

When Jesus of Nazareth Passes By

by Brian Long

Jesus Christ always brings hope to the hopeless, and true salvation requires a personal relationship with Him and being changed by Him.

Duration: 1:00:32

Scripture: Genesis 6:3, Amos 7:8, Amos 8:2, Luke 18:35-43, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Topics: "Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a living relationship with Jesus Christ. He references the story of Noah and the flood as an example of God's patience and pleading with people to repent. The preacher also discusses the feeding of the 4,000 and highlights Jesus' compassion for the multitude. He warns against being spiritually blind and urges listeners to have a heart that is broken over the lost and loves what God loves. The sermon concludes with a poem by Zach Poonin that encourages self-reflection and surrender to God's will.

Transcript

It's wonderful to see everyone again tonight. It's been a wonderful day. I had a wonderful country breakfast this morning that I'll never forget, and wonderful visits.

You people are so kind and generous, and I've just been blessed the whole time I've been here already. I was thinking that first song that we sang, Blessed Be Your Name, You Give and Take Away. When I was pastoring in Boyce City, Oklahoma, there was a couple who helped lead worship, a husband and wife.

And they were driving to church one morning. They came from about, I think, 40 or 50 miles away. And that morning, the roads were iced over, and they were headed to church, and they slid on the highway and had a head-on collision, and the Lord took them both home.

And their children, who were teenagers at the time, one was in college, the other two were in high school, I believe. At that funeral, they stood up and sang that song. And every time we sing that, I can't help but think of that testimony.

And to this day, as far as I know, those children are serving the Lord. The Lord is sovereign. He's in charge.

And sometimes He takes us through those times. But His grace is always sufficient. And His name is always worthy of praise.

So, I love that first song. Tonight, we're going to be in Luke chapter 18. So, I want to invite you to turn there, Gospel of Luke chapter 18.

And my message is, when Jesus of Nazareth passes by, when Jesus of Nazareth passes by, Luke chapter 18. We'll begin reading in verse 35. And it came to pass that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging.

And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passes by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

And they which went before rebuked him that he should hold his peace. But he cried so much the more, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood and commanded him to be brought unto him.

And when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight. Thy faith has saved thee.

And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God. Now, this blind man, we're told in the Gospel of Mark, in chapter 10, is blind Bartimaeus.

He's a blind beggar. His life would have consisted of sitting off the side of the road every day, doing the same thing every day, begging. Begging for someone to put a few coins in his cup so that he could live.

In that day, there was no hope for a blind man, unless you had somebody taking care of you, a family to take you in. The only means of survival was to beg on the side of the road. So imagine this blind Bartimaeus, every day, begging on the side of the road.

Day after day. It was a hopeless case. He was not only blind, but he was a poor blind beggar.

But one day, something happened. Something was different. He heard something different going on in the crowd.

Something unusual was happening. And so he asked those that are standing by him what it meant. What's going on? Who is it? What is it? And someone standing next to him told him, what I believe the Lord has sent me to tell you tonight.

Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. I don't know what those words do to you, but when I hear that from my heart, my heart leaps.

Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. He's coming near me. He's coming here.

I guarantee you it brought hope to this blind beggar. When he heard those words, Jesus of Nazareth passes by, hope must have risen in his heart, because he knew that when Jesus came by, he wasn't hopeful because Jesus would just put a few coins in his cup. But hope rose in his heart, because he knew this was the very one who could make him whole.

Jesus was the one who could open his eyes. He gave hope. What I want you to see first tonight, brothers and sisters, is that Jesus Christ always brings hope to the hopeless.

There is no such thing as a hopeless case or a hopeless cause with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let the world say what they will. Let man say what they will.

I gave you a testimony last night of Leon Alts. There was a man that the world said, he's a hopeless case, he's a hopeless cause, and today he is born again and he's serving the Lord. There's no such thing as hopelessness with Christ.

Jesus Christ is hope to the hopeless. Well, he brought hope to Bartimaeus. Blind Bartimaeus was hopelessly blind and he knew it, and he knew that Jesus Christ was his only hope.

No doctor could help him. You could give him a pair of glasses, that's not going to do anything. Surgery couldn't help him.

And his only hope was Christ. Now I want you to think for a minute what it would be like to be physically blind. Can you imagine never having ever seen the light of day? Can you imagine what it would be like when you hear somebody describe a sunset or a rainbow, but you yourself, you can't even imagine it because you've never seen anything but black.

Darkness. Can you imagine not ever having the privilege to see the face of your spouse, your wife or your husband? Never ever being able to see the precious faces of your children or your grandchildren? To be blind must be a horrible thing. But I want to address something tonight that I believe blind Bartimaeus is a type of today, and even in the church today.

