

# Mark - a Wayside Miracle

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon explores the miracle of Bartimaeus as a profound illustration of faith, spiritual blindness, and the call to discipleship through Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 39:14

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 9:27-31, Matthew 18:20, Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 11:9-10, Luke 18:35-43

**Topics:** "Miracle"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Bartimaeus, a blind man who cried out to Jesus for mercy. The preacher emphasizes the importance of recognizing our need for Jesus and believing that He can help us. He highlights the journey of Bartimaeus from physical blindness to both physical and spiritual well-being. The preacher also emphasizes the call of Christ to Bartimaeus personally and how this encounter led to discipleship. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to cry out to Jesus in their times of need and to have faith in His ability to bring healing and transformation.

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## Transcript

Now, would you like to turn with me, please, to Mark, chapter 10? And I'm going to read again the incident which is the basis of our message this morning. It's a record of an event which took place in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ when he was here upon earth. We'll read it again because I would like it to be fixed in our minds as we come to learn some lessons from it.

Mark 10, beginning with verse 46, and once again I'm going to read from the New International Version. Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples together with a large crowd were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus, that is, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging.

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. Jesus stopped and said, call him.

So they called to the blind man, cheer up, on your feet, he is calling you. 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.

Jericho, the scene of this episode, is located some 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Just have it in your mind. It's a lovely place.

It's been called by someone a little paradise. Jerusalem is 3,300 feet higher, and so when you come to the balmy air of Jericho, well, it's a far more pleasant situation. It's no wonder that Mark Antony chose to give this lovely city to Cleopatra, the Egyptian queen, as a gift.

Not all of us can give gifts like that, of course, but he could, and he did, as a token of his affection for the said lady. Well now, our Lord Jesus Christ and his entourage have arrived at Jericho. Remember, they're on their way to Jerusalem to the Passover feast.

Jesus is on his way to death. He's going to die. He has set his face like flint, and with unyielding determination, he is on his way to lay down his life so that men might receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of everlasting life through him.

There, this miracle took place. The miracle itself is as beautiful as it is expressive of the powerful word and grace of our Lord Jesus. But I would like you to remember also that there is a sense in which it is symbolic.

That is, it speaks to us not simply of the healing of the body. By the time we come to the end of the story, there's something much more here than mere physical healing. The man has faith in Jesus Christ, and the faith that he has in Jesus Christ has by this time so linked him with Jesus Christ that he follows him on the way.

Now, this is a beautiful picture, you see. He had faith in Jesus Christ, that faith that so linked him with a person of Jesus that he leaves everything and he follows him in the way so that he becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ. Now, it's necessary for us to remember when we refer to this symbolical aspect of the story that in the Old and the New Testament, the real problem of humanity is described sometimes in terms of blindness.

I don't know whether you've ever encountered this, but if you have not, let me remind you this is true. You have encountered it, I'm sure, because at Christmastime we read the passage from Isaiah chapter 9, which goes like this. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned, and the reason, because unto us a son is given. A child has been born. The government shall be upon his shoulders, and he brings light into the darkness.

He opens the eyes of the blind, not only physically, but spiritually. Later on, the same prophet Isaiah, in comforting the people of his day, says this. Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way.

Your God will come. He will save you. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the years of the deaf will be unstopped.

Paul tells us, coming now to the New Testament, that the problem of the human race can be described in this way. The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers. This is very humbling, but here it is.

The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel, even though it is the gospel of the glory of Christ, and the Christ is the image of God. It's as serious as that. God himself, in all his glory, has manifested himself in the person of the Lord Jesus, and there are

people in this world who, because they're blinded, can see nothing in him, nothing to him.

So that, you see, Paul tells us that his commission to preach the gospel was given him in these terms. I'm just illustrating, just giving a few examples of this theme. The Lord said to Saul on the way to Damascus when he appeared to him and turned him from darkness to light personally, I am sending you, he says to the Gentiles, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

Now that's enough, isn't it? To prove, you see, that this picture of blindness is in the New Testament often symbolic of a spiritual condition, even when we encounter it on the plane of the physical, so that when Jesus healed a case of physical blindness, it may well speak to us about certain principles concerning the way in which he heals spiritual blindness. And I think we shall encounter that very principle here this morning. Now let us bear in mind then these two dimensions to the fascinating event before us.

