

January 11, 2026

ESSENTIAL TRUTHS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Mark 10:46-52

(4 of 15 in a series through Mark 10-16)

Several years ago, perhaps a couple of decades or so ago, we crafted our initial Sunday school curriculum. We knew what we wanted the teaching during our Sunday morning corporate worship to be—consistent, faithful exposition through books of the Bible so that we worked through the entire canon of Scripture. But Sunday school offered quite a few possibilities to us. Instead of making us free, though it felt a bit overwhelming to have so many options opened up to us. Therefore, we began to build some parameters to help guide our decision-making. We first noted, especially in those early years, that we had so many college students that it didn't make sense to not consider that they're only around for four years, on average. Then, we started prioritizing what we thought was important for any follower of Jesus to know. We asked, "What would you most want someone to know if you were teaching them what it looked like to believe and obey our Lord?" Finally, combining these two, our final question became, "What would you want to teach someone if you only had four years with that person?" And with that, we ended up putting together a Sunday school curriculum that we followed, especially in those early years, and something that we still focus on with our core theology Sunday school class taught each fall.

I thought of that question—"What would you want a follower of Christ to know?"—as I studied our text this morning, Mark 10:46-52 because of the placement of this healing miracle (when most of them occur in the first part of Mark's gospel). But, I think if you look at it, it makes sense why it's here.

First, Mark obviously include the story for geographical reasons. That is, this event happened as Jesus was going to Jerusalem. If you were a Galilean Jew, and you wanted to go to Jerusalem, you would take a detour around the Samaritan region, which would take you right through Jericho—the very place where this healing happens.¹ So, that makes sense. And yet, we know from John's gospel that Jesus did many, many other things that aren't recorded in the gospels (John 21:25), so even though this healing took place, Mark wouldn't have had to mention it. But I think he did because I think this story reminds us of a number of truths that serve to summarize what Jesus has been teaching in Mark 8-10.

Here's why I say that. Mark 8-10 is filled with information about discipleship. In each of the chapters Jesus has predicted his death, the disciples have responded with a very self-absorbed and prideful response, and then Jesus has taught them about the humility and sacrificial requirements for following him. He taught them not to be presumptuous as the man brought his son for the disciples to cast out the demon. He taught them that they have to become like children as the disciples' inclination was to turn away parents bringing their children to Jesus. He

¹ David Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 419.

taught them that they must sacrifice the security found in money and treasure Jesus above all after the rich young ruler had come to Jesus. And we could certainly add more. And then after all that teaching on discipleship with all of those crucial lessons, just prior to Jesus arriving in Jerusalem, Mark gives us one more healing story. And though it can feel like it's just more of the same that we've seen earlier in the gospel. I think it's different. I think this story serves as a picture of these important lessons on discipleship that Jesus has been giving his followers. In short, if we were to ask, "What are some crucial things Jesus wanted his followers to know?" I think many of the answers come to the fore in this story of Jesus healing a blind beggar named Bartimaeus.

Now, because this story works as a bit of a summary of the lessons Jesus has been giving, some of the points we'll see we've covered before. But what's helpful for us here is that we get to see these truths in a new way, through a new picture, as we encounter someone in one of the lowest strata of society. So, I want us to walk through this story, and along the way, we'll stop and note some crucial truths we're to understand as Jesus' followers.

As Jesus heads toward Jerusalem, as we've noted, his path takes him through Jericho. And as he heads on the road through Jericho (with a large crowd accompanying him) a man named Bartimaeus is sitting by the roadside. But Bartimaeus wasn't just an any man, he was a blind beggar. You see, in that time and place, there weren't welfare programs or the like set up for those who were truly disabled and unable to work in society, such as one who was blind. Therefore, the only way to make it was to beg. And if you were going to beg, there was hardly a better place to imagine than being on the side of the road in Jericho in this time of year because faithful Jews would have been heading to Jerusalem to celebrate the upcoming feasts and festivals, and a lot of traffic increases the odds that some of those people would stop and give you money. So, this element of a blind beggar being in that spot would have been perfectly normal. But what the man does next we're not too familiar with in Mark's gospel.

We're told in verse 47 that when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he began to cry out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Now, the title "Son of David" is a reference to Jesus being the Christ—God's promised and eternal king. In fact, the reason I say "promised" and "eternal" king is because in 2 Samuel 7 God promised to raise up one of David's descendants (one of his "sons") who would reign over the throne of his kingdom forever. So this king was promised, and his reign was to be eternal. Thus, we have the Christ as God's promised, eternal king who would be David's Son. And others recognized the Messiah would be David's son. We know this because only a couple of chapters later Jesus will speak of the Christ as clearly being David's son, and everyone seems to go along with that obvious designation. The Messiah is David's son. What's interesting, though, is that no one in Mark's gospel has referred to Jesus as the Son of David except right here. This is the only time the title is used. This man who can't see, ironically, has a clear picture of who Jesus is—the promised eternal king from David's line.