I want to address something tonight that is far, far worse than physical blindness. What could be worse than that? What could be worse than never having seen the light of day? It's something worse than physical blindness. It's spiritual blindness.

A person can be physically blind and yet come to know Jesus, and when they die they go into glory, they enter into heaven, and their eyes are open and they'll never be blind again. But a person who is spiritually blind and who dies spiritually blind will not go to heaven. They will go to hell without any hope of ever getting out.

There is nothing more serious than being spiritually blind. Far worse than being physically blind. Now, the Bible refers to us being lost and in sin as being in terrible darkness.

Spiritual blindness is a condition that we were all born in. We were all born in sin. We were all dead in our trespasses and sins.

We were spiritually blind. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4, verses 3 and 4, But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. So Satan has blinded the minds of the lost.

And the most tragic part of all is that most of them do not know it. The worst part about being spiritually blind and deceived is that you don't know that you're deceived. The question I have tonight is, could it be that there are spiritual blinders on your eyes? Now, this is a humbling thing to have to recognize.

It's been humbling in my own life. Even after having walked with Christ, when I would have an encounter with God or my wife would confront me with something that I did not see, I was blind to. Could it be that you're not as spiritual as you think you are? Could it be that there could be spiritual blinders on your eyes or my eyes that I'm not aware of and you're not aware of? When you're deceived, you don't know you're deceived.

And it is a deception to think that you couldn't be deceived. How do you know? Bartimaeus knew he was physically blind. How does a person know if they're spiritually blind? I want to give you a few markers tonight, a few marks of spiritual blindness from the Word of God.

And here's the first one. Having religion without a relationship with Christ is to be spiritually blind and in the dark. Having religion without a personal relationship with Christ is to be spiritually blind and in the dark.

Turn to Matthew chapter 23, if you will. Or look at up here. I think our brother put all these scriptures up on the wall here.

So, Matthew chapter 23. Jesus is confronting the most religious people on the face of the earth at that time. They were called the Pharisees.

They knew scripture. They fasted. They tithed.

They were moral people. They were very religious people. But they were blind.

I think in that day, if you were to ask somebody, show me a spiritual man. Lead me to someone in this town who knows God. They would have led you to a Pharisee.

They would say, hey, these guys, they know the scriptures. These guys are in the synagogue. Every time the doors are open, they tithe.

They pray. They fast. They're spiritual men who know God.

But could it be that Jesus had a different opinion about them? Matthew chapter 23 and verse 15. Jesus speaking to the Pharisees says, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. You compass sea and land to make one proselyte.

And when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, you blind guides, which say whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing. But whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor.

You fools and blind for whether is greater the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold. And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing. But whosoever swears by the gift that is upon it.

He is guilty. You fools and blind for whether is greater the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gold. Move on down to verse 23.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you pay tithe of mint and anise and come in and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith. These ought you have to done and not to leave the other undone. You blind guides which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee! Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Even so, you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Folks, you can be totally religious and absolutely blind. You can be totally religious and yet absolutely lost.

What was the mark of the blindness of these Pharisees? They always focused on the external. They focused on the outward appearance, but Jesus said He looks beyond the outward man and He looks to the heart. And when He looked to the heart of these Pharisees, He did not see them clean and righteous.

He saw them full of sin and iniquity and hypocrisy. To be religious but not have a personal relationship with Christ is to be blind. And it can happen today, folks.

It can happen, someone who sits religiously in a church pew, every time the doors are open, you can give, you can tithe, you can say prayers, you can sing songs, and yet your heart be a million miles away from Christ. Religious, but lost. Religious, but blind.

Isaiah 64, verse 6 says that even our righteous acts are as filthy rags in the sight of a holy God. So many people, especially who grow up in the church, they grow up in the church, they said a sinner's prayer, they were baptized, but they never met the living Christ. And there's a huge difference between being dead in religion and being alive in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tremendous difference. Some of the most spiritually blind people on earth are religiously sitting in church pews every single Sunday, and the greatest tragedy of all is to be blind and in the dark and not know it. Now ask yourself, as I have had to ask myself, brothers and sisters, Lord, am I just plain religious? Or do I have a living, vibrant relationship with you? Am I going, you see, no one knows you like your wife or your husband.

No one knows you like your children. And it grieves me to hear the story time and time again, and everywhere I go you hear the same story of people, children who grew up, and once it came time to leave the home, they left the church. You know why? Many times this is why.