And the first thing I would like us to notice is the cry that attracted attention. Jesus and his disciples together with a large crowd were leaving the city. This blind man, Bartimaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging, and when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth that was passing by, he began to shout, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

Everything seemed normal, that is normal in that particular setting. Everything seemed reasonably normal until this one man quite excitedly began to shout and couldn't be stopped. But we need to look and we need to consider for a moment the calamity that occasioned the need to shout.

It's so easy to say it, isn't it? I don't suppose any of us here this morning are blind. We do have blind folk who come to us from time to time. Bartimaeus was blind.

Those of us who have the gift of sight intact simply cannot begin to understand the tragedy of the sightless. Especially so in New Testament times when in addition to the normal deprivation involved, it was commonly believed that blind persons were particularly stricken of God. It was a token of divine judgment.

And then, of course, there was no known healing to most cases of blindness. Stricken by this depriving affliction and the spiritual stigma it entailed, you can well imagine the blind man's peculiar interest when he heard Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. You see, he had evidently heard of how our Lord Jesus Christ over the past three years or so had been showing mercy toward people with physical sicknesses as well as spiritual.

He had evidently heard that Jesus was not simply able to calm violent storms and to exorcise vicious demons and cure a variety of diseases, but that he had been able to bring sight to the blind, men who were as blind as he. I don't know whether he ever wished in his own heart that perhaps this Jesus of Nazareth would somehow come into Jericho for a weekend or something, that he might somehow appeal to him for help. I'm fairly sure he wasn't thinking of him at this particular point when someone said, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

No sooner did they mention his name, and the man began to shout. Jesus, Son of David, he cried, have mercy on me. Then we notice the persistency that refused to be stopped.

In verse 48 we read this, many rebuked him, told him to be quiet. You can almost hear them, can't you? But he shouted the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. You can't silence this man.

Now, we may be puzzled by the evident objection to Bartimaeus' shouts for mercy. But there were those who sought to restrain him, and they may have had good reason, or at least they may have had their own reasons anyway. Whether they're good is perhaps not quite so clear.

But he persisted, even if he disturbed the crowd. And let us say this. Folk used to turn out in those days to watch the pilgrims going to the Jerusalem Passover feast.

Folk used to line the wayside if they were not able to go themselves and just saluted the faithful who were going. And so, you see, there was an aura of the sacred about this scene. The pilgrims are on their way, and here are people of Jericho watching them go.

They can't go themselves, and Bartimaeus is among them, but he disturbs the atmosphere of the place, and he begins to shout. He persisted, despite the fact that they tried to stop him. He persisted, even if some of them were upset by the fact that he should address Jesus of Nazareth as Son of David.

I suppose this was probably the main reason why they objected to him shouting. You see, he was calling Jesus of Nazareth Son of David. You say, what is there to be upset about that? Well, this was the real issue between the scribes and the Pharisees on the one hand and Jesus on the other.

Jesus claimed that he was the Messiah, the Son of David. And the title Son of David meant that he was the Messiah. You remember how a little later on they objected to the fact that the little children were crying to Jesus, and they used this same title, Son of David.

And the Pharisees and the scribes and the leaders objected vehemently. Why are you allowing them to say things like this about you? Well, it was because of this. They conceded that he was the Messiah, the promised one, the one that God was going to send into the world to be the Savior of the lost.

It's not only the children who conceded that title to Jesus. This man does it. And you see, what he's saying in effect is this, Jesus, there is no one quite like you who's come this way.

I can ask you to do things that I can't ask the scribes and the Pharisees. I can ask you to do things that I can't ask anyone else to do because you're the Son of David. I believe the Messiah has arrived, and you are the Messiah.

