

Mark 10:46-52 “Never Too Busy to Serve”**

Main Idea: In Mark 10:46-52, as Jesus is making the trip that will take Him to the cross, we learn some vital truths about Jesus from an encounter He had with a blind beggar. There are three scenes in the story.

I. We see the Master on a mission (46).

- A. Jesus came to save sinners.
- B. Jesus took time to serve a sinner.

II. We see a man in need (47-48).

- A. He calls for Jesus.
- B. He believes the Scriptures.
- C. He asks for mercy.
- D. He persists.

III. We see the Jesus that many today do not know (49-52).

- A. Many have distorted views of Jesus.
 - 1. He is a good example, but not the Savior.
 - 2. He is a viable option, but not the only way.
- B. Here is the real Jesus.
 - 1. He possessed unrivaled power.
 - 2. He was never too busy to serve.
 - 3. He loves to help the person who asks for mercy.
 - 4. He responds to those who demonstrate real faith.

Make It Personal: Two questions to ponder...

- 1. Is my faith in Jesus real?
- 2. Is my faith in the real Jesus?

With our Bibles open to the final passage in Mark 10, I must begin with a confession. I have a question that's plagued me as I've been contemplating the text before us. *Why did Mark include this story?* Granted, the story about a man named Bartimaeus is fascinating, but quite honestly, it doesn't seem to fit the flow of the storyline, at least it didn't to me.

According to verse 32, Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem . Passover is approaching, so the streets are packed with Jews traveling to the city of David . This will be a very special Passover, one that will change the world forever. Jesus will not merely observe Passover, but will BE the Passover Lamb. Yes, as we come to the story before us, keep in mind that Jesus is on His way to the Cross which is merely a week away.

Mark makes it very clear in verse 32, “They were *on their way up to Jerusalem* , with Jesus leading the way.” Jesus is focused. He has a mission to accomplish and nothing will deter Him. He details the mission plan for the Twelve in verses 33-34, “‘*We are going up to Jerusalem,*’ he said, ‘and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.’”

In reality, this is the third time in three chapters that Jesus gave the same prediction to His disciples about His impending death and resurrection (see also 8:31 & 9:31). The cross is on His mind, *His cross*. When His disciples start arguing about greatness, Jesus teaches them about servanthood in verses 35-45, with this climaxing statement in verse 45, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” There it is again. Jesus is thinking about the cross.

In fact, the very structure of Mark’s gospel shows how important the cross is. The first ten chapters of Mark’s gospel cover the first thirty-three years of Jesus’ life. As we’ll see beginning next time, the final six chapters (from Mark 11-16) focus on His final *week* of life. In a very real sense, everything we’ve seen in Mark’s account thus far is preparatory for this final week, the *passion week*.

As we approach the end of Mark 10, the Gospel writer has made it clear what Jesus is thinking about. He’s gripped with the thought of completing the work His heavenly Father gave Him to do, the redemptive work of the *cross*.

What are you like when your attention is fixed on accomplishing a project? I tend to get consumed. My focus becomes intense to the point that I have a hard time listening and thinking about anything else (my wife says I have a ‘one track mind’).

It’s at this point that Mark includes a story that doesn’t seem to fit, the healing of a blind beggar by the name of Bartimaeus. Which raises my question again. *Why?* Why is this story included at this point in Mark’s narrative?

You say, “Because it happened! That’s why Mark included it!” Yes, it happened, but so did many other things in Jesus’ life that are not included in the brief Gospel accounts (John 21:25). So when a Holy Spirit-led writer includes an event, especially an event that seems out of place, we need to ask the question *why?* Why is this story here? What truth does it teach us about Jesus?

The fact is, this story most certainly *does fit* and its presence teaches us something very significant, very compelling about Jesus.

As you may recall, last time in our study of James and John’s request for prime seats in Jesus’ kingdom, we talked about the problem of *competing agendas*. We, like the sons of Zebedee, tend to become consumed with our own, self-seeking, self-promoting agenda in life, whereas Jesus calls us to live with a God-focused, people-serving agenda. The story before us shows that Jesus practiced what He preached.

In Mark 10:46-52, as Jesus is making the trip that will take Him to the cross, He encounters a blind beggar. There are three scenes in the story.

I. We see the Master on a mission (46).

Our story begins in verse 46, “Then they came to Jericho . As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd,^[1] were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging.”

