

“What Do You Want Jesus to Do for You?”

October 24, 2021 Sermon by Stephen Portner

Mark 10:46-52

46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

49 Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” 50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

51 “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

52 “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

There was a recent Facebook post that read something like this:

I pass by this ancient mailbox every day on my way to work. The old rusty box is nailed to an oak that has to be 150 years old. After 3 years of passing it by I decided to open the box to see if anything was inside. After all, there isn’t even a house nearby to which it could possibly serve anyway. Any home it serviced was long ago torn down I’m sure. I noticed an ancient letter inside as you can see in picture #2. I looked at the post mark date and it said July 7, 1903. Due to age and moisture the addressee on the envelope was not readable, so I opened up the envelope hoping to find some local history and a good story I could share with you. Here is what the letter inside said. “We have been trying to reach you about your cars extended warranty.”¹

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/ThatIsSoFunny/posts/1210902279389763>



I generally don't like making a nuisance of myself (some of you may disagree with that statement). And it just seems that having to repeat something over and over and over again in order to get attention, and just generally make a pest of yourself, just goes against my natural inclination. For me to be persistent, it has to be intentional. For example, there is someone I have been trying to contact for months. I have sent emails. I have called their office. I have now even resorted to filling in an online form for contact information. So far, no response. Of course, those calls and emails have been spaced out over a matter of months. So, I begin to wonder, what would happen if I send an email or make a call every day until I get some kind of response? Would that relegate me to the same category as public nuisance, like how I feel about those telemarketers that keep calling about my car's extended warranty?

There was a man on the road to Jericho, a blind man, who was making a public nuisance of himself with his persistent calling out to Jesus. It turns out persistence was something that Jesus honored rather than judged. Let's take a look at the Scripture again.

46 Then they came to Jericho. As you may remember from our reading of last week's Scripture, Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. He was on his way to Jerusalem for a purpose. He was going there to be killed and to become a ransom for many for the

forgiveness of sins. Jericho was about 15 miles, as the crow flies, from Jerusalem. Longer when you had to take the winding paths. At any rate, Jesus' journey to Jerusalem was nearing the end. This was the eleventh hour of his earthly life. Here in Mark is this account, which is the last recorded account, of a healing done by Jesus.

As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Bartimaeus had apparently heard about this Jesus of Nazareth who was passing close by to him. He referred to him as Jesus, Son of David, which was a title the Jews gave to the expected Messiah. Beggars in the days of Jesus were especially destitute. They had no government welfare programs in place to help the needy. He had to survive on the money that was given to him by passers-by.

Beggars often waited along the roads near cities, because that was where they were able to contact the most people. Jericho, with its fairly wealthy inhabitants, was a popular location for beggars. Usually disabled in some way, beggars were unable to earn a living. Medical help was not available for their problems, and people tended to ignore their obligation to care for the needy (Leviticus 25:35–38). Thus, beggars had little hope of escaping their degrading way of life.²

48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Bartimaeus was not about to be silenced. This was a once in a life time opportunity for him to be truly healed. For all he knew, Jesus would not pass by this way again. And, if he had thought that, he would have been right. Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem and to his crucifixion. Bartimaeus knew that his one opportunity to be healed was close by, and he did not want it to pass him by. That opportunity could be found only in Jesus.

49 Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” Despite the crowd forming around Jesus, despite the disciples acting like body guards holding people back, despite those in the crowd trying to quiet his outcries, this blind man would not be silenced. His loud outburst caught Jesus' attention, and Jesus told others around him to call for Bartimaeus.

So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” 50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. The blind man's cloak would have been his only possession. He needed that cloak to lay on the ground before him, so that people would throw their coins onto the cloak. Then, at the end of the day, the blind man could gather his cloak, starting at the corners, and rest assured that he could collect all the coins lying on the cloak which he would otherwise

² Barton, B. B. (1994). [Mark](#) (p. 307). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

not be able to see. When Jesus called out his name, Bartimaeus left all to follow him, casting aside his cloak and his means of supporting himself under his own direction.

Then Jesus asks the question of Bartimaeus, the same question he had asked James and John, the sons of Zebedee, only moments before. **51 “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.** James and John had wanted power and authority. They had wanted to jockey for position in Jesus’ kingdom, one sitting at his left and the other at his right. Not so with this blind man. The blind man responded to Jesus’ question with: **“Rabbi, I want to see.”**

...[T]hese words – **“Sir, we wish to see Jesus”** [from John 12:21 where Greeks approached the disciple Philip]– were often carved into the wood of church pulpits, not for the congregation to see but for the *preacher* to see. These words remind the preacher of the primary task of all Christian preaching: to speak of Jesus so that he may be seen... encountered by all who hear. In essence, the preaching task is to bring Jesus to life! The gospel message of God’s love and forgiveness must be brought to life anew every week. It’s a tall order.³

Would that all of us would be able to answer the same when Jesus asks about what we want from him. Not that we would ask for power, authority, riches or fame – but that we would truly want to see Him. If we were to imagine Jesus asking us that question, “What do you want me to do for you,” my concern is that most of us would ask for some kind of personal need to be met. Some people treat Jesus like he is the big Santa Claus in the sky, and that when we ask for something for our selves, then Jesus would give it to us. And if he doesn’t give it to us, then we act as though he doesn’t exist or that he is irrelevant to our lives. What if instead of thinking selfishly, we thought of that question as an opportunity to truly see Jesus, to see Jesus for who he really is.

52 “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road. Bartimaeus didn’t simply receive his sight and then go on his merry way, like so many people did when they received a gift of healing from Jesus. Bartimaeus followed Jesus. Some versions have it that he followed Jesus “on the way.” “The Way” was one of the phrases followers of Jesus were called in the first century. This was the eleventh hour of Jesus’ life here on this earth and for all we know Bartimaeus did follow Jesus all the way to Jerusalem where he would be arrested and then crucified on the cross. Jesus had given him his life; he would follow him, wherever he may lead. He didn’t ask where Jesus was heading. He didn’t ask for Jesus’ destination or why he was doing what he was doing. He simply left everything behind and followed him. What an amazing testimony of faith.

Bartimaeus’ persistence paid off, and Jesus had honored his faith. It reminds me of the times when I have asked God for something, and maybe I have asked for that something only once, because I didn’t want to bother God with my prayers. It seemed to me that God would have more important things to do. But that has not been my experience. Just as I often need things repeated to me, over and over again, until it

³ <http://www.stdunstansbethesda.org/trail-notes-sermons/sir-we-wish-to-see-jesus>

finally sinks in, I begin to understand the importance of persistence. And it's not that we think that by praying the same things over and over again that we bug God or that we can wear him down by being a nuisance. God is bigger than all that. We need to be persistent so that we know that we know that we know that it is God's providence that has made possible whatever it was we asked for. We give God credit for what God has done for us. And when we receive his gift, particularly his gift of salvation, we respond by following the one who is worthy of our praise.