Because daddy was not the same man on Sunday at church as he was at home. He wore a mask. He was clothed in hypocrisy.

And there's nothing that Jesus spoke stronger against than hypocrisy and dishonesty. He hated hypocrisy. A hypocrite is not someone who struggles, and who is honest and confesses their sin and gets up again.

A hypocrite is not someone who is imperfect. A hypocrite is someone who is a pretender. They're pretending that all is well.

The outside of the cup looks good. You can dress right. You can have the external appearance that looks holy and pious.

But if your heart is not right with Jesus Christ, and you're putting on an outward show, and you're not real on the inside, Jesus said, blind hypocrites. That's what He says. There's a big difference in being religious,

and having a relationship with Christ.

Jesus wants us to be for real. He wants us to remove the mask, and let Him do the deep work of the heart, because this is what the Son of God does. When He comes in, He changes you from the inside out.

It starts on the inside. It starts at the heart. But there's another type of spiritually blind man.

He or she thinks that they can be saved, and yet not changed. In other words, let us continue in sin that grace may abound. Now I don't know how it is up in Wisconsin, but in the Bible Belt where I am, this is what we face the most.

In the church, you have people who say, hey, you ask them, are you saved? Yes, I'm saved. I did that when I was a kid. You did what? Well, I came to the altar, and I said a prayer, and I've been baptized, and I put my name on the decision card, and I'm a member of a church.

Yes, but are you born again? Have you passed from death to life? Has anything changed since you, quote, got saved? And many of them came to the altar, but they didn't meet Jesus. And if you didn't meet Jesus, you didn't get saved. And if you didn't get changed, you didn't get saved.

Don't be deceived. To think that you can continue in sin and still make heaven because you said a prayer way back yonder is to be blind and be deceived. Don't be deceived.

Those who God saves, He changes. He changes from the inside out. Are you gonna be perfect in one instant? Well, spiritually, we're clothed with His righteousness, but outwardly, no.

We're being sanctified day by day. We're continually being conformed to the likeness of Christ. But I'm talking about the person who is continuing in sin, and I've talked to them before.

Yes, I'm saved. There's no fruit in their life. They've not been changed, and yet they have this false sense of security that they're gonna make it to heaven.

It is a lie. It is a lie from the pit of hell. Are you saved? Yeah, saved from what? The Bible says Jesus Christ came to save us from our sins.

Has He saved you from lying, and from cheating, and from gossip, and from bitterness, and from unforgiveness? Has He saved you from lust, and pornography, and anger, and holding a grudge? Has He saved you from sin? Jesus, you shall call His name Jesus, the angel said, for He shall save His people from their sins. You cannot meet the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the King of glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet remain the same. What happened to blind Bartimaeus when he met Jesus? His eyes were opened, and he was never the same again.

And when you meet the living Christ, it is impossible not to be changed. Those He saves, He changes. Now in case you wonder if I'm just making this up, let's see what the Bible says.

Go to the Word of God. 2 Corinthians 5:17 What does it say? Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new.

1 Corinthians chapter 6 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived. Notice that. Be not deceived.

Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Paul says you were this. You no longer are. And those who continue in that, be not deceived.

You will not inherit the kingdom of God. 1 John chapter 2 and verse 9 He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness and knoweth not whether he goeth because that darkness has blinded his eyes. Someone who hates his brother, is there hatred in your heart for a brother or a sister? The Bible says you're blind. But he goes on to say in chapter 3 verse 15.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Revelation chapter 20 Revelation chapter 20 and verse 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Is your name written in the book of life? He goes on to list who is not written in the book of life. Chapter 21 verse 8 But the fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do all these wonderful works in your name and He will profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Those are the scariest words in the Bible to me.

Do you think any of them who stood before the Lord Jesus Christ thought they would hear those words from Christ? They thought they were saved. They thought they would be welcomed into heaven and yet the Lord Jesus Christ says, I never knew you. After all they've done, I never knew you.

Don't think that God saves anybody that He doesn't change. To believe that lie is to be deceived and blind. There's another marker of spiritual blindness.

Revelation chapter 3, Jesus addresses this group of people. Revelation chapter 3, when He's speaking to the church of Laodicea, they are those who think they can have Jesus as Savior but not follow Him as Lord. If you were to ask the members of the church of Laodicea if they were saved and in the light, you know what they would have said? Of course we are.

We're blessed. We're rich. We're increased with goods.

We're in need of nothing. But notice what Jesus says to them. Verse 17, Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

He says before that, I wish that you were hot or cold, but because you are lukewarm, I'm about to spew you out of my mouth. You've got to understand, brothers and sisters, and I have to understand that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord, and you cannot separate Savior from Lord. You trust Him as Savior for the cleansing and forgiveness of your sin, and you follow Him as Lord of all your heart.