But the crowd doesn't recognize this man as one with great insight. They recognize him as one who isn't worthy of Jesus' time—much as the disciples had thought about children. And so, as the disciples had done with the children, the crowd tries to keep this man from bothering Jesus.

They rebuke him and tell him to be quiet. But he just cries out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (v. 48). And instead of Jesus ignoring the man, encouraging the crowd to make him quiet down, or even rebuking the blind beggar himself, Mark tells us that Jesus stops and tells the people to call the man to him. This man is about to be blessed of the Lord. And that brings me to the first truth I want to note. It’s one we’ve already seen in this section of Mark but is clearly seen here as well, namely, it is only when we know we’re desperately needy that we are in a position to be blessed by God.

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Notice how this man is calling out to Jesus. We’ve already noted his declaration that he believes that Jesus is not just another teacher or prophet but the Messiah himself. But in addition to that, how is he summoning him? He’s saying, “Have mercy on me.” You only cry out for mercy if you feel that you’re not deserving. If you think you’re deserving, you cry out for justice. You think you’re owed something, like Lucy in the Peanuts Christmas movie, saying, “All I want is what I have coming to me.” You only call for mercy when you know you deserve nothing except maybe to be punished, condemned, or neglected. You know your only hope is the compassion of another, and so you cry out for mercy. That’s what Bartimaeus does here. He sees himself as desperately needy, and his only basis for getting anything is to appeal for Jesus to be merciful to him.

Now, I’ve mentioned that we’ve seen this already in this section in Mark’s gospel. It’s why the rich young ruler walked away sad. He thought highly of himself and didn’t want to abandon the security he had in his riches. We saw it with the children as Jesus taught us that we must become like children in the sense of recognizing our helplessness and need to enter the kingdom. And here we see it played out once more.

Therefore, the temptation could be to say, “We got this point already” and move on. But I wonder if we really have taken to heart what Jesus is saying. Jesus is telling us that it’s preferable to be able to easily see our need and helplessness. In other words, Bartimaeus was in a more blessed position than the rich young ruler because what’s most important in life is seeing one’s need for Jesus. The man’s wealth blinded him to that whereas Bartimeus’s helpless condition aided him in seeing this. But my guess is that we still look at a man like the rich young ruler and struggle with covetousness, wishing we were in his shoes and look at Bartimaeus and thank God we’re not in his shoes. In short, you and I are still tempted to despise being in a position of neediness.

To quote pastor Tom again, we are always working to get ourselves in a place where we don’t need or have to trust God. And we panic when he puts us in a place where our desperate neediness is apparent. So, I just want to challenge us to pray that the Lord would change our hearts on that. Let us thank the Lord for opportunities to say, “Lord, if you don’t provide here, I’m hopeless.” That’s not a position to despise when you find yourself there. In fact, it’s preferable to being in a position where you say, “I’ve got this.” And so, the Lord in his love for you may continually orchestrate your life to show how dependent you are on him. And that’s not

because he is against you but because he loves you. So, let's pray that the Lord will always help us to see that we're not self-sufficient. We're not deserving. We're desperately needy. And that's good because those who know they're desperately needy are in a position to be blessed by God—which matters more than anything else we can gain in this life.

But it's not just that this man knows he's needy. In other words, neediness is a *necessary* condition for being blessed by God, but it's not a *sufficient* one. Many needy people will die and go to hell. This man not only knows he's needy, but he also believes that Jesus Christ can do amazing things and is his only hope.

Notice that as the crowd tries to silence him, he only calls out more. Nothing is going to stop him from getting Jesus' attention. He believes that Jesus is his only hope. He believes that Jesus can do for him what no one else can. And he has a persistent faith that won't stop short of getting to Jesus.

So, he has a persistent faith, but he also have an expectant faith. What I mean is that he believes that Jesus is able to do the extraordinary. After telling the crowd to call the man to Jesus, the man springs up and goes to Jesus, and then Jesus asks him a question, saying, "What do you want me to do for you?" Now, perhaps we find that an odd question, but what that question really does is gauges what this man believes Jesus is able to do.

If he thinks Jesus is good but not powerful, my guess is he might say, "Can you give me some money to live on for the next year or five years or ten years?" I mean, that would be a pretty amazing request, wouldn't it? He'd no longer have to beg. But he doesn't. He says, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight" (v. 51). This man believed Jesus was able to do the extraordinary.

And Mark wants us to see that. We know that because Jesus points it out, saying, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And Mark adds, "And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way" (vv. 51-52). And that brings us to a second truth. We should live our lives with persistent, expectant faith in our Lord.

We should live our lives with persistent, expectant faith in our Lord

Imitating strong faith is actually commanded in Scripture as Hebrews 13:7 says, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." In other words, we can't imitate the exact actions of faithful believers who have come before us, but we can imitate their faith in and toward our Lord.

