

WHEN THE BLIND SEE

Mark 10:46-11:11

A pastor named Bryan Clark I think nailed it in one of his sermons recently when he said that one of the real and unfortunate reasons why a lot of people struggle with Christianity and really accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior, or maybe even become disillusioned and walk away, is because we've come to Jesus in the first place with our own preconceived notions about Him. Many of us I'm sure who are here today and have been through this, would say that upon your initial seeking of Jesus, you tried to make Him who you wanted Him to be rather than reading the Bible first and accepting Him for who He says He is. We have the tendency to try and create our own Jesus that fits our expectations and our desires and our own agenda, much like the rich, young ruler. So when we come to Jesus with our expectations and He doesn't answer us the way we wanted Him too, or asks of us to exchange our agenda for His, we start to feel disappointed and disillusioned and unfortunately, go home sad as a poor, young ruler. I think it's safe to say that this scenario plays out in peoples' hearts many times over every day, all around the world, as people try to come to their version of Jesus, without considering who He really is and what He asks of them.

Some people treat Jesus like a **Genie-Jesus** where if they just rub the lamp a little bit, they'll get their 3 wishes. Clark says that in more modern terms, we might call Him an **Alexa Jesus** – where we treat Jesus like an errand boy – “Jesus do this; Jesus do that...” And we use our going to church and putting a little money in the offering box as leverage for Jesus to do His part. And when He doesn't hold up His end of the imaginary deal, we walk away. We also turn Him into a **back-pocket Jesus** where we only bring Him out when we need a little comfort and then put Him back in again when we want to go on about our lives our way.ⁱ But if we want to keep from being disappointed and disillusioned, we've got to get to know the biblical Jesus because the reality is that He is more and offers us so much more.

Mark 10:46-11:11,

*“Then they came to Jericho. And later, as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a beggar who was blind named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him here.” So they *called the man who was blind, saying to him, “Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you.” And throwing off his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. And replying to him, Jesus said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” And the man who was blind said to Him, “Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!” And Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.*

And as they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring it here. And if anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it’; and immediately he will send it back here.” They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. And some of the bystanders were saying to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” And they told them just as Jesus had said, and they gave them permission. They brought the colt to Jesus and put their cloaks on it; and He sat on it. And many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. And those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: “Hosanna!

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!” And Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple area; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

You guys didn't know it was Palm Sunday, did you? Anyway, **two historical accounts** here: one with the blind man and one with the crowds coronating Jesus as their King. We start with the blind man, whose story is **like the bridge between two sets of blind people**. The disciples are blind (not understanding His Passion Prediction like we saw last week), the blind man gets healed, and then you see the blindness of the crowd who doesn't understand Jesus' mission either. It's really the same thing we witnessed in chapter 8 in a sermon called “Seeing Jesus Clearly”. The blindness of the disciples as to Jesus' purpose in coming was demonstrated through that 2-stage miracle healing of a blind man. This healing serves the same purpose, sandwiched in between the blindness of the disciples and the blindness of the crowds who will later turn on Him when His interests come into conflict with theirs. That's the context summed up.

I. JESUS HEALS A BLIND MAN AT JERICHO (10:46-52)

Jericho, again, is down in the Jordan Valley below sea level. It is a fertile, tropical oasis in the midst of a hostile desert area and it is able to be that way because of the natural springs of water there. Even from a satellite image today, this place sits like a plush green dot in the middle of desert wasteland. The historian Josephus said about this place that it is “the most fruitful country of Judea, which bears a vast number of palm trees.” The Jericho referred too is a new Jericho from the OT one the Israelites conquered and could be called the Herodian Jericho. It was the place of royals who wanted to snowbird in the winter. Herod the Great beautified it and eventually died there.

