

# In a Moment

by Jim Cymbala

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*Faith is the key to experiencing God's power to change lives, and it is the key to overcoming obstacles and experiencing instantaneous change.*

**Duration:** 30:12

**Scripture:** Mark 10:46

**Topics:** "Believing"

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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 power of desperate prayer and the need to ask God for mercy, as we cannot earn anything from Him. The sermon highlights that Bartimaeus' life was changed in a moment, not gradually, and that God can bring about divine interventions that can instantly transform our lives. The preacher encourages the congregation to believe that God can do miracles in their lives and reminds them that as members of the church of Christ, they should support and root for each other.

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## Transcript

How many believe that in just the next 20 minutes that God is alive and can do a miracle in one or more of our lives? How many believe that? Lift up your hand. No, lift it up high if you believe that. I want to see that.

Not everyone believes that, so here's our verse for today, our passage. It's found in the book of Mark, a familiar story to some. And 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.

And 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. And Jesus stopped and said, call him.

So they called to the blind man. Cheer up, on your feet, he's calling you. And throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and he came to Jesus.

What do you want me to do for you? What a sentence in the Bible. What do you want me to do for you? That's Jesus. Jesus asked him and the blind man said, rabbi, I want to see.

Go, said Jesus, your faith has healed you. Now, Jesus did the healing, we know, virtue came out of him, but notice what he links it to. Your faith has healed you.

That's what did this, your faith. And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road. In the Bible, there's a description of the Christian life, mostly in one way.

That description is this, when you come to Christ and you're born again, and those of you visiting with us that are not Christians, you have an opportunity tonight to receive Christ, who loves you, died for you, has a plan for your life, wants to give you a whole new start and a new beginning. When you receive Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into you to live. That is called being born again.

You put your faith in Christ and you believe that when he died on the cross, he died for our sins as a substitute, a penal substitute, paying the price for what we deserved. He took our place. When you put your faith in that and that God raised him from the dead, becoming a Christian is not about joining a church, it's about coming into a relationship with God through Christ and it involves supernatural life, new creation.

If anyone is in Christ Jesus, they are a new creation. Now that new life inside of us has to grow. We have to grow, we have to grow in faith.

The metaphor, the picture that is given in the Bible over and over again is that Christians must grow, we have to grow and growth is gradual. We're all growing. Aren't you happy you're not what you were 10 years ago? Are you different than you were 10 years ago? We all should be saying amen to that, right? We're not what, as someone said, we're not what we want to be and what we should be but we're not what we used to be.

Why, why are we changing? Because there's growth. All churches believe that there's growth in the Christian life. My friend Warren Wiersbe, who I talk to regularly, has the greatest writings on the book of Psalms that you could just imagine and I've heard him preach several times from Psalm 1, you know? And he will be like a tree.

What's a tree have? Life, what does a tree do? It grows. When a tree starts, it's not what it was gonna be five years from then, so there's growth. Beside growth, there's another element of God working in his people in the Bible which many churches do not believe in or if they claim to believe in it, they don't practice it but I want to practice it today because I only have 20 minutes here that I want to talk to you.

And that is there's growth which is gradual and you don't even know that you're growing. You just sometimes turn around and you say, wow, God's changing me. I used to blow up and get angry when things like that happened and I see now there's mucho paz, I have more peace.

I'm relaxed more, God's helping me. But then there's also what the Bible calls divine interventions that in a moment, your life can change. In a moment, God can do something.

It's not gradual. There's nothing gradual about it. It happens in an instant.

The name of this message, in a moment because Bartimaeus' life was changed not gradually. Life was changed in a moment. Not only in one day was his life changed.

His life was changed in one moment on one day. And we here at this church are trying to be New Testament Christians. We don't belong to any denomination and really denominations don't exist to God.

He just has one group of people on the earth that he calls his body, the Church of Christ. And we're all members of that. So we have to root for each other.

Do I get an amen here? We have to root for each other, encourage each other because there's no Arminians or Calvinists or Assembly of God or Baptists. These are phrases that are totally irrelevant to what's facing us here on the earth today. But things can change in a moment.

For example, when you're born again, you're not born again gradually. Nobody's born again gradually. When Jesus said to Nicodemus, you must be born again, he was talking about something that happens in an instant.

Some of us, when we look back on our lives, I can remember a night that I believe I was born again. Sometimes if you grew up in church, it's hard to pin it down. But there is a moment.

You're either lost in your sin and trespasses and dead and then or you're made alive in Christ Jesus. But you can't be in between. It happens in an instant.