Why? Because love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, and my all. He is Savior and He is Lord. He is Lord of all.

There's one more I want to address. Those who have no compassion for their neighbor are spiritually blind. Those who have no compassion for their neighbor are spiritually blind.

Mark chapter 8. Let's look at this one together. Gospel of Mark chapter 8. Jesus says in verse 2, this is when the multitude was gathered around Him. They had nothing to eat.

This wasn't the feeding of the 5,000. This was the feeding of the 4,000. Mark chapter 8. But He says in verse 2, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days and have nothing to eat.

Jesus had compassion on the multitude. Move on down to verse 15. He charged them saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod.

And they reasoned among themselves saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, Why reason ye because ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand. Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? Having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke those five loaves among the 5,000, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They said, Twelve.

And when the seven among the 4,000, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They said, Seven. And He said unto them, How is it that you do not understand? How is it that you don't see? And He comes to Bethsaida, and they bring a blind man unto Him, and He besought Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town.

And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw aught. And he looked up and said, I see men as trees walking. After that, He put His hands again upon his eyes and made him look up, and he was restored and saw every man clearly.

What is it to be blind? It is to have no compassion for your neighbor, no compassion for the lost. It's to come and worship on Sunday morning, but never have a broken heart for those who don't know Jesus. And Jesus gives an example here.

He could have healed this blind man by one spoken word, but He heals him in a way, in such a way that the first time He touches him, the blind man's eyes are opened, but he says, I see men, but they're like trees walking. How many of us see men, but only like trees? A tree doesn't have a soul. A tree is not destined for heaven or hell.

A tree has no feelings. I don't look at a tree and weep over that tree, even when it's cut down. But a man, a woman, a child has a soul, brothers and sisters.

When you see the lost and you see your neighbor and you see those that are in the bars tonight, does your heart break? Does your heart break? Do tears well up in your eyes? If not, it's because we see men only as trees and we see them only as trees because we have blinders on our eyes. I know it's a heavy word. I know it can be a hard word.

Let it pierce. Let it pierce your heart. Say, God, I don't weep over the lost.

My heart is not broken like it should be. What do you need? You need Jesus, just like Bartimaeus needed Jesus to touch his eyes. And when Jesus touches your eyes, He will give you eyes of compassion.

He will give you eyes to see people unlike you've ever seen them before. Now, not everyone wants to come out of darkness, of sin into light of God's holy presence. And that's why Jesus asked the blind man.

I want to go back to Luke chapter 18. Having seen all these marks of spiritual blindness, be honest with yourself and ask yourself, am I religious? Am I religious or do I have a living relationship with God? Have I been changed since I've been saved? I say Jesus is my Savior. Am I following Him as Lord? Do I see the lost as Christ sees the lost? Is my heart broken for them or do I see them as men, as trees walking? And if you say there's blinders on my eyes, I know tonight I have blinders on my eyes.

I've had deception. Then you're the one Jesus will meet with tonight. Those who say, Lord, I want to see.

You see, Jesus came to the blind man in verse 41 and He asked him this question that I find interesting. Verse 41, Jesus said to blind Bartimaeus, What will thou that I shall do unto thee? In other words, what do you want me to do for you? That seems obvious, does it not? Lord, I want to see. I'm blind.

I want to have my sight. Why does Jesus ask that question? Because not everybody wants to see. Not everybody wants to come into the light.

Not everybody wants Jesus to open their eyes. You know why? Because it can be painful. It can be painful to have to admit, Lord, I've been religious.

I've been singing all the songs and honoring You with my lips, but my heart has been far from You. Lord, I've been talking about the lost, but I don't weep for them. It's painful to admit.

It's especially painful for a proud man or a proud woman to say, Lord, I've been blind. I've been a fake. I've been a phony.

I've had pretension and I want You to strip it away tonight. It's painful to come to the light. Not everybody wants to.

John chapter 3 verse 19. Here's an example of those who don't want to. John chapter 3 and verse 19.

Jesus said, This is the condemnation, that light is coming to the world. And men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

Have you ever noticed when you pick up an old piece of tin or kick over a rock, how all those creepy crawling creatures scurry for cover? They hate the light. They want nothing to do with the light. I remember as a young boy, my dad would come in there and oftentimes wake us up four o'clock in the morning.

Wake up, boys, he'd say. It's time to go to work. We lived on a ranch.

