

Luke 18:35-43
May 17, 2020

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Think of a time when you were desperate for God's mercy. Perhaps you were in a bad situation that was self-induced, or maybe it was a circumstance that was beyond your control. When you cried out for Jesus's mercy, what did you discover? [Let people engage]

Transition: Today we meet a blind beggar named Bartimeus. Blindness was a common affliction in that day for which there was no cure. So imagine being a beggar whose lifestyle was to get up every morning, take a walking stick and somehow manage to park himself by the city gate, where multitudes of people would be passing by. Each day, the blind man begged for help just to get by. But then a unique situation occurs. His ears can discern that a crowd was going by, and he wants to know what's going on! Let's not only read this text to find out, but let's also read this same storyline in Matthew 20:29-34 and in Mark 10:46-52 to get a fuller picture of the scene. Let's start with today's text of Luke 18:35-43. Now let's read Matt 20:29-34. Does someone have Mark 10:46-52?

[Clean up perceived conflicting reports: Matthew tells us that there were *two* blind beggars who met Jesus as He *left* Jericho (Matt. 20:29–30), but Luke introduces us to one blind beggar, Bartimaeus, who called out as Jesus *approached* Jericho. There were two Jerichos: the old ruined city and the new one built by Herod the Great, and they stood about a mile apart. The two men, one of whom was more outspoken, were sitting at the entrance to the new city, so there is no contradiction (note Mark 10:46).]

BOOK:

A Blind Beggar Receives His Sight

³⁵ As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. ³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

³⁸ He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

³⁹ Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁰ Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹ "What do you want me to do for you?"

"Lord, I want to see," he replied.

⁴² Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." ⁴³ Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

What are the lessons found in this story?

- Jesus never ignores the cry of those who truly call upon Him.
- Jesus is profoundly compassionate.
- The Lord has power over all human infirmities.
- Jesus came to do far more than heal human afflictions, but rather to offer forgiveness and salvation.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 250-251)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

A Determined Beggar (Luke 18:35–43)

Matthew tells us that there were *two* blind beggars who met Jesus as He *left* Jericho (Matt. 20:29–30), but Luke introduces us to one blind beggar, Bartimaeus, who called out as Jesus *approached* Jericho. There were two Jerichos, the old ruined city and the new one built by Herod the Great, and they stood about a mile apart. The two men, one of whom was more outspoken, were sitting at the entrance to the new city, so there is no contradiction (note Mark 10:46).

In that day, blindness was a common affliction for which there was no cure, and all a blind person could do was beg. These two men had not been born blind, for their prayer was to “regain” their sight (Luke 18:41, and note Matt. 20:34). They persisted in crying out to the Lord, in spite of the obstacles in their way: their inability to see Jesus, the opposition of the crowd, and our Lord’s delay in responding to them. They were not going to let Jesus pass them without first pleading for mercy.

The fact that they addressed Him as “Son of David,” a messianic title, indicates that these two Jewish beggars knew that Jesus could give sight to the blind (Isa. 35:5; and see Luke 4:18). Jesus responded to their faith and healed them, and what a change took place! They went from darkness to light, from begging to following Jesus, and from crying to praising the Lord. They joined the pilgrim crowd going to Jerusalem and lifted their voices in praising the Lord.

The contrast is obvious between these two beggars and the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18–27). The beggars were poor, yet they became rich, while the young man was rich and became eternally poor. The beggars claimed no special merit and openly