When people are healed, they're not healed gradually. The manifestation might come gradually, but they're healed or they're not healed. And God heals someone, Jesus heals someone.

It didn't take a week, it didn't take a day. It took an instant and Jesus spoke the word and something happened. The call of God on someone into the ministry does not happen gradually.

You might become aware of it gradually. But either you're called or you're not called. You're called one day, you receive the call.

Paul says to Timothy, you remember the word spoken about you when you were ordained. That day we ordained you and God spoke about his purpose over your life. But that all began, although it was planned from eternity, the call of God, the gifting of God, it happens in an instant.

When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14, so pursue spiritual gifts, especially that you might prophesy. When he says you're not gonna grow into the gift, you either have the gift or you don't have the gift. And when you receive the gift, that's an awesome moment.

When God speaks and leads you, it happens in an instant. The working out of it might take time. In Acts, Paul was in the city of Corinth and maybe getting a little nervous about getting beat down so many times in so many places, which was foretold about him when he got converted.

In the middle of the night, the Lord appeared to him and said, don't be afraid, keep talking, for I have many people in this city. That happened in an instant. His life was changed and he was encouraged because on that moment, the Lord spoke a word into his life.

Didn't happen gradually, it happened that night. And then it worked out that he stayed in Corinth for 18 months, probably encouraged by that word that he received in an instant from the Lord. And on and on it goes.

There are divine interventions by God. Paul's conversion is a classic example. When he was on the road to Emmaus, he was an unbelieving, Christian-persecuting rabbi, Pharisee, and then the next thing you know, his life was changed forever.

We believe that God still does those things. A lot of churches don't believe that God does those things. Everything is gradual and kind of hazy and fuzzy and it's almost like a modern form of Christian deism.

There's a God out there somewhere, but he doesn't intervene in your life. He like turned the clock and started the whole thing going in your Christian life, but he's not gonna intervene one day for you, my dear sisters. He's not gonna speak a word or touch you or impart some gift or grace or fill you with the Holy Spirit.

On Acts 2, the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, that didn't happen gradually. No, they were all seated in one place when the day of Pentecost would fully come and they were all baptized, filled with the Holy Spirit. And the church era began.

In that instant, it happened. God did it, which brings us to our friend Bartimaeus. So Bartimaeus, we know one thing about him.

Whatever happened to him, whatever the miracle was, it happened because of his faith. Yes, God did it, I'm all for that. But what made him different from the crowd is he had faith, like the woman who touched the hem of his garment.

I didn't see anybody else in the crowd getting healed as they jostled Jesus, but she did. And she was healed in an instant. So Bartimaeus possessed this wonderful gift of faith, this faith, this life-changing faith, and Jesus recognized it.

He even said, he even attributed to himself, although he was the healer, Jesus is the healer, he said, Bartimaeus, your faith has made you well, has healed you. So I wanna follow him just for these couple of minutes because I wanna learn about that faith. How many would like tonight or any other time for God to invade your life and impart a blessing or change your life? I know when I first went in the ministry, I can look back to moments right now when my wife and I began with less than 15, 18 people, very depressing situation, two people in the Tuesday night prayer meeting, offerings, the first collection was \$85 total tithes and offering, and one Tuesday night, I think the offering was like \$3, \$7, very depressing.

I didn't know what I was doing. She was ahead of me being a pastor's daughter, but I can tell you about moments, if you wanna take time, where God visited me and changed my life, changed my life. I said, change my life.

One day when I was complaining to God in an afternoon, pacing, I can see myself so young, walking back and forth in the auditorium all by myself on a Tuesday, knowing that there would be, what, two people, five people, seven people in the prayer meeting. My sermons were pitiful. They were so boring, I fell asleep while I was preaching.

That's not a good sign at all. And I'm pacing and telling God what I inherited, how did I get into this, and my wife and I, what are we to do, and there's no money, and there's these people, and half the people we inherited were problematic and all of this, and I'm complaining, and I'm just pouring out my heart to God, and the Lord came right to that, I could show you the place on 543 Atlantic Avenue. I could show you the spot.

It's a mosque now, but I could show you the spot in the auditorium. And the Lord spoke to me, and I ended up on my face, and he said, I'll tell you the problem in the church. You wanna know the problem? You're the problem.

You don't love the people, you don't seek my face, and you're just trying to get through every service. You're just trying to get through every service because you're so insecure. But you're not loving the people the way I love them.

