



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### Close Encounters with Jesus: Blind Bartimaeus

#### Mark 10:46-52

How many here today have had a dream in which you've been unprepared for a test or an interview or something? Today's encounter is an eye-opening look at the importance of that moment, and our response to Jesus...

*10:46 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. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

*48 Many people 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.*

*10:46 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.*

There was a large crowd because of Jesus and because the Passover pilgrims were en route to Jerusalem.

This is just before Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem and the Palm Parade. And here's blind Bartimaeus, begging on the side of that road. What a great picture of us today:

In some ways, we're blind: because we think we can see everything clearly. Spiritually, we're blind to *how lost we are* without Christ. We're blind to how broken down we are in our sin. We're blind to God's justice and holiness, his goodness and wrath. We're blind to how beautiful the love of Christ is. We're blind to most other people, unless they can meet *our* need in something. We're blind until he opens our eyes, and when he enters us, we begin to see how blind we were.

We're also poor: Because we're born into sin. We're poor and don't realize what we lost when sin entered the world: the image of God, our birthright, our promise, or our paradise. When Adam and Eve broke their covenant relationship with God, sin entered the world, and our inheritance was lost. Our true home was lost and dilapidated. We're left in the depths, starving, begging, and blind, without anything to buy bread for our hungry souls with. UNTIL Jesus visits us with love.

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Bartimaeus REFUSED to be silenced! He knew what to do! The problem with all those other people was they didn't know what God was capable of doing. I think that's our problem too. We don't know what God is capable of doing.

So how did he know? Blind men didn't travel back then. How did Bartimaeus know about Jesus? He'd know. He'd heard... Jesus healed a man born blind...Not only that, Jesus had read from the scroll: Luke 4:18 "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden,*

*to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”*

Bartimaeus heard that Messiah should come to open the eyes of the blind, and quick in thought, came at once to the conclusion that the man who could open the eyes of the blind was none other than the Messiah; and from that day he was a secret disciple of Jesus. He might have heard Jesus being scoffed at, but *he* did not scoff. How could he scoff at one who had opened the eyes of the blind? He might have heard many a passer-by reviling Christ, and calling him an impostor, but *he* could not join in the reviling. How could he be a deceiver who gave sight to poor blind men? That encounter of which he had heard led him to believe Jesus must be the predicted Messiah.

Faith comes by hearing. Have you heard? Were you here to hear the testimonies of those among us who came to faith and were baptized? Have you heard how Christ pardons sin? Maybe you have the seeds of faith, but you haven't really grabbed on to it. Your faith doesn't have to be super strong; it just has to be enough to get you to grab on to Jesus. Your faith is not in your faith, it's in Christ. You don't need strong faith to begin; but just enough faith to reach out.

I think he must've been really shouting "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Everybody shushed him but Jesus. It took a blind man to see Jesus for who he was: the Messiah-King of the Hebrew prophecy. (Is. 11:1-5, Jer. 23:5-6, Ezek. 34:23-24). Jesus didn't try to stop him! He accepted this Messianic title. He probably said "He's callin' my name!" You know, when you're in a large crowd and someone says your name...

*49 Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you."*

Jesus didn't ignore him, either. He told the folks to call him. Even as Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem, knowing what was to come, he had time to serve someone in need.

And look at the crowd. Aren't you sick of crowds? It's sort of like the typical media frenzy. First they shush you, then you do something, and they cheer you. No wonder God calls us sheep. Just give me something good to follow, worth following. That's what I love about God's vision for this church: to be a regional equipping center for the unconnected thousands...for Christ-focused life transformation! God wants us to follow him that thousands of others can also encounter Jesus.

*50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. Bartimaeus doesn't stop for anything. He knew his moment had come.* He throws his cloak aside. (It's like he said "I won't be needing this anymore!") This was probably the cloak he spread out to collect alms. He jumps up.

Bartimaeus was quick to grab the opportunity when his chance came. He didn't argue with himself. If that's you, if a part of you is ready to receive Jesus' healing or salvation or new life, quit the argument! Yes, there's something noble about a person who carefully weighs his or her thoughts. Yes, our society honors those whose thoughts are tumultuous and divided. Yes, our postmodern worldview embraces the negative and views all opinions the same...but I say get over it! It's not that noble! Not if it's keeping you from seizing your moment now! When ultimate Truth and Light are revealed, when Life with a capital L comes in the room, it's time to quit considering the shadows. I'm not saying to quit weighing your options when you face a decision, but for some of us, arguing with yourself can just be a bad habit. Arguing for the sake of argument. Time to drop it. Give up. God's going to outlast and outstrip any argument you've got. It's time to put aside your arguments, and it's time to act.

Bartimaeus' chance came. And he was ready. Though he was blind, he saw it! When our chance comes, will we recognize it? Bartimaeus knew where he was. He knew all about his lot in life, but HE HAD FAITH in the Messiah of the living God.

*51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."* Jesus questions him. Now Jesus wasn't going for information. He wanted to encourage Bartimaeus to articulate his need and express his faith. And he knows! Bartimaeus knows! "Rabbi, I want to see." "Rabbi (Rhabbouni means "My Lord, my Master") a very personal address. (Jesus must have loved that: not only did

Bartimaeus see Jesus as Messiah of Israel, but as Messiah of his life as well.)

By his answer, we see Bartimaeus takes Jesus seriously. How about you? Have you taken Jesus seriously? Bartimaeus doesn't hem and haw. He doesn't say "Lord, I hardly know what to say." He just says it—"Lord, that I may receive my sight." Our prayers are never intrusions to God. Even when they come off as yells. They are the stuff of our encounters with him! Specific prayers are real prayers. Be real with God. He'll never reject you or your prayers. Be honest with him. I think we're afraid to be honest with him for two reasons: We aren't in a relationship with him, and we don't know what God is capable of doing. Until we get specific, we won't know what God is capable of doing.

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

Jesus acknowledges his faith. While his healing was from God, Bartimaeus claim of it was through his faith. Bartimaeus' physical "salvation" (deliverance from darkness to light) was an outward picture of his spiritual salvation. He became a loyal disciple. Bartimaeus saw... He saw his inability, He trusted Jesus as the One to give him God's mercy, When he could "see" clearly, he began to follow Jesus. Do you have enough sight to see what it is you need? Bartimaeus did.

Bartimaeus was able to let go—of his doubts, of his position in life, of what other people thought about him, of his old way of living, and he went for it. Just like the guy at the pool last week. Jesus asked him: What do you need? DO WE KNOW?

Jesus calls him, and Bartimaeus eagerly obeys the call. There's no pressure. Nobody had to pull him. Nobody can do that for you anyway. You need to do it yourself. So Bartimaeus throws off his cloak. He says "I won't need this anymore!" Don't you know Jesus has been calling you? Some of you have heard his call already, but you're all wrapped up in your cloak; not ready to fling it off.

Listen, when you first sensed Jesus' call, and you didn't respond, did you think Jesus didn't mean it? When he said "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Why are you still weary and heavy-laden? Why don't you come? Come! O come to him! Cast away your cloak of weariness, or affluence, or respectability, or sin, or coping, or whatever "it" is for you, and come! I'm not calling you—Jesus is! Come, no matter what shape your life is in, come! No matter how many people are shushing you. Come on! He's not talking to anybody else. You're *not* left out—come! Trust him *now*, just as you are, sins and warts and all. *Come!* Ask him to forgive you, claim his goodness, claim his sacrifice. It won't be in vain. Come!

Jesus asks you today: "What do you need from me?" Do you know? Can you say it? Can you confess it? Tell him your sin. Don't hold anything back. Grudges, anger, laziness, unfaithfulness, lust. Tell him. It's not like he hasn't heard it before! You're not going to shock him. © He himself was faced with it all, but chose not to sin. Tell him of your blindness. Tell him of your hardened heart. Or your gossip. And ask him to be renewed. To be washed. To be filled. To be used for his purposes. To be assured of his love.

The moment Bartimaeus is healed, the moment he's set free, he wants nothing but to serve Christ. What a beautiful picture! The one thing he wants is to serve Christ. To tell of his mercy. He wants to walk with him, and be with him.

Easter is coming up. Holy Week is here. What an amazing time to open your life to a close encounter with Jesus. Let us pray: *Son of David, we simply come to you right now...we expose our wounds...our need... Lord, we lay aside everything that holds us back...we give you proper place in our lives...and we allow you to fix our brokenness. We don't know where you will lead us, but we go forward with you to serve. Thank you! Amen.*