be encouragers to others. It is said that Abraham Lincoln carried in his pocket a newspaper clipping of an article that said he was a great leader. Everyone needs encouragement.

Note also about this verse the repetition of the word "call" or "calling." "Call him here." So they called him and said – he is calling you." It is not that they could not say it another way – it is for emphasis. If Jesus had an i-phone (which I suspect He does) your name would be on speed-dial. Jesus calls his disciples by name. We sang that beautiful hymn. "Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling - calling for you and for me. Why should you tarry when Jesus is pleading, pleading for you and for me? Why should we linger and heed not His mercies, Mercies for you and for me?" Dr. Toussaint, at the seminary, said his favorite word for the gospel is "come." Why? Because Jesus calls. Look at the person next to you and tell them, "Jesus is calling you." Jesus calls his disciples. How will you respond?

Mark 10:50 Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus.

Remember the rich young ruler who could not leave behind his worldly goods? Bartimaeus has no such problem – of course he doesn't have as much stuff, which may be the point – just a windbreaker that he throws aside, jumps up and comes to Jesus.

The picture that comes to my mind here is young children who are playing or reading quietly until Dad announces, "Ice cream is ready." Boom – they jump up and come immediately. What we have modeled for us here is that a disciple should be willing to forsake everything to do anything for Jesus. Every now and then we should take inventory. Is there

anything holding me back from following Jesus? Maybe fear, or possessions, or sin. Is there something I need to let go of? And with that weight gone, you can leap to your feet and come to Him, ready for your marching orders.

Mark 10:51 And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, *I want to regain my sight!*"

Can you imagine standing before Jesus, and him saying – "What do you want me to do for you?" Like a divine blank check. It reminds me of the promise God gave Solomon "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." It reminds me of James and John who said, "Master we want you to do for us whatever we ask." Maybe Jesus is testing the man's faith. Will he be wise like Solomon or foolish like James and John? He is wise - and says humbly: "Rabboni" (my master / teacher) – "all I want is to regain my sight." Why? Not because I deserve anything – but because you are merciful.

All this begs the question: "What do you want Jesus to do for you?" Do you tend to ask only for your own comfort and glory, or do you seek God's will no matter the cost to you? It is fine to petition God, we must do that with humility. True disciples come to Jesus with wisdom and humility. Seek first the Kingdom, and then all these things will be added to you.

Remember the song: "I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold; I'd rather be His than have riches untold; I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands; I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand."

Mark 10:52 And Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and *began following Him on the road.*

ὑπάγε, (hupage: go) ἡ πίστις σου (he pistis you: your faith) σέσωκέν σε (sosoken se: has saved you) literally: Go! Your faith has saved you. “Amazing Grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found. Was blind, but now I see.” Physical sight and spiritual sight are both in view in the Gospel of Mark. This section of discipleship starts and ends with a miracle of healing a blind man – to communicate the importance of spiritual vision.

So Bartimaeus is healed physically and spiritually. But his spiritual sight has a way to go. As he now follows Jesus we wonder – what will happen when Jesus is arrested? Will he join the crowd in shouting, “crucify him?” Will he remain faithful or desert Christ? Perhaps Bartimaeus will be one of the many who see Jesus after the resurrection? We don’t know the rest of the story for him – and we do not know the rest of the story for you. What we do know that discipleship is about ever increasing spiritual sight.

We have talked about many issues of discipleship and I hope that at least one has resonated with you this morning. Perhaps you are facing an obstacle in your faith, and need to overcome it. Maybe your application is to find someone and encourage him or her. Or maybe you know Jesus is calling you to change your life, but you just have not been willing to set aside everything to do anything for Him. Let it go. Bartimaeus is an example to all of us – a man who was transformed from a side-lined beggar to a starting-team follower of Jesus – who before our eyes has grown in his faith as I pray will happen to you and I as well.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is America’s best-known poet. He lived from 1807-1882. He wrote the famous “Paul Revere’s Ride” and “The Song of Hiawatha.” He was critically acclaimed during his lifetime. Edgar Allen Poe called him, “unquestionably the best poet in

America.” By the end of his career he was being paid \$3,000 per poem, which you can imagine was a lot of money back then. He was described as a sweet and gentle man. He was well liked and well loved by many. But he faced many difficulties in life, just as you do. He had constant facial pain and stomach pain; and he had very poor eyesight.

While he was reading his Bible one day in his Greek New Testament text he came to the end of Mark chapter 10. Perhaps his own poor eyesight gave him empathy for blind Bartimaeus. He resonated with this story and with this amazing man and wrote the following poem.

The Blind Man of Jericho

Blind Bartimaeus at the gates
Of Jericho in darkness waits:
He heard the crowd: - He hears of breath
Coming is Jesus of Nazareth!
And calls in tones of agony,
Iesou, eleson, Me!

The thronging multitudes increase:
“Blind Bartimaeus, hold thy peace.”
But still above the noisy crowd,
The beggar’s cry is shrill and loud
Until they say, “He calleth thee!”
Tharsei, egeire, phone se!

Then saith the Christ, as silent stands
The crowd, “what wilt thou at my hands?”
And he replies “O give me light!”
Rabbi, restore the blind man’s sight.
And Jesus answers,
Hupage, he pistis sou sesoken se

If Ye have eyes, yet cannot see,
In darkness and in misery,
Recall these mighty voices three
Iesou, eleeson me!
Tharsei, egeirai Hupage He
Pistis sou sesoken se.

Jesus is merciful. Have courage – get up! Your faith has saved you! Let’s pray