Jesus entered Jericho , a place called ‘the city of palm trees’ in the Old Testament (Deut. 34:3). But Jesus is not in town to view the scenery. Jericho was located five miles west of the Jordan and fifteen miles northeast of Jerusalem .

Jesus is in Jericho because Jericho is located on the road that will take Him to Jerusalem where His cross awaits Him. See Him, beloved. See the Master on His mission here.

The fact that He is in Jericho illustrates two things about the Lord.

A. Jesus came to save sinners. Hear His words again, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and *to give his life as a ransom for many* (45).” That’s why Jesus came. That’s why He is traveling through Jericho . He’s on His way to shed His blood as a Passover lamb so that all who believe in Him will not perish but have eternal life. That’s what brings Him to Jericho today. He’s there because He came to save sinners. But His presence in Jericho teaches us something else...

B. Jesus took time to serve a sinner. Yes, Jesus had sinners (plural) in mind as He walked through Jericho , but He also had an *individual* sinner in mind.^[2] Mark introduces us to him. His name is Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. Some scholars say the reason Mark preserved his name was because he later became a noteworthy figure in the Jerusalem church.^[3]

That’s speculation, but this is not. Mark tells us that Barthimaeus was blind, and being unable to work, he resorted to begging. Matthew’s account indicates there were two blind men, but Mark mentions only Barthimaeus, apparently since he was the spokesman.

Note also that Mark says the encounter with Bartimaeus took place as Jesus was *leaving* the city. If you’re a serious Bible student you may recall that Luke’s account states the meeting occurred as Jesus was *approaching* Jericho . Critics of the Bible get excited at this point and say, “There’s another contradiction. The Bible is full of them!”

To which I would respond, *wrong on both counts*. It’s not a contradiction, nor is the Bible full of contradictions. The Bible, by its own claim, was written by holy men who were guided by God the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21). This guarantees that the texts they wrote were indeed without error. It’s called the doctrine of *inerrancy*.

“What about the apparent contradiction here?” you say. “How do you explain it?” By using your own word. It’s an *apparent* contradiction, not a real one. And it’s only apparent because our perspective is limited.

You say, “Wait a minute. Mark says the miracle happened when Jesus was *leaving* Jericho , while Luke says it happened as He was *approaching* Jericho . Both can’t be right. One must be wrong, right?”

Wrong. Both are right. Both are recording truth unmixed with error. It only seems contradictory to us.

Actually there were *two cities named Jericho* , an old Jericho (which was basically in ruins at this time) and a new Jericho (the latter built by Herod the Great who had his winter palace there). Walter Wessel explains, “Matthew...says the healing took place on the way into Jericho ; Mark reports that it took place on the way out of the city. It is possible that the miracle was done somewhere between the old Israelite city and the new city of Herod .”^[4]

Be assured of this. You can trust your Bible! It is inspired, inerrant, and infallible.^[5]

By the way, if you don’t understand the truth about the process God used to give and preserve His written Word, you will not be able to talk intelligently with skeptics today who question the accuracy of the Bible. Sixty million sold copies of *The Da Vinci Code* attest to the fact that many people are questioning whether the Gospel accounts written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are accurate or fraudulent, as Dan Brown’s conspiracy theory supposes. You say, “But the book is fiction.” Granted, but it’s storyline uses ideas that others promote as fact. I urge you to be prepared to give answers to those who ask for a reason of the hope you have.

As we return to our story, here is a great truth we must not miss. Jesus came to save *sinners*, but He also is concerned about the *sinner*. He sees individuals, beloved. He saw Bartimaeus that day. Today He sees you. You are not here by chance but because the all-knowing Lord has scheduled an appointment with you.

So ends scene one. We see the Master on a mission.

II. We see a man in need (47-48).

Verses 47-48—“When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’”

As a man in need, Bartimaeus did four things that day. Notice them...

A. He calls for Jesus. In fact, the text says he *shouted*. “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” That’s a great thing to do when you’re in need, *call for Jesus!*

But don’t expect everyone to applaud your efforts. Those in the crowd rebuked Bartimaeus and told him to stop the commotion.

The text specifies the crowd was large. Barclay explains there were 20,000 priests and as many Levites that served in the temple in Jerusalem . They didn’t all serve at the same time, but were divided into twenty-six courses that served in rotation. Many of these priests and Levites lived in Jericho , and undoubtedly, filled the streets that day heading to do service in the temple.^[6]

Why did the crowd tell Bartimaeus to be quiet? We’re not told. Maybe they thought they were doing Jesus a favor. Maybe they thought He was too busy for a beggar.