So let me change you before you start complaining about everybody else. Oh, that's, are you kidding? That'll be in my memory until I see Christ, because I got up from there an hour and a half or so later. I was a different person.

Was the job completed? No, but I'm telling you, I met God. How many believe you can still meet God today? Put your hands together if you believe we can still meet God. And God wants to meet you choir members, and God wants to meet you, pastor, and God wants to meet you, sir, ma'am, from the shelter, wherever you're from.

Maybe God has something for you tonight. So Bartimaeus is part of the crowd, and notice the other crowd. They're accepting whatever.

Whatever their problem is in life, they're accepting it, because I don't see any of them crying out or touching Jesus. So they're all flow of humanity, just like you and me, and they have problems, and they have needs. Maybe they're sick.

Maybe they're whatever, but they're walking along with this big, huge crowd toward Jericho, and they're walking alone, and no one's getting changed, because that's the way it is. Faith is what gets the answer. Only faith that touches God changes a life.

They're bumping him, jostling, listening, analyzing his words. What are they getting? Nada, they're getting nothing from it. But look at Bartimaeus.

He's not accepting what is. He's thinking there can be something different. That's how it is with all of us tonight.

You have an is what it is, right? Right now, you all have a life. We all have a life. We all have a situation.

We're all pastoring a church. We're all doing what God called us to do, leaders. Now, do we accept what is and complain about it or just hold a fort, or do we say, wait, no, God has something better than what is.

God can change my situation. Now, not everybody believes that. The crowd didn't.

They're accepting what is. Jesus had all kinds of people near him. He never touched their lives, never helped them.

He wept over Jerusalem, and that's why he wept. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you didn't know your day of visitation. I was right there up in your grill, and I could have helped you, but you didn't know it.

That's how people are with unbelief. They can know about Jesus, but they don't have the faith of Bartimaeus. But what does Bartimaeus do? Something in him, I don't know how it happened, but something reaches out.

He's lying by the roadside, sitting by the roadside. He hears that Jesus is going by, and blessed Bartimaeus, something in him says, no, I can change. He can change me.

I don't know how he got to that, but all I know is something in him said, he can help me. Oh, Jesus of Nazareth, I've heard about you. I don't know what information he had, but something makes him cry out and reaches out to God and say, God, change me.

Did you know how much would change in our lives if we just had the faith to reach out and say, change me? Some of us never get to that. We just accept and then we say, I'll try harder. Try harder with what? We don't have the equipment.

We need God to come. We need God to pour out his grace. We need God to stretch out his hand.

Come on, when God does that, things change. Let me finish this little story. So he reaches out.

Faith always reaches out. Pastors, if there's faith in your church, the people pray and reach out to God. If they don't pray and reach out to God, for whatever reason, there's no faith.

Faith without works is dead. And the first act of faith is to pray and reach out. No one ever had faith in God and didn't reach out to him because faith without works is dead.

It's just intellectual faith, arguing over this fact and the mark of the beast and all this other stuff. But real faith reaches out and lays hold of God and says, God, you got to help me. You got to change me.

You got to change my church. Leader, whoever you are, every discouragement I've ever had, I've been there, and twice. So I know what it is.

I empathize with you. You're my brother, you're my sister. We got to fight this together.

But we got to reach out to God and say, God, do the thing only you can do. A computer will not help me. Visiting some church conference, including this one, won't help me.

You're the only one to help me. And the only good church conferences are the ones that make you reach out to God because he's the source. He starts doing that because faith always reaches out.

If we're not reaching out and calling on God, there's not faith. We have some amount of intellectual faith, but not heart faith. There's another thing about faith we learned there.

Faith overcomes every obstacle, every discouragement, because the minute he starts to call out to God, what happens? The crowd says, shh, have a little reverence. It's a rabbi. He's screaming like a madman.

What is this about? Don't you know this man is a noted teacher and he's given us wonderful words. He gave us the beatitudes. He gave us all of this.

What are you screaming? What do you think this is, a circus? That's what happens a lot of time when you reach out to God. Right now, in America, a lot of people pray and are desperate to get something new from God. They're squelched, even by churches, by church leadership, by philosophies, like that God is dead.

He doesn't answer prayer anymore. I want to declare to you today, God answers prayer. Come on, does somebody say amen with me? If God doesn't answer prayer, let's close the book, burn it, and leave, and

go out and have something to eat.