He'd turn on that bright light, and the first thing we'd do is pull those covers over our head. We didn't want the light. We wanted to stay in darkness because we wanted to stay asleep.

And much of the church is asleep today. Let's get honest. And the Lord says, He says, the Holy Spirit says, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

You say, Lord, I know I have blinders. Are you willing to come to the light? It's going to be painful. It's going to be painful to have to admit that I've been asleep.

But are you willing to come to the light? Or will we be like the old desert nomad that I read about who was lying in his tent one night, he woke up hungry in the middle of the night. He lit a candle and he began to eat some dates that we had in a bowl next to his bed. And he bit into one date and there was a worm.

So he threw it out the tent door. He picked up another date and bit into it, and there was another worm. So he threw it out.

You know what he did? He said, if I'm going to continue this, I won't have anything to eat. So he blows out the candle, gets back in the dark and eats all the dates. That's what some would rather do.

Let's eat worms rather than come to the light. Rather than let this word pierce my heart and strip me of pretense and pride and let your holy light shine on me. Would you rather stay in darkness or do you want Jesus to do His deeper work tonight? Jesus asked Bartimaeus, what do you want me to do for you? He said, Lord, I want to see.

Even though it be painful, even though it caused me to cry like Isaiah the prophet, woe is me for I'm undone. I want to look at some more scripture. Isaiah chapter 5. Look at this.

Another example of someone who came to the light. Isaiah chapter 5. And notice these verses with me in the fifth chapter of Isaiah. I'm just going to read the first part of each verse.

Verse 8. Woe unto them, Isaiah the prophet says. Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, that there be no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth. Verse 11.

Woe unto them. Verse 18. Woe unto them.

Verse 20. Woe unto them. Verse 21.

Woe unto them. Verse 22. Woe unto them.

He's pointing. Woe unto them. And then he has this vision of the Lord Jesus Christ high and lifted up and the train of His robe fills the temple.

And what does Isaiah say? Woe unto them. Chapter 6, verse 5. Isaiah says, Then said I, Woe is me. Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

And my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. It shook Him to the core, because the holiness of God, the light of God, illuminates the sinfulness of man. It strips those blinders off our eyes.

We become like Job who said, I've heard of you, God, by the hearing of my ear, but now my eyes have seen you, and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. Peter was in the same boat with Jesus. And when he realized he was in the boat with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Scripture says he fell on his knees and said, Lord, get away from me, for I am a sinful man.

It can be painful to come to the light when God opens our eyes and we finally see that we've grieved His heart, that we've sinned against Him. But brothers and sisters, if you're here tonight and you say, Lord, I don't care what the cost is. I don't care how bad it hurts for me to have to confess, to come to the light.

I want you to do whatever it takes to remove the blinders from my eyes. God will meet with you tonight. Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

But Jesus of Nazareth waits for something. What does He wait for? He awaits to hear your humble cry. Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, but if Bartimaeus would have stayed quiet and silent and never cried out to Jesus, he would have passed right by Bartimaeus.

Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Jesus of Nazareth waits your humble cry. What did Bartimaeus do? The Scripture says in Luke 18, notice what he does.

When Jesus passes by, he says in verse 38, he cried, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And when they which went before rebuked him that he should hold his peace, he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. Notice something about this man's prayer.

First of all, it was short. You don't have to have a long, eloquent prayer if it's coming from the heart and you're desperate for God. The second thing I love about it, it was undignified.

He didn't care what other people were thinking about him. He was desperate. He was blind.

Jesus, have mercy on me. And the religious crowd say, Shh, don't act that way. Is that necessary? Hush.

You don't have to cry out. You don't have to scream. Bartimaeus would have said, Don't you see? I can't see.

I'm blind. He's my only hope. Jesus, have mercy on me.

There's a time, brothers and sisters, when you've got to cry out from your gut because you're desperate. And you say, Lord, I've been asleep and my only hope is for you to strip me of this religious pride and pretense and do something real in my heart. Open my eyes.

He cried out, Oh, that an undignified sinner would even cry out tonight and say, Jesus, have mercy on me. Oh, that a religious man would say, Jesus, have mercy on me. When I've been, I've had no compassion for people.

I stand with my rules and my traditions and my regulations, but I do not care about a person's soul. Have mercy on me, Jesus. Remove these blinders from my eyes.

Break my heart and heart. Those who cry out like that, watch what happens. The Scripture says in verse 40, having heard this cry, verse 40, Jesus stood.

He's passing by. Bartimaeus cries and he stands still. That's what happens.

Even in a service, a meeting like this tonight, when Jesus of Nazareth hears somebody cry out from the desperate heart. Is that necessary to cry out like that, Brother Brian? It is for the desperate. It is for those who see their need for Christ.