But this blind beggar wouldn’t give up. The more the crowd tried to shut him up, the more he cried aloud.

B. He believes the Scriptures. Listen to his brief, but significant request, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Mark is the only gospel writer to use this title, “Son of David.” It’s a title that the Old Testament uses to refer to the Messiah. For instance:

Jeremiah 23:5-6 “‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will raise up to **David** a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.’”

Ezekiel 34:23-24 “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.”

This man may not be able to read his Bible, but he knows it! He also believes it! He identifies Jesus as the one promised to David, the Messiah.

J. D. Jones remarks, “Physically blind though he was, he saw further into spiritual things than the multitude. He had heard about Jesus, about His wonderful words, and still more wonderful deeds. He had meditated upon it all in his heart. And while other people were quarreling and debating who Christ was, this blind man had made up his mind that this Jesus Who was giving sight to the blind, and cleansing to the leper, and life to the dead, was none other than the promised Christ.”^[7]

Someone once bluntly asked blind and deaf Hellen Keller, “Isn’t it terrible to be blind?” To which she responded, “Better to be blind and see with your heart, than to have two good eyes and see nothing.”^[8]

It’s significant that Jesus doesn’t here reject the title used by Bartimaeus. In the past He tried to keep His identity as Messiah under cover, but now, with Jerusalem in sight, He lets the man spread the news—and even brings attention to the man’s words by calling for him.

C. He asks for mercy. Mark records Bartimaeus’s words twice. Verse 47—“Jesus, Son of David, *have mercy on me!*” And in verse 48—“Son of David, *have mercy on me!*”

He doesn't say, "I'm a victim! I've got a bum wrap in life. I deserve better than this life of blind misery! Society owes me! God owes me. You owe it to me to help me, Jesus!"

No, that's not what he says. Bartimaeus simply pleads for mercy. "Please take note of me, Jesus, not because I deserve it for I don't. I am a sinner. I have fallen short of God's holy standard. I simply ask that you not give me what I deserve. I ask for mercy."

D. He persists. How many times did he utter that simple request? I don't know. Mark just says that he *shouted all the more*. Like a drowning man with a lifesaver in view, Bartimaeus knew that his only hope was passing by him on this day. In confident desperation he kept on shouting.

Verse 49 states, "Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.'" The persistence paid off. The crowd relayed the message to Bartimaeus, telling him, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." The life of Bartimaeus son of Timaeus was about to change. That's what happens when Jesus calls for you and enters your life.

Which brings us to scene 3. Having seen the Master on a mission and a man in need, in the final section...

III. We see the Jesus that many today do not know (49-52).

It's a sad reality but a true one. Many people do not know the real Jesus. Oh, they believe in Jesus—and they'll tell you if you ask them—but the Jesus they acknowledge is a fictitious Jesus, a combination of some facts found in the Bible and some fable conjured up in the minds of misguided men. Some of the folks I'm describing are quite irreligious, but a large number are sitting in churches this very morning. Yes...

A. Many have distorted views of Jesus. In other words, they think and say things about Jesus that simply do not square with the facts of Scripture. Here are two views.

1. *He is a good example, but not the Savior.* This view of Jesus is often evidenced more by what folks do NOT say rather than what they actually say. I've shared with you before that I spent the first part of my life in a "church" that emphasized the golden rule. Jesus was presented as our role model. His life was seen as a collection of inspiring stories. And so I learned to view Jesus as my example. But my Savior? No. Good people don't need a Savior, and that's what I was taught, that I was a *good person*. A sinner needs a Savior, sure (somebody like Hitler for instance), but if you are a good person, you just need examples. You need motivation to inspire you to achieve the supposedly God-given potential of your inborn goodness.

In reality, it wasn't that the church didn't believe Jesus was the Savior. I'm sure it was on a doctrinal statement somewhere. They just didn't talk about that fact. You don't talk about salvation if you talk about sin. And sin is such a negative subject, depressing some would say. So you stop teaching about sin, or redefine it so that it is somebody else's problem and not your own. Before long, this is what you have left...a Jesus who inspires you, a good example that you seek to exemplify and follow, but certainly not a Savior in whom you place your trust for God's pardon. Here's another fallacy...