Because there's no, what are we meeting for if God's not alive? If God isn't at the throne of grace, dispensing mercy and grace to help us just in the nick of time as the Greek intimates, then what are we doing this for? What are we here for? What are we singing about he's God? Sure enough, obstacles come. I want to assure all of you, the moment you reach out to God and you want to see God do something, there will be a discouragement. The minute faith starts in your heart, what do you think, the enemy's going to cheer you on? No, he's going to attack, distract, discourage, shake and bake, whatever.

The Bible says that the crowd started saying, hey, shh, what are you, nuts? Shh, and you know what? Faith does, oh, faith is so amazing. No matter how you try to hold it back, it breaks through. It finds a way to overcome every obstacle.

When someone has faith in God, you can squeeze them, press them, but they're going to break through. So the Bible says, typical of faith, they tell him to be quiet and he shouts all the louder. Now to some of you, that is very crude, isn't it? It's very primitive or emotional.

I have no ax to grind with anyone. That's why Christianity is in decline in America today. Every measurement of Christianity is in decline.

The average number of people going to a service, down to 68 from 90-something actual attendees just 20 years ago. 1,500 ministers leaving the pastorate every month. 1,500 ministers, while we're meeting today, 50 bit the dust.

Lifestyles of the people who go to church, forget it. I just saw a statistic in the USA today. 46% of all born-again believers between 19 and 30 say that's not wrong to have sex outside of marriage.

These are the folks going to church. Come on, Pastor Sybil, grow up. Come on, it's a new day.

Well, if you show me in the Bible where it's a new day and those things aren't still true, I'm happy to discuss it with you, but as far as I see, the word of God is never going to change. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the word of God will never pass away. Forget cursing the darkness.

One of the reasons Christianity is in decline is that because what I'm talking about now is not believed or practiced by a horde of churches and denominations. They'll do anything but pray. Do anything but call on God.

Do anything after the sermon, but call people to cry out to God. And yet, what's the whole purpose of the new covenant? The writer to Hebrews says, therefore, because of what Christ has done, let us come boldly to the throne of grace. The action is not coming to church and hearing somebody speak.

The action is getting to God in prayer and saying, like Jacob, I won't let you go until you bless me. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Jesus said men ought always to pray and not give up.

The Old Testament is replete with examples of verses like this. Call upon me in the day of trouble. I will answer you.

I want to tell you something. If you call, he will answer you. If you have faith and call, he will answer you.

Otherwise, what are we doing? The Bible tells us that he overcame that obstacle. Notice his cry. Because sometimes when I've reached out to God, the enemy has come and pointed out all my failures and all my mistakes.

And he can bury you in condemnation. He's the accuser of the brothers and sisters, isn't he? But this Bartimaeus, he teaches us something because he only had one cry. Have mercy.

Not, look, you gotta hear my story. How I was blinded, I want to show you. I have a little video I'd like to show you about how I became blinded and all of that.

All he had was, son of David, have mercy. You know when you're desperate, prayer is so short. Have mercy.

Isn't that what some of us need to cry out tonight? I know all I can ask God for is just to have mercy on me. You can't earn anything from him. Everything is by grace.

So all you have to do is ask God, get desperate and say, have mercy. I don't know, was Bartimaeus serving God? Did he believe in the 10 Commandments? Was he a follower of Moses? The Bible doesn't tell us. All we know that he's a blind Jewish man and he says, cries out, have mercy.

And there's such power in that prayer and in that simple calling on the Lord that the Bible tells us Jesus stopped the whole procession. Can you imagine? Somehow amid all the crowd noise, he hears this, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. That's all.

And Jesus is just walking, everyone's clamoring, there's noise, there's babies crying. But somehow his ear, oh, I love that about Jesus. There's noise, but then there's the cry of faith that stops him in his tracks and he stops everything and he goes, bring him to me.

Did you know that God's ear is tuned to the prayer of faith? You say, yeah, but I've messed up and I've made a lot of mistakes. I've made more mistakes than you. But I know one thing, God's ear is open to the cry of his people.

When you come and you mean it and you trust him and you ask for mercy to help you in whatever the situation is, he can change everything in an instant. In an instant, it can begin now. It'll work out over months or even years, but it begins in an instant.

The Bible tells us that he's called in front of Jesus. Jesus says this amazing thing. What would you do if Jesus said to you, what do you want me to do for you? Carte blanche, you've arrested my attention.

I've stopped the procession. I've called you in front of me. Blind man, tell me.