I've shared with you before, when we were in such a desperate case with Luke, I put my head in my pillow and I screamed from my gut, God, help us. There was not a whispering prayer. Jesus Christ hears that desperate cry.

You say you want your children saved. Do you cry out to God in prayer? You say you want God to deliver you. Do you pray? Do you cry out? You say you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Do you ask Him? Do you cry? Do you pray? That's what He waits for. He waits for that. He waits for the desperate who will press through the crowd.

Someone like that woman with the issue of blood. You remember she went to all the doctors? Nobody could help her but she said, if I can press through the crowd and just touch the hem of His garment, I will be made whole. She was desperate and that's why she pressed through the crowd and she laid hold of the hem of Jesus' garment and she was made whole.

These are the people that Jesus Christ meets with. They're desperate. They're hungry.

They're thirsty. They know He's their only hope. The Canaanite woman who came to Jesus and said, Lord, my daughter is demon possessed and Jesus didn't answer her.

So she persistently prayed, Lord, help me. The disciples said, send her away. Jesus said to her, I've not been sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Lord, help me. He said, it's not meat to take the children's bread and to give it to dogs. She said, that's true, Lord, but even the dogs will eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table.

And Jesus must have smiled and said, oh woman, great is your faith. I don't believe He was just calling her a Gentile dog. I believe He was testing and trying her faith and showing those who were around her, listen, you people, you disciples, look at this woman.

She has something that you don't have. She's got tenacity. She's got faith.

She's got desperation. She will not let me go until I answer her. And that's the kind of faith He's looking for.

Jesus says again in Luke 18, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth? What kind of faith? The faith that will press through the crowd. The faith that will cry out, Jesus have mercy on me. The faith that will, like the Canaanite woman say, Lord, my daughter, my son is away from you.

I will not let you go until you answer me. The faith that those men had when they saw their buddy paralyzed and lying on a mat, and they said, we've got to get you to Jesus. And they pick him up and they take him to Jesus, but the house is full.

They can't get into the house. Are they going to give up? Are they going to be satisfied? Oh, sorry, you know, it's just the way it's going to be from now on. No, they said, let's crawl up on that roof and let's tear off the roof and let's lower him down through the roof to Jesus.

That's the kind of faith. That's the kind of persistence, the desperation that the Lord hears, those cries, the desperate cries. Psalm 34 verse 17.

The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth and delivereth them out of all their troubles. Bartimaeus' cry was heard. Jesus stopped.

And when Jesus stopped, salvation comes. Bartimaeus not only received his sight, you know what else he received? Salvation. How do you know he was saved? I know he was saved because of the last verse.

It says immediately he received his sight and followed him. He followed Jesus. A glorifying God in all the people when they saw it gave praise to God.

Mark's gospel in chapter 10 verse 50 tells us that Bartimaeus threw off his outer garment and he followed Christ. Is it not time, friends? Listen, is it not time? To throw off the pretense, throw off the outer garment of unbelief, throw off the outer garment of pride, pour out the pills, pour out the booze, turn off the TV, set aside the computer, and follow this One who is the lover of your soul, who gave His all for you, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will touch you and make you whole. Follow Him.

That's what he did. His eyes were opened and he followed Him. And when our eyes are opened to see the glory of Jesus, you don't desire, you don't want to go anywhere else.

There's no one who can satisfy your soul like Jesus. And you want to follow Him. You want to follow Him with all your heart.

When that happens, you can say and sing with truth, amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found was blind. But now I see.

But I want to leave you with one final warning. And it's so critical that we hear this. Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

He will meet tonight with whoever will cry out to Him desperately. But I'll tell you this. He will not always pass by.

There will come a time in each and every person's life and each and every church when Jesus of Nazareth no longer passes by. This was the last time that Jesus would pass by through Jericho to Jerusalem because after this, He was going to the cross. If Bartimaeus would not have cried out this time, he would have missed his last call.

Did you know there comes a time when God's patience has ended with a nation who is in rebellion? And God's mercy turns into judgment. Did you know there's a time when a person will hear God's call, but it's their last call? Did you know there's a time this incredible grace and mercy that we experience, God reaching out His arms, God calling us, but if we continue to say no, if we continue to turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to the Lord, the time comes when He no longer passes by. Suppose Bartimaeus would have said, it's Jesus of Nazareth? Oh, I'll catch Him next week.

Or maybe the next time He comes through, He would have missed it. He would have stayed blind till the day He died. I have a good friend in Guymon, Oklahoma that pastors a Hispanic church.