2. *He is a viable option, but not the only way.* In our age of political correctness and relativism, this is a quite popular view. It's why church attendance is up in many places. It's the "in" thing to be spiritual nowadays, so believing in Jesus is a good thing. Believing in *anything* is a good thing, we're told, as long as it helps you. The only thing that is NOT good is to suggest that others are wrong and that what you believe in is the only right option. That is totally unacceptable in a pluralistic world.

But that is the very message Christ preached, who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me (John 14:6)." If you want to meet the true Jesus, I invite you to travel with Bartimaeus as he stumbles in the darkness and makes his way through the parted crowd.

B. Here is the real Jesus. Pick up the narrative at verse 50, "Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and

came to Jesus. ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ Jesus asked him. The blind man said, ‘Rabbi, I want to see.’ ‘Go,’ said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you.’ Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.”

We learn four essential truths about Jesus from this encounter...

1. *He possessed unrivaled power.* Jesus issued a command, “Go!” and eyes that previously didn’t function instantly produced 20-20 vision. Instantly. Jesus didn’t perform surgery. He didn’t give the man medicine to take. He simply spoke^[9] and Bartimaeus could see.

That’s power. That’s unrivaled power. No one else who has ever walked on this planet had the inherent power to do what Jesus did.

Why would Mark want us to know that at this point in the story of Jesus? Think about it. What’s going to happen in a matter of days? Jealous religious leaders will plot to take Jesus’ life, a crowd will foolishly cry out for His crucifixion, a Roman leader will choose to save his neck rather than administer justice, and the Messiah will be crucified. Did Jesus die because He lacked the power to prevent His death? No! A thousand no’s! And here is one final bit of evidence before the Passion week begins that proves He possessed unrivaled power and could have saved Himself if He had been so inclined.

2. *He was never too busy to serve.* We’ve just seen the last of Jesus’ healing miracles in Mark’s gospel. How fitting! Though the Lord is on His way to Jerusalem to save sinners, He takes time in Jericho to help one poor sinner named Bartimaeus. I love this about Jesus, don’t you? Jesus sees the person, not just humanity.

There’s a great lesson here for us, too. G. Campbell Morgan says it well:

“If Jesus should have passed that blind beggar and refused to help him, because His thoughts were so great, He would have cut the nerve of His coming passion. He could not pass that man by, because He was mastered by the passion that took Him to the Cross. So God help us to go forth, seeing the coming of His glory, sharing the travail of His soul, and doing it with the next who asks our help.”^[10]

3. *He loves to help the person who asks for mercy.* In fact, as Walter Wessel points out, “[Jesus’] opening the eyes of the blind man stands in sharp contrast to the blindness of the religious leaders he is about to encounter [in Jerusalem].”^[11]

Do you remember the story Jesus told about two men who went to the temple to pray? One was a Pharisee. He was a good man, respected by others (and in his own eyes). When he prayed these words came from his proud heart (in Luke 18:11-12): “God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”

Next Jesus put the spotlight on that tax collector the Pharisee mentioned, saying (13), “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’”

Then Jesus delivered the divine assessment of those two men in verse 14, “I tell you that this man [the tax collector], rather than the other [the Pharisee], went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Who finds favor with God? Not the self-righteous, but the person who pleads for mercy. That’s what Bartimaeus asked for...*mercy*. “Have mercy on me!”

Dear friend, that cry pleases the ear of the Savior. He loves to help the person who humbles himself, admits his unworthiness, and simply asks for mercy.

4. *He responds to those who demonstrate real faith.* That’s why Jesus healed Bartimaeus. “*Your faith* has healed you,” He told him.

We see the faith of Bartimaeus throughout this story. Why did he keep shouting for Jesus? Because he believed Jesus could make a difference. And what does he do when the crowd tells him Jesus wants to see him? He *throws his garment aside*. Do you see the man's expectant faith in that action? A man who anticipates remaining blind in the future wouldn't do that for he would have trouble finding this garment again; but a man who expects to see soon could care less where that cloak landed! There's joy mixed with recklessness in the response.

And when Jesus gave him a blank check offer ("What do you want me to do for you?"), Bartimaeus doesn't hesitate.

"Rabbi," he says. The word is *Rabboni* which means "My Master." The only other person in the Gospels who used it was Mary Magdalene (John 20:16).

"Rabbi, *I want to see.*" His request reveals his faith. He's putting in the blank check what he wants Jesus to do *and believes Jesus can do*. Hebrews 11:6 states, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Bartimaeus believed Jesus. He put his trust and confidence in Jesus.