Bartimaeus, what do you want me to do for you? I want to declare to you today, I want to challenge us to have faith now. What do you want him to do for you? Is it a wayward son? Is it a wayward daughter? Is it some problem in the church? Is it your own depression? Is it your own lostness? Is it your own emptiness? What is it that is aching in you? What is it that's troubling you? You say, Pastor Bill, you're just like laying it out there like it's just pie in the sky. What am I gonna do? I'm just reading the Bible to you.

He didn't say to Bartimaeus, Bartimaeus, how long you been obeying the commandment? Are you circumcised? Are you, do you go to the temple? I know you're blind, but I'm gonna ask you still. Are you tithing? No, he doesn't ask any of these things. When you cry for mercy, how many are happy we have a

God who stops when we say, Lord, have mercy on me.

Come on, son of David, have mercy on me. Just help me. Are you all so different than me? Haven't you ever been to that spot? How many ever been to a Bartimaeus position in your life? Just, God, have mercy on me.

Have mercy on me. And Jesus said, what will you want me to do? And then he said, your faith has done it. You dare to cry out and reach out to me? You dared to fight out through obstacles, press in? I don't know why this comes to me now, but I see myself sitting at a kitchen table a lot of years ago when my oldest girl was away from God.

Torment, a nightmare for two and a half years. And then my wife had surgery. And something got messed up with her hormones.

And my wife, out of nowhere, started talking suicidal sentences. Talked about wanting to take her life. And saying, no, yeah, that's right, the one who directs you.

Said, I don't know, I don't want to live anymore. So now my daughter's away, getting worse. And my wife is like talking.

It's not even the woman I married. Who is this person? And I'm trying to start other churches and we're having meetings. And I got to the absolute end.

But I'm so happy that when you're at the end, God is at the beginning. God is at the beginning when you're at the end. He's just ready to, come on, can we just praise him for his faithfulness? Let's close our eyes.

The Lord is here. Every eye closed. If you're here tonight, pastor, a homeless person in a shelter.

I got a big prayer group behind me. The choir's gonna help me. I got pastors and deacons, deaconesses.

Is anybody at the end of their rope in a given situation? You're like Bartimaeus. I can assure you one thing, Jesus is passing by. He's here tonight.

Do you have the faith to believe? Because according to your faith, so be it unto you. If you believe now, nothing will ever change. I just got to tough it out and try.

According to your faith, so be it unto you. But if there's some childlike element of faith in you that will reach out to God and say, God, you know what's overwhelming me. God, in the name of Christ, come and help me.

He will help you. He'll do something. I don't know what he'll do, but he will do something.

Otherwise, God's word is not true and that's impossible. Anybody here today, whether it's to receive Christ as your savior or some missionary or pastor, you are just needing a divine intervention in a moment. You need it tonight.

It's even time sensitive. You can't even wait six months. God knows those things too.

Just come out of your seat and come up here. If you cross the street in overflow, you'll stand over there and they'll direct you. But right now, come on.

From the balcony, from downstairs, you come. Come on, pastor. Come on, leader.

Come on, whoever you are. Member, visitor, come on. Jesus is saying to us, I repeat it boldly because it's in the word of God.

What do you want me to do for you? What do you want me to do for you? Come right to the edge. Walk forward. Come on, step forward.

That wayward girl is coming back. Yes, she will. Yes, she will.

Because with God, nothing is impossible. Lord, we thank you for your word to us tonight. And what's echoing in our minds and hearts is your sentence to Bartimaeus.

What do you want me to do for you? And we have responded and we have told you today. We've poured out our hearts. Many, they're tears.

You know where we hurt. You know where we're lame. You know where our heart is broken.

You know the circumstances. You know the financial needs, the family trouble. We not only believe that you have brought us in front of you today, we believe that already you have heard and the answer has begun to happen right now while we're standing here.

We believe that. We believe that, Lord. You are stretching out your hand right now, Lord.

Not because of us, but because of your great mercy. Not because we deserve anything, but because of your great mercy and grace and love. We worship you, Lord Jesus.

Jesus, we ask you to bless every brother and sister in this building, especially the leaders that we have visiting with us. Even now, bless their churches. Bless their families right now, Lord.

Bless them. Bless the labor of their hands and give them two days, Lord, of being encouraged and enriched from you, from your word, from your presence. And now, Lord, we remember another word.

By this shall all men know that we're your disciples because we love one another. Not because we carry Bibles or even shout hallelujah, but because we love one another. Let our fellowship be sweet as we close this meeting.

God, just spark something to encourage somebody as we do this. In Jesus' name, and everyone said. Amen.

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