But the climate and the location of Jericho is what made it a great resting place for those Jews who were, like Jesus, on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover. This would be a sort of final stop where they rested to gather strength for the last difficult leg of climbing to the city. During this time of the year, there would be throngs of **Passover pilgrims** making on their journey to the holy city, besides Jesus' followers, so it was a great place for a **blind beggar** like **Bartimaeus** to sit by the road and beg for alms from pilgrims feeling pious on their holy journey.ⁱⁱ

Bartimaeus, by the way, simply means son of Timaeus. And Matthew, a parallel passage records that there were two men but Mark and Luke chose only to focus on the one because he is probably the more significant one or prominent one for whatever reason. It's not a matter of error but of choice of report. One added more details. Remember the gospel interpretation principle:

❖ **Gospel Interpretation Principle: Not contradictory, but complimentary.**

It's the same thing with the Jericho's. One writer says leaving Jericho and one says entering. Well, there's two Jericho's right there just a few miles apart. They're in the vicinity of the old and new. So that is sufficient.

That being said, notice that even though he has no eyesight, his ears are sensitive to what is going on. At this time there would have been a ton of commotion but this commotion is a little more than normal, because well, who doesn't want to see this Jesus everyone's been talking about? He probably asked someone, “Why the commotion?” and when He hears that Jesus the Nazarene is walking by, he begins to cry out with a shrieking cry for help. The word suggests that he's annoyingly loud, like worse than a loud fan in the stadium trying to get the attention of his favorite player. It's overwhelming and everyone is just wishing he would stop. Verse 48 says, “Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more.”

So this tells us this isn't your average beggar on the road, filled with beggars. He's not just seeking a few pieces of change to help a poor blind man. He's seeking Jesus fervently and desperately. I think that blindness for this man has been an advantage because according to the Pharisees (though a false presumption) this man's blindness was the result of being cursed by God. And maybe he believed that – he was under God's curse. So even if it was a false presumption, it made him realize that he was an undeserving sinner who need God's mercy. In other words, because he couldn't see, he saw himself as God sees him (biblical anthropology says we are sinners who all fall short). But the Pharisees, because they see, did not see their need for mercy. **This man is blind, but he sees better than most.** And his cries for mercy are cries of a man who understand he's not worthy.

It's more than a man who is tired of being blind. He's crying out for God's mercy on him. He knows he needs rescued. And even though he hasn't seen Jesus do a miracle, he has heard about Jesus and His ministry – and that's enough for anyone today, as well, to believe in Him. **Faith comes not by seeing, but by hearing the Word about Christ** (Rom. 10:17). How tragic that some actually saw Him and didn't believe. This man doesn't see, and yet believes already.

Romans 10:17

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ."

This is why it's so important to sit under the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. This is how faith is built! If you feel like you lack faith, know that faith comes by hearing the gospel and hearing the Word of God. Without hearing the Word of God, taking it in, we're all going to be blind in this world – just wandering generalities as Wayne Fisher says. Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:14-17 that Scripture is sufficient to give us the wisdom that leads to salvation and to completely equip us to live a life of faith for God. It's my job as Paul instructed young Timothy to remind you guys that the Bible, this Book, is not just an ordinary book. It is sacred. It is God-breathed. It's is God's Word to us for salvation and for life (1 Thess. 2:13). It is inspired by God. Not just the word of men, but the Word of God, which performs its work in those who believe (1 Thess. 2:13). People today need the Word of God. Salvation comes through hearing what it has to say and it will help you flourish in life as you live and serve God.

Charles Stanly wrote, "It [Scripture] provides us with an advantage in every department of life – family, business, and personal relationships. It is profitable because it reflects the wisdom of God; and when we abide by its teaching, we learn to live in His peace. As we meditate and consider its truth, our spirits and souls find nourishment. We become established and enriched in every experience of life by living according to God's perspective."ⁱⁱⁱ Without the Word, we're all going through life blind.

All of us though, when we really understand the depths of our sin nature, should become like blind beggars who go forcefully after the real, biblical Jesus. We should go for it. Spiritual blessings like salvation belong to those who "go for it".^{iv} I think if you want to be saved, you've got to cry out to Jesus in your heart and ask Him to save you. And like the blind man, once you see your need of Jesus, you don't care whose around. You just cry out because you know that **Jesus is your only hope from sin.** Imagine if this man didn't go for it – didn't cry out – and just let Jesus walk on by... people do that every day in their hearts. But thank God this man didn't.