And Jesus commended him for it, "Go, your faith has healed you." Of course, faith per se didn't restore his eyesight. Jesus did that. Jesus healed the man using His matchless power, a foreshadowing of what He will do for all His people in the kingdom age to come.

"Every one that asks receives," the Lord says in Matthew 7:8. "So let us, as Dr. Glover says, sow the seeds of prayer on the heart of God. There is no hard ground, or rocky soil, or thorny ground there. His heart is the good soil of tender and gracious love. Let us scatter the seed of prayer, and we shall get a harvest of blessing. According to our faith it shall be unto us."[\[12\]](#)

One of the tragedies you discover in reading the Gospels is that many took Jesus' benefits without giving Him their hearts.[\[13\]](#) That did NOT happen this time.

It's significant that Jesus told Bartimaeus to *go*, yet what did the healed man do? The text says he *followed Jesus along the road*. That's the natural inclination of a person has saving faith, to follow the One in whom he has placed his faith.

You see, real faith is not merely *intellectual*—it's not enough just to believe some facts. Nor is it simply *verbal*—saying "I believe in Jesus" doesn't necessarily mean you do. Real faith is *personal*—by that I don't mean it varies from person to person. I mean that if you have real faith you will *follow a Person*. You will trust and obey and person, namely Jesus Christ, the One who said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily *and follow me* (Luke 9:23)."

So ends Mark 10. The Son of David continues down the road to the city of David. The Master is about to finish His mission as we shall see in our coming studies, the Lord willing.

Make It Personal: Two questions to ponder...

We've just seen what Jesus did for Bartimaeus, how He commended him for his faith. Now ask yourself two personal, yet essential questions...

1. *Is my faith in Jesus real?* Speaker and author, Jim Elliff, begins his provocative book entitled *Wasted Faith* as follows:

"Most people will spend far more time examining the vegetables in the supermarket than they will ever spend scrutinizing their faith. In the follow pages we will take a hard look at faith...*your* faith. We will pry off the lid of

deceptive faith and smell its contents. In the process, we will come to an understanding of what is authentic—the faith that is the acceptable response to the activity of God. And we will discover the disturbing possibility that what we thought was conversion to Christ may have only been a shadow, an illusion, a mere experience.”^[14]

The question is vital. Is my faith in Jesus *real*? You say, “How can I know?” Elliff offers this counsel: “To reveal the true nature of your faith, strip away your reliance upon family traditions, church attendance, or baptism. Look deeper than the pious words you say in the right company. Look beyond the well-intentioned assurances given by a trusted parent, pastor, or evangelist. Set these insufficient comforts aside and look at what is left. Then determine if you have what the Bible describes as genuine Christian faith.”^[15]

Be honest, beloved. The stakes are eternal. Is my faith in Jesus *real*? Then ask yourself this follow-up question...

2. *Is my faith in the real Jesus?* We’ve just seen the real Jesus this morning. Is your faith in Him? A faith in a different Jesus will not save. Only the real Jesus saves. Make sure you know Him.

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

^[1] This is what first century rabbis did, walked and taught with a crowd of interested learners following behind.

^[2] It was also on this day that Jesus met a sinner named Zacchaeus (see Luke 19:1-10).

^[3] Observation by Kent Hughes, *Mark*, p. 75.

^[4] W. Wessel, p. 721.

^[5] J. D. Jones remarks: “The fact that there are slight divergencies in the various narratives does not discredit them; it does the very opposite, it adds to the weight of their witness. For quite obviously it shows that we have here three independent testimonies. If they slavishly copied one another in every detail, we should suspect that we had in them only three versions of one and the selfsame story. But the very divergencies and contradictions show that what we actually possess is three separate and independent accounts. And in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” *Mark*, p. 387.

^[6] William Barclay, p. 260.

^[7] J. D. Jones, p. 391.

^[8] Taken from Kent Hughes, *Mark*, p. 72.

^[9] Matthew’s account indicates Jesus touched his eyes as well.

^[10] G. Campbell Morgan, *Mark*, p. 250.

^[11] W. Wessel, *The Expos. Bible Commentary: Mark*, p. 722.

^[12] Quote taken from J. D. Jones, p. 393.

^[13] Observation by J. D. Jones, p. 393.

^[14] Jim Elliff, *Wasted Faith*, p. 7.

^[15] J. Elliff, p. 9.