And so I'm asking you, I'm begging you, and I'm not going to stop shouting, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. You got it? So Bartimaeus cried and cried, and the sense of his need overwhelmed any sense of shame. The cry that attracted attention.

Now come with me behind that. We've got to ask ourselves the question, and we've got to answer it. We've got to ask ourselves a question about the circumstances that made it impossible for him to be quiet.

There were such circumstances. What were they? That blind man was no precursor of our modern social rebels or anarchists. He was not necessarily disrespectful of the establishment nor fond of hearing his own voice.

But his condition and circumstances made it virtually impossible for him to be silent. Now, one, his was a conscious need. Two, he had an emerging conviction in his soul.

His conscious condition of being blind and his emerging conviction that Jesus could heal that blindness bring these two things together, and the man simply cannot be silenced. Now let's look at them very

briefly. His conscious condition.

Of course, I'm saying the obvious now. I'm very aware of that. Bartimaeus was blind.

He could not see. And without my unnecessarily attempting to prove the evident, he could not otherwise than be conscious of the considerable deprivation and disability that blindness implied, even if he had no pain. His very dependence upon others and the very fact that he was there begging that he might ache out a little bit of a living.

Everything spelt his awareness of his need. He couldn't be otherwise than aware of it. You see, there are some conditions of equal seriousness, but they're not actually felt by people.

You can have a very serious physical condition, and at certain stages in the development of that condition you don't feel anything wrong. If you did feel something wrong, then that would be to your profit because you do something about it. But with blindness, you know it's there.

You're dependent upon other people. It's difficult. You just know all the time.

You live with it, and you're aware of it. Blindness affords no respite from a person's awareness of his need, however accustomed he may have become to it. And Bartimaeus was blind, his conscious condition.

Now, add to that his emerging conviction. He was becoming, even if he was not already thoroughly and completely convinced, he was becoming convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-promised Messiah. Now, it's not necessary to believe that this man knew everything, that the Old Testament tells us about the Messiah that was to come, the Savior that was to come.

But he certainly believed that the promised Son of David, the Messiah of the Scriptures, was merciful and mighty. Having heard of Jesus' healing power, even in cases of physical blindness, he could not let this opportunity pass, therefore, without pleading for help. To do so would be irrational and foolhardy and suicidal.

And then, of course, when he was told, you see, that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, can't you sense the urgency of it? Here he was with his need that no one else could meet. Here is Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Messiah, who can deal with this problem. And yet Jesus has not come to stay in Jericho for a long time.

He's on his way through. He's going somewhere else. So, you see, the man put two and two together.

And with the astuteness of a blind man, he saw it. He said, I must shout now and shout irrespective of whoever tries to keep me silent. I must shout now or never.

He may never return. I may never see him again. I may never hear him again.

I may never be within reach of him again. And so shout he did. Shout until he upset the crowd.

Shout until he was heard. Shout despite every objection. Shout for help.

Whilst the only one qualified to bring such help was within earshot. Now, spiritual blindness, the more serious kind of blindness, lacks this ingredient of creating and maintaining in men an awareness of their condition. This is one of the sad, this is one of the terrifying things about spiritual blindness.

We have been born that way. And we may have it. And we are living in a world where all are alike blind apart from those whom Jesus has healed.

And you see, we may not be aware of it. We take our normal, natural condition as that which was meant to be. It doesn't hurt us very much.

We don't feel a pinch in the body. About the only time when we become aware of the fact that there is a dimension that we are out of touch with is when we hear somebody give what we call a Christian testimony or witness. Who says, whereas I was blind, I can now see.

God has become real to me. And we hear people sing something like heaven above is softer blue. Earth beneath is sweeter green.

Something lives in every hue that Christless eyes have never seen. And we hear people sing about the glories of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we really don't find anything to sing about.

We don't see that he's all that wonderful at all. We don't know anything about his power. We don't know anything about his love.

We've never felt it. Maybe we've been in an emotional meeting once or twice and we've been a little bit moved. But it's nothing to talk and shout about.

We're blind to it all. Blind to the reality and glory of God and the work of his Son. We know neither the peril of our own condition nor the provision made for our salvation.