His name is Brother Cuco. We were actually speaking about him today at breakfast. Brother Cuco was leading a Bible study one night in Liberal, Kansas.

And there was a young man who just happened to pop in and come through the doors because his mom was attending this Bible study. And Brother Cuco had such a burden for this young man's soul. So he went over and he talked to him and he said, why don't you stay for the Bible study? The young man said, no.

He said, another time, not tonight. He said, please, please stay. No, he said, I'm going to go tonight.

I just came to get some money for mom. And he wouldn't let him go. He said, listen, I know you don't know Jesus.

And he began to plead with this young man to give his heart to Christ. And the young man said this. He said, I know what you're saying and what you're telling me is true.

But can you just give me another chance, another time? And Brother Cuco said, if it was up to me, I could give you another chance. But it's not up to me. That young man that very night walked out the doors.

He got in the car with two friends. They bought some drugs, cocaine. It was in little plastic bags.

They were driving down the street. The next thing they knew, the lights were flashing behind them. They panic.

He's sitting in the middle in between his two friends. The car pulls over. And in a panic, he puts the drugs in his mouth and he swallows that sack of drugs.

The cop writes a ticket for whatever it was, speeding and searches the car, can't find anything. And as soon as they drive off, this young man is in excruciating pain and he's bent over in the car. He says, get me to the hospital now.

They rush him to the emergency room and he dies on the emergency room table. That very night, a man of God was pleading with him, but he didn't take it seriously. That very night, a man of God, it was Christ in Brother Kuko pleading, come to Christ, stay for the Bible study.

Not now. Maybe another day, he says. Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

He awaits our humble cry. He will not pass by forever. You say, is that in the Bible? It sure is.

Amos 7, verse 8. Every time you read in the Scriptures some reference to God passing by, He's always passing by in mercy. But there comes a time when His mercy turns to judgment. Amos 7, verse 8. The Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, a plumb line.

Then said the Lord, behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. I will not again pass by them anymore. You hear that? I will not pass by here anymore.

You've heard your call. That's it. God told Noah that his spirit would not always strive with man.

And there came a day when God sent the flood after 120 years of patience and pleading with people to repent. Amos chapter 8, verse 2. He said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, a basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, the end is come upon my people of Israel.

I will not again pass by them anymore. Folks, I plead with you in Jesus' name to allow the Holy Spirit of God to search your heart and to reveal if there be any scales upon your eyes, any blinders, that this very night you cry out to God and have Him remove those blinders that you may see clearly. Don't be satisfied

with anything less than a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

Don't be satisfied with anything less than a heart that is broken over the lost and that loves what He loves and hates what He hates and weeps over what He weeps over. Would you bow your heads with me just right where you are. Bow your heads with me.

And I want you to listen to this poem that was written by a man of God that I highly respect, Brother Zak Poonen from India. And I want you to let this penetrate your heart and get honest with God. And if you agree with it, let this be your prayer.

Lord, give me light. If I have not forsaken all in answer to Thy loving call, if I've kept something back from Thee, Lord, give me light that I might see. Lord, help me judge myself each day to walk this new and living way.

I seek Thy grace with all my heart to be made pure just as Thou art. If anything upon this earth attracts me with this sense of worth, if money has a hold on me, Lord, give me light that I might see. If all my life revolves around me and thoughts of my own family, if I am living selfishly, Lord, give me light that I might see.

Is there some good that I should have done? Is there some soul I should have won? Have I hurt someone thoughtlessly? Lord, give me light that I might see. If someone's failure has not wrought concern and care within my heart, if I've judged others inwardly, Lord, give me light that I might see. If I have cared for man's applause or sought my own and shunned the cross, if I have feared man's mockery, Lord, give me light that I might see.

If I have not sought Thy power in prayer because of earthly toils and care, if I am not longing after Thee, Lord, give me light that I might see. The Scripture says today, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart. Harden not your heart.

And brother Johnny, if you'll come, I want you to lead us in a song, Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior. Hear My Humble Cry. And brothers and sisters, here's the simple invitation and appeal.

Here it is. Lord, open my eyes that I may see. Lord, give me light that I may see.

If the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart tonight, it's critical, it's vital that you respond to Him. God is a merciful God. He is a loving God.

He is a patient God. But you cannot trifle with His mercy or with His patience. When He passes by, there's only one response that is a right response, and that is, Lord Jesus, hear my cry tonight.

Open my eyes. Strip me of pride and pretense. Lord, let me see.

If I've been deceived, let me see. He loves you, brothers and sisters. He loves you, everyone here.