But let's push back and say, "Just because this blind beggar exercised persistent, expectant faith doesn't mean that Mark is telling his readers that this should characterize our lives as well." But that's harder to say when we consider that Barimaeus isn't exceptional. Remember how the Syrophenician woman would not turn away from Jesus even though she wasn't a Jew and was initially rebuffed by Jesus (7:24-30)? Remember Jairus, whose friends basically encouraged him to give up hope after the announcement that his daughter had died (4:35-43). Remember the

friends who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus, even when they had to tear through the roof to get to him (2:1-12). Remember the woman with the issue of blood who had to violate laws to push her way through to touch Jesus' garment (5:25-34). And we could go on. But what I hope we see is that Mark keeps showing the same response to Jesus—people who trust him, keep trusting him, and believe he can do the extraordinary.

Let's let that characterize our lives. Let's persistently pray for our lost family and friends, believing the Lord can change their hearts. Let's keep praying the Lord will raise up laborers to send into the harvest as he's done in the past, which we'll see in our upcoming network conference. Let's keep praying for revival to happen in our city, state, and nation so that lives are transformed. We're only limited by our imagination our unwillingness to ask the Lord to let his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Let's be characterized by persistent, expectant faith.

Now, there's one other element that I want to highlight in this story that is quite interesting because Mark does something pretty extraordinary in telling this story that we may not recognize at first sight. First, he names the person who was healed. Mark tells us his name was Bartimaeus, which he tells us means, "The Son of Timaeus" (v. 46). But what's odd about that? Well, no one else for whom Jesus had performed such a miracle has been named in Mark's gospel. We were told that the little girl Jesus raised from the dead was Jairus's daughter, but never has Mark told us the name of the individual whom Jesus has healed—until now. But that's not all.

When you read the parallel story in Matthew's gospel, it's obvious that Jesus actually healed two blind beggars in this event. That is, Bartimaeus wasn't alone. In Matthew 20:29-34 you read a story that occurs just after the request revolving James and John being at Jesus' right and left hand in his kingdom and just before the entry into Jerusalem—the same place this occurs in Mark's gospel. And all the elements in that story are the same, except there are two blind men. They cry out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David," the crowd tries to silence them, they cry out all the more, Jesus calls them to him, he asks what they want, they tell him they want to receive their sight, Jesus heals them, and they follow him. Everything is the same except that Matthew tells us that there were two blind beggars that day who were healed.

Mark, on the other hand, chooses to focus on only one of these blind beggars, and he tells us the name of the one he's choosing to focus on, Bartimaeus. Why? It certainly isn't because Mark is being deceptive with his reader, hoping you'd never find out Jesus healed two blind men. Actually, that would be a more impressive story to tell. So, why focus on one?

I believe I know the answer. Imagine I were telling an amazing story that involved many people, like a crowd of people acting heroically. But one of the individuals in that heroic crowd that day were Pastor Tom. I'd probably tell you the story focusing on Tom, not everyone else. And the obvious reason why would be because you all know Tom. It's a fine story to tell of the actions of a heroic crowd. But how much more exciting to tell that same story involving someone you know! I think that's why Mark focuses on Bartimaeus here.

I think that Bartimaeus was a well-known servant in the early church. In fact, if Peter was Mark's source on these stories, I could imagine Peter telling Mark this story and saying, "So, we're on our way to Jerusalem and this blind beggar is crying out for Jesus. And everyone is trying to silence him, but he'll have none of it. He keeps crying out until he gets Jesus' attention. Jesus stops, calls him to himself, heals him, and he becomes a follower of Christ. And you know who that guy was? It was Bartimaeus?" And Mark would say, "Bartimaeus? Wait, you mean, our Bartimaeus?" And Peter would answer, "Yes, that's who I'm talking about. That's how Bartimaeus came to be a follower of Christ." And this brings me to my last point, namely, that our value in society doesn't necessarily match our value in the kingdom.

Our value in society doesn't necessarily match our value in the kingdom

To the crowd that day, blind, begging Bartimaeus had no value. He shouldn't even deserve Jesus' time. And after that day I think he became a very valuable part of the early church. So, let's let this be a lesson to us. We can be tempted to value things as the world does. Maybe we even have said, "Oh man, what could that guy do for the kingdom if only he were saved." But the reality is that the Lord actually opens the eyes of people who aren't that valuable in society in order that he might show off his might. This is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor 1:26-29). That's who we are.

The Lord may well bring to himself someone who is disabled who will fuel impossible tasks through faithful prayers. He may take someone who is impoverished and move them to give so that all of us have a faithful model and are pressed to express our trust in Christ more. He may take naturally selfish people like you and me and give us hearts that love one another dearly just to show the world the transforming might he has to take selfish hearts and change them. We don't know what he'll do. But don't let us be a people who import what the world says is valuable into the church. The Lord likes to take blind beggars and make them people about whom Mark would say to Peter, "You mean that was Bartimaeus?"

Remember, it's those who know they're desperately needy who are blessed. And desperately needy people who cry out to the Lord with persistent, expectant faith may well result in us seeing some Bartimaeuses come into the fold here. Our Lord, who died and rose for us, has told us that he's able to do exceedingly beyond what we think or ask. So let's trust him now as we come to table. Amen.