We're blind, you see. And so we never cry. We never shout.

We're sedate, smug, complacent, satisfied. And it's all because we don't know that we're blind. Allow me to ask a question this morning.

I trust I can do so in the spirit of my Lord. But it's a personal one and I want to ask it personally to the individuals present here today. Are you aware that whatever the state of your physical sight, you are by nature spiritually blind? You aware of that? If not, I ask you right where you are in your seat this morning, pray the Holy Spirit to show you your blindness and to reveal to you your condition, to convince you and to convict you until you know that you need none less than the Messiah of the Scriptures, the Son of David, the Son of God, the Promised Deliverer.

It's wonderful to have those of you who are visiting us this morning as well as those who are so regular with us in worship. It's wonderful to have you. It's great to be together.

And you see, it's a great thing that we are found together on the Lord's Day in a place like this. I'll tell you why. Because our Lord has made a promise that He comes regularly this way.

He does. Now there is no place in the universe but that our Lord can reach that place. No place.

And there have been those who have cried for sight from the most abysmal dungeons, morally and otherwise, and they've received it. Somebody was ringing me on the telephone only this week. He was seeking for a job in Christian work, an opportunity to express, to use his gifts for Christ.

And he was telling me how he was converted in prison. Just one illustration. You see, our Lord hears prayer from any place in the universe where a man in his need sees God in his grace as able to meet that need and cries.

But you see, there's something far more precious about our being here this morning. He has gone on record. He has gone on covenant.

And he has said, where two or three are gathered together in my name, I'm there. I'm there. So that I can say to you this morning, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

And he's lingering with us throughout this hour because he's promised to be here. He's within the sound of your cry, if you call to him. And there is no question about it.

There will be those who will be blessed here this morning, despite the feebleness of the preacher and of every other human thing which is fallible. Despite all that, there will be men and women who will be blessed by him here this morning, as sure as he is God. So you can cry to him.

If you sense your need, and if you believe that he can help you, just cry. Now that brings me to the last scene, the cure that resulted in discipleship. Briefly note the pilgrimage of Bartimaeus from physical blindness to physical and spiritual well-being.

Now I want you to notice how our Lord did it. Oh, this is a beautiful story. Read it when you go home.

Read it over again and you'll see much more in it. Notice the call of Christ to him personally. Jesus stopped and said, call him.

See, it started off with Bartimaeus calling for Jesus. Jesus stopped and said to the folk around him, call him. So they called to the blind man, cheer up, on your feet, he's calling for you.

And you notice what he does, it's all so natural, isn't it? It's so true to life. You see, the man really wanted to be healed, he wanted his sight, and this is the opportunity. So he threw aside his cloak, just as if I were to throw my robe on one side.

He didn't want anything to fetter him or trip him or keep him up, hold him up at all. He threw it all on one side and he just made a dash. Somebody must have taken him by the hand, of course.

And brought him to Jesus. What I want to say is this, you see. You call upon him and sooner or later he'll call to you by name.

And say, come on, come near, bring your requests. Let's talk about it. There is a word in the book of Psalms which says like this, Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will answer you.

Call upon me. Go on calling, go on shouting, never mind who objects to it. Cry, cry, cry to him and he will hear you.

The call of Christ for him, the question of our Lord to him. This may sound strange to us. What do you want me to do for you, Jesus asked him.

Now you may smile at that. Evidently, from what we know of our Lord Jesus Christ, he would have known exactly what was wrong with this man and what he needed. Why then this question, what is it you want me

to do for you? Well, you see, probably the reason was this.

He wanted the man to be fully concentrating his mind upon his primary need. And then to make that request openly and deliberately, so that he would see that health sight is being given him as the gift of God through the son of David, the Messiah. And so he says, don't be vague about it, put it into so many words.

What are you asking me to do for you? And the man said, well, I want my sight. That brings me to the last thing. Hearing that Jesus made a command.

Now I'm going to Luke here to supplement Mark. Because Luke adds something that Mark doesn't tell us and I think it's important. Jesus commanded him in these words, Luke 18, 42.