Jesus accepts his request as a clear indication of his faith that meant his eyes would be opened literally and spiritually. He is saved from blindness and from sin. And notice how he threw off his old garment and then followed Jesus on the road. That's just wonderful and I'll tell you why:

❖ **This healing is a model of conversion and call to discipleship.**

Just like each believer, Christ has opened our eyes to see Him clearly and now we're called to follow Him. Like Bartimaeus, I think Mark is calling us to **throw off the old garments**. To throw off the old filthy rags of self-righteousness and be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. And to throw off the ways of the old man (sinful ways), jump up and follow Jesus.

Ephesians 4:22, NLT

"Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from Him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.

Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.

Put on your new nature, created to be like God – truly righteous and holy."

Everyone needs to have this moment where they make that decision to say, "I've heard about Jesus and what He did for me. And I'm going to trust Him and I'm going to live for Him. I'm done living for myself and I'm living for Christ now!" That's what people who see themselves and Jesus clearly do. It's not, "How can I get my Genie-Alexa Jesus to fit my will?" But, "How can I begin to live my life for Him and His will?"

But now we come to the next scene in chapter 11 which reveals the blindness of the crowd and basically initiates the last week of Jesus' life. For the rest of Mark, we're in the final week – Passion Week.

II. JESUS' ROYAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM (11:1-11)

The story picks up in **Bethphage** and **Bethany**, small villages close to each other on the outskirts E of Jerusalem in the Mt. Olives region, about 2 miles out or so. From here, Jesus can overlook the city and actually weep over the city as He rides in – so it's not all smiles and cheers because Jesus sees through everything that's going to happen (Lk. 19:41-44).

And even though Jesus has made this journey several times in the past, He's never entered like this before. Other times when the crowds attempted to sort of crown Him King like this, He wouldn't allow it. He didn't want the shallow fanfare because He Himself knew what was in man and wasn't entrusting Himself to them (Jn. 2:25). But now is the proper time to accept a royal entourage because today is the day to fulfill prophecy. This is the day that 483 years earlier, the prophet Daniel said the Messiah would enter Jerusalem only to be cut off (Dan. 9:26) and make atonement for sins. And there's only one more seven year "week" in that prophecy and it's the tribulation period before Christ returns.

Some consider this the last opportunity for the nation of Israel to receive Christ as Savior, but I don't think this is the case after what we've studied already. He has been presenting Himself over the past 3 years and about a year and a half ago they decided they didn't want Him as their Messiah, at least His way of being Messiah.^v They blasphemed the Holy Spirit, saying He was possessed by Satan basically, and that was the unpardonable sin. They've been trying to assassinate Him since. So I don't think this is another new offer. I think it is just fulfilling prophecy, and just kind of rubbing it in that He is their King and Messiah, like when Pilate nails "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews" to the placard on His cross (John 19:19).

Even though the peoples' motives for wanting Him as King are shallow and selfish, He allows this because it's going to precipitate the action of His enemies^{vi} so that they'll keep on fulfilling prophecy by crucifying Him on Passover day. As a result of what is going on here, the Pharisees realized they may have waited too long to assassinate Jesus because they said, "the whole world was going after Him" (Jn. 12:19).

There's just so much going on here guys that it's hard to even put it into words. I think I've preached through this account a few times and I hear it preached almost yearly but to communicate the depth of what is taking place here and the significance of it is not easy.

The Agenda of the Crowd: (vv. 7-10)

So the crowd has on their minds that Jesus is the Kingly Messiah who will usher in the kingdom of God on earth and overthrow Rome politically. When they cry out **Hosanna!** It means "save us now!" literally save us politically right now. The Gospel of John adds that to the psalm they were quoting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" they were strangely adding to the end of that psalm, "Even the King of Israel".

The **palm branches** (Jn. 12:13) they lay on the ground signify victory and joy. The **coats** they're laying on the ground (Mk. 11:8) signify submission – saying you can rule over us, walk on us, sort of thing. And the route is the **exact route** that many Jewish kings in the past have taken on their return home from battle or being anointed as king. **Solomon** in 1 Kings 1:38-48; **Jehu** in 2 Kings 9:13; **Judah Maccabee** in the 2nd century B.C.; and **Simon Maccabee**, the last of the Maccabees after that. Both Judah and Simon Maccabee had brought military victory to the Jewish people, cleansed the Temple, and expelled Gentile authorities.^{vii} They're expecting Christ to do the same.

Their agenda is clear. And granted, Jesus has met all of the qualifications – He's of the lineage of David and has proven it by His power that He is able to lift the curse of sin on man and creation (Is. 35:5). He heals blindness and raises the dead (Jn. 11:39-44). Everybody who had the hope of the coming Messiah understood the Messiah would lift the curse on creation. And His riding a donkey that's never been ridden (without it turning into a rodeo!) is just more evidence of it (Is. 11:6). He is the Lord of Creation.

❖ Christological Significance: Jesus is Lord of Creation. He meets the qualifications of the King who can usher in the Millennial Kingdom.

The crowd is making their agenda clear but their agenda is too shallow and doesn't account for their sin problem and by far they have already rejected Him. But you can see **the conflict of interest** by the way Jesus is riding a donkey and not a war horse.

Jesus' agenda:

The **donkey** signifies peace and Rome wasn't going to be won over with **peace**. Jesus was also **weeping** over Jerusalem as He drew near while they're praising because Jerusalem didn't recognize their time of visitation (Lk. 19:41). So it's quite interesting. Jesus knows the hearts of this people and that their praise is superficial. When He starts expelling Jewish authorities from the Temple and not Gentiles, most of them will turn on Him saying we won't have this man reign over us (Lk. 19:14) why? Because their disillusioned by His agenda that conflicts with theirs.

Something Mark really highlights and wants us to see is Jesus' deity in all of this.

❖ Christological Significance #2: Jesus has supernatural knowledge. (vv. 2-6)

We made the same point last week but it's important. He's omniscient. Mark wants us to be moved by the way Jesus supernaturally knows the location of this donkey and that it's tied up and when they untie it the owner will ask about it and all they need to say is, "The Lord has need of it." Remember, Jesus doesn't have a cell phone to facetime with this man about a newborn donkey. This is supernatural and it tells us a lot about Jesus – He is God – not just a "good and moral teacher." And He's fulfilling Zechariah 9:9 by riding this donkey, written 500 years earlier.

It says a lot about His first coming in peace. Now, for His second coming, that's a different story. He will come on a white war horse and set up the kingdom. But He has to be the Prophet and Priest first.

❖ **Jesus holds 3 offices: Prophet, Priest and King.**

Being God, He is the ultimate Prophet, ultimate Priest, and ultimate King. But there's a sequential order to it. And thank God there is because (and this is what the crowd doesn't understand) you won't want Him as King if He first doesn't deal with your sin problem as a High Priest first. Because He is a righteous King who will rule in righteousness and us not being righteous, need the gift of righteousness through faith in Him in what He does on the cross first.

The crowd is on **political** deliverance and He is thinking **spiritual** deliverance (political deliverance coming later). Like Peter on the Mt. of Transfiguration, they're thinking the **Feast of Tabernacles**, but Jesus is thinking the **Passover Feast** where the Lamb is slain.

Jesus is the Suffering Servant and like Isaiah 53 prophesied, He is the Lamb of God who must be slain to make atonement (covering) for sin. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness (Heb. 9:22). That's why you see all of those sacrifices throughout the OT. They're all pointing to the **ultimate Lamb of God** who would come as John the Baptist said and, "Take away the sins of the world" (Jn. 1:29).

Every Passover, the Jews on this day, the 10th day of the month of Nisan, would choose a **Passover lamb** according to Exodus 12:3-6. And they would set it aside for a few days to test it and make sure it is spotless and without blemish. That's because the lamb had to be perfect to deal with man's imperfections (just like Jesus has to be the perfect God-man who never sinned to pay for man's sins). Well, here **Jesus is being chosen as the Passover Lamb** on the 10th of Nisan and during this last week He is going to cleanse the temple and interact with the Pharisees and Sadducees and they're going to be dumbfounded by His perfection. They can't find anything wrong with Him. He'll die an innocent man. But little do they know that **by their questioning and testing of Jesus, all they're doing is proving Him to be that spotless and blameless Lamb of God who is able to make atonement on the 14th of Nisan.**^{viii} Just as the Jews chose and set aside a literal lamb, so Jesus is chosen on this day and set aside for testing. That's why He enters the city and temple and then leaves (v. 11). It is symbolic. It is graphic.

❖ **Jesus' entry into the temple and leaving symbolizes His being chosen as the Passover Lamb and set aside for testing to show Him spotless and blameless.**

Only when Christ had ascended and they had received the Holy Spirit, did the disciples understand what happened and the Scriptures they fulfilled this day. It was a wonderful day. A prophecy fulfilling day. Like Albert Mohler said, "Jesus is more than Israel knew to expect, but He is nothing less than Israel was promised." They just didn't realize it because their own preconceived notions and expectations got in the way.

So what do we do with this? How do we sum this up? Well, I think Mark wants us to learn what this means for us as disciples. That's His emphasis – to see us respond to Jesus as genuine disciples.

The Response of a Disciple:

1. Disciples will see themselves clearly. (Mk. 10:47; John 1:8)

You might say, biblically, according to real anthropology. Like the blind man, a disciple of Jesus will see their sin and their need for mercy because of it. They will see their personal need is much greater than money and physical healing and political freedom. They'll see their greatest need to be freedom from sin's dreadful penalty and sin's enslaving power.

2. Disciples see Jesus clearly, as their only hope. (Mk. 10:48; Acts 4:12)

Like the blind man, disciples know Jesus is their only hope for their sins because only Jesus, the God-Man, could pay the ransom (Mk. 10:45) and restore fellowship between holy God and sinful man. They cry out to Him for salvation from sin.

3. Disciples are willing to lay aside the old sinful ways and put on the new way of Christ. (Mk. 10:50; Rom. 13:11-14; Eph. 4:21-24; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 John 3:4-10)

Like the blind man, they throw off the old garments. They don't mess around with sin and habitually practice sin. They understand that sin is the reason they were separated from God and lack fellowship with Him, therefore they turn away from wickedness (2 Tim. 2:19). By studying God's Word they learn what pleases God (Eph. 5:10) in every area of their life and apply it to their lives, as so flourish.

4. Disciples are willing to follow Christ where He leads. (Mk. 10:52; Jn. 12:26)

The blind man immediately regained his sight and began following Jesus on the road. Disciples go, where through their relationship with Him, He leads them to go. And you might be surprised when that is nearer than you imagine or farther than you imagine. But Jesus said be open and willing because, "Anyone who wants to serve Me must follow Me, because My servants must be where I am" (Jn. 12:26).

Communion

And as we come to the communion table this morning, I want us to remember that we're celebrating our Passover Lamb being slain. When the Israelites slaughtered the lambs and applied the blood to their doorposts in Egypt, the Lord passed over their sins. It's the same for us. He passes over our sins and that makes this a celebration. And it's more than that. Nisan marked the beginning of a new year and that meant a new lamb, a new beginning, a fresh start. And some of you here this morning could probably use a fresh start. That's what communion is also all about. Confessing our sins and thanking God for forgiveness and getting back to a fresh walk with Him.

ⁱ Bryan Clark, sermon *You Must Die to Live*, www.lincolnberean.org, accessed 6 February, 2021.

ⁱⁱ Robert Stein, *The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008) 494.

ⁱⁱⁱ Charles Stanley, *The Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible* (Thomas Nelson, 2009), 1441.

^{iv} Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 259.

^v Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective, Volume 3* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2018).

^{vi} John MacArthur, sermon *The False Coronation of the True King*, www.gty.org, accessed 5 February 2021.

^{vii} Fruchtenbaum, 231.

^{viii} Fruchtenbaum, 222.