But when He passes by, you better respond. Will you stand with me as we sing? And if God is calling you, if the Holy Spirit is wooing you, if He's prompting you, I want you to come forward tonight. There's empty pews on the front where we can kneel in prayer, where we can cry out to God.

Don't worry. Listen, when a blind man knows he's blind, he doesn't care what people are thinking about him. He cries out from his heart.

All that matters is you and Jesus. He's your hope. He's hope to the hopeless.

He is life to the dead. He's a living Christ. He gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

He saves the lost. There's no one here, if you'd be lost, that Jesus Christ cannot save. No sin that He cannot forgive tonight.

The only one He can't forgive is the one you refuse to confess and bring to the light. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. All sin.

Respond to Him tonight. Father, I pray, I pray, Father God, that You would search our hearts, that You would show us, Lord God, if there be any blinders upon our eyes, spiritual blinders. Lord, if there be any deception that is holding us back, I pray, God, I pray that even though the external and outward appearance may look right, only You know the heart.

And I'm asking You to penetrate the heart tonight, God. And strip us of religious façade and make us for real with You. Jesus, You're passing by tonight.

Meet with us, I pray. And give us the grace to respond. Lord, I commit this invitation to You.

Do Your work, Lord, as only You can, in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen. I praise You for Your grace tonight.

I praise You for Your grace, Lord. Thank You, Jesus. There are folks dealing with God at the altar.

I want to still give time. If there's anyone else that needs to come, you want to come, you say, Lord, I want to be for real. God, I want to be for real.

I don't want to be blind. Open my eyes that I might see. There's still time for You to come.

Come. Praise God. Anybody else, come.

Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. Holy Spirit, we need You.

We need You. You're the Spirit of truth, O God. Search our hearts tonight.

Search our hearts tonight, O God. Remove every blinder, O God. I know that God is working in somebody's heart.

I know He's at work tonight. If there be anyone else, perhaps you're resisting. You're resisting the Holy Spirit.

Come. Come to Jesus. Come tonight.

Let Him do His deep work of grace in your heart. Get honest with God. Thank you, Lord.

Lord Jesus, we thank You for Your incredible mercy tonight, O God. We thank You for Your great, great, great love for us. We thank You, Lord.

You saved us not to become religious, not to die in dead, religious and outward form, but to be transformed from the inside out. Lord Jesus, I ask You, I ask You, Lord, to tear down every wall tonight. I

ask You, Lord God, to open every eye.

I ask You to reach in deep, Lord. Some of these things go so deep. I ask You to root out all that doesn't belong, all that's not of You.

Lord Jesus, touch our eyes that we might see. Come, walk in the midst of our hearts. Clean it up, Lord God.

Wash over us tonight. Wash us in the precious and cleansing blood that You shed at Calvary. And we shall be whiter than snow.

Thank You, Savior. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for Your cleansing blood, the blood that washes away all sin. I thank You, Lord.

I praise You, God. Lord, so many of us, I myself, have fallen short of Your glory. And You've been so merciful and so patient, Lord God.

But I'm hungry, Lord. I'm hungry for reality. And others here tonight who are kneeling before You are hungry for reality.

We're hungry, Lord. We don't want a single ounce of hypocrisy in our lives. So I'm praying tonight that You burn it all up.

God, that You make us real through and through. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You for the joy that comes from knowing You.

Thank You for the peace that surpasses all understanding. God, I praise You tonight. We're just going to wait before the Lord for a little bit longer.

Just talk to Him, cry out to Him from your own heart. We praise You, Lord. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, fix my eyes upon You. Fill my vision with You alone. Lord, fill me with Your Spirit, Your life-giving Spirit.

And produce Christ-likeness through me. Give me Your eyes that I might see, Your ears that I may hear, what You see and what You hear. Touch my heart, Lord, and give me Your compassion that I may carry the compassion of You, Jesus, to this lost world.

Thank You, Jesus. Thank You for choosing to use weak people like us who are simply willing to get honest with You and to depend upon You. Make us for real through and through.

Thank You, Jesus. We love You and we praise You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Amen. Just thank Him tonight from your heart. Praise Him.

Lord, we do. We thank You and we praise You for Your goodness, for Your greatness, Lord. Thank You for Your life-giving Spirit, O God.

Thank You for the joy of serving You, Lord. Thank You for Your beautiful church, Your bride, Your body. Lord, I thank You that You're coming back for a pure, spotless bride.

Now, while we await Your return, Lord, help us not to waste time. Help us to go forth from this place, Lord, with hearts of compassion, eyes of compassion, free, free indeed. We praise You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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