Jesus said to him, receive your sight. Now I don't know how that strikes you. Here is a man who's blind, you see, and nobody could bring him his sight.

And Jesus has called him to him and Jesus has asked him, what do you want me to do for you? The man says that I may receive your sight. And Jesus commands the man, it's an imperative. He says, now look, he says, receive your sight.

How on earth does this make sense? How can the man receive his sight? Is Jesus telling him to look out for a doctor? That he's going to pay the bill or something like that? How can he receive his sight? Ah, but you see, this is the point. The blessed son of God was holding out to him the gift of sight. And at that moment, he was holding it out and he was offering it and he was just telling him, now look, he says, just take it.

Let your faith come and grasp it and take it from my hand and it's yours. And the man did. Jesus then commanded him to go.

As a healed man explaining, and here are the words of Mark 10, 52. Go, says Jesus, your faith has healed you. If we are to analyze those words, we have to say something.

Strictly speaking, the man's faith didn't heal him at all. Jesus healed him, not his faith. Jesus gave him his sight.

It was Jesus that provided the gift, but you see, Jesus was also right, of course he was. How could he be wrong? Your faith has saved you. What does he mean? This, it was in my hand, I had it to give, it was there as a gift, and you came by your faith and you took it out of my hand and you made it your own.

Now, my friends, salvation. The knowledge of God, spiritual sight, is exactly like that. It is the gift of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ procured it by his death upon the cross. It is in his hand to give. And he says, ask and it shall be given you.

He says, seek and you shall find. He says, knock and it shall be opened unto you. He says, if only you will seek me with all your heart, you shall most surely find me.

Will you shout this morning? I don't mind if you literally shout. You don't have to do that. But my friend, will you cry to him and will you say, Lord, I'm aware of my need.

I have this spiritual blindness. It's no mere cataract. It's no mere stigma of the eye.

I'm blind. I don't recognize my God and creator. I don't see the spiritual meaning of the universe and the purpose of life.

I see nothing in your son to get excited about. I'm blind to it all. And he says, receive it.

And he puts the onus on you. It's in my hand. I procured it.

Now you possess it. By the spirit of God, if there is someone here this morning who doesn't know the Lord Jesus, the Savior, who doesn't know this salvation, who doesn't know this light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, I want to ask you right now, you don't need to close your eyes or even bow your head. Right where you are, this very moment, cry to him from your soul and say, My Lord, I believe that you have it and I'm trusting you for it.

And I'm absolutely sure that the same kind of thing will happen to you in principle as happened to this man. You'll be drawn to follow him in the way. This is how he makes his disciples.

How do you think the Christian church has continued for 2,000 years? I'll tell you. Men and women have come to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Messiah of the Scriptures, and being aware of their need, have seen that he is able to supply that need, and by faith they've received it and believed in him. And they've procured salvation for themselves.

And having thus come to know salvation and know the Savior, they can't leave him again. I invite you, therefore, with all my heart. It's a great privilege to proclaim the gospel, but this is the greatest privilege of all.

I invite you to cry to the Lord Jesus, if you've never done so before, and ask him to be your Savior. Now let us spend a moment in prayer together. Let us pray.

I wonder whether the Holy Spirit has been making you conscious of your need this morning. Perhaps, of course, it wouldn't be exclusively described in terms of blindness. The Scripture speaks of it in other terms, too, as depravity, rebellion, perversity, wickedness, condemnation, and in many other terms.

Are you conscious of your need? Do you realize the significance that Jesus Christ is here among his people, and that you only need to cry, believing that he's able to fulfill his promise? Cry to him now. O Lord, our God, will you, in your grace and in your mercy, help those who perhaps for the first time ever recognize the need to cry, save me, and have done so, or are doing so? We pray that they may become so united with the giver of the gift of eternal life, with a donor of divine pardon, that they shall, from this day forward, follow him in the way, and come to know him increasingly with the passage of time, to spend eternity in the joys of his service. Hear us, for Christ's sake.

Amen.

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