

What Do You Want Me to Do for You?

Our text records the last healing story in Mark's gospel, and it is an important one indeed.

Mark 10: 46-52

46 And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. **47** And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” **48** And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” **49** And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.” **50** And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. **51** And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.” **52** And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

Jesus' encounter with Bartimaeus is meant to be compared to his encounters earlier in this chapter, especially with James and John. We know this because of the identical question He asks them in vv. 36 and 51: “What do you want me to do for you?” The responses to this question are very different, and Jesus' reaction to them is also very different, which leads us to ask: what's the difference?

The difference is none other than saving faith. That's why this text is so vital for us. Let's then examine the nature of true saving faith, demonstrated for us in this encounter between Bartimaeus and Jesus:

1. Faith sees without eyes (v.46)

Bartimaeus did not have the privilege of observing Jesus' other miraculous healings as evidence to support his faith. He believed by hearing. Remember when Thomas insisted on seeing before he would believe, and, after showing his scars to Thomas, Jesus then said, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. (John 20:29)” For 2,000 years, God's people have believed without physically seeing. Bartimaeus is our prototype.

2. Faith rests in Christ alone (v.47)

Observe the two main thrusts of Bartimaeus' faith: 1) Jesus is the Messiah (Son of David) and 2) I need mercy. This is forever the essence of saving faith. Hear how the Westminster Confession of Faith states it:

“By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.” (Chapter XIV, par. 2)

In saving faith, we come to Christ in all His Majesty to heal us of all our sin and brokenness.

3. Faith perseveres (v. 48)

In this world, sincere faith will always be challenged. So it is with Bartimaeus. The people tell him to hush, but observe what he does—he doubles down, raising his voice a few more decibels! This is the nature of faith. It will not be extinguished by the fiery arrows of the evil one and his minions.

4. Faith gets Jesus' attention (v. 49)

Notice that Mark says, "And Jesus stopped..." Wow! What got Jesus' attention? Was it this man's wealth? His prestige and reputation? His great learning or religious knowledge? No. It was his simple faith in Christ. Your simple, saving faith has the same effect upon Him.

Jesus then calls you to Himself. Notice that when He does, all the disciples change their attitude toward you: "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you."

5. Faith responds to His call (v. 50)

This poor man's cloak was his only defense against the cold of night, his only comfort in his sleep, and his only means of collecting coins from begging during the day. But when he receives a call from Jesus, he casts that old cloak away, and vigorously arises and stumbles to find Jesus. What a graphic picture of real saving faith at work in our lives. This is the very thing that the rich man was unwilling to do, as recorded earlier in this chapter.

6. Faith heals (v. 51)

This man believed that Jesus had the power and the compassion to heal him. And so He did. The words for "healed," "made well," and "saved" are all the same in Greek. Furthermore, the Scriptures often use blindness as a metaphor for lostness (see, for example, II Cor. 4:3,4). What we learn, therefore, is that faith alone will save us. This is why the Scriptures say, "And without faith it is impossible to please him." (Heb. 11:6)

7. Faith follows Jesus (v. 52)

Mark says that Bartimaeus "followed him on the way." Compare that phrase to the one in v.46 where Mark says, literally "he was sitting by the way." Faith, you see, takes us from the sidelines and puts us "in the game"; it takes us from the classroom and puts us on the battlefield; it takes us from being served to serving.

The challenge for each of us is to answer the question, "Do I have this saving faith?"

Discussion Questions

1. What are the most difficult things for us to believe without seeing them with our own eyes? What helps us?
2. How is Christian faith different from all other religious faiths?
3. What difference does it make to know that you have Jesus' attention?
4. What does it mean for us today to "throw off our cloaks" (v. 50)? How do we best do that?
5. How would you explain to someone with terminal cancer that our faith heals us?
6. How would you explain someone who says that he "believes in Jesus" but whose lifestyle is contrary to His? What does it mean to "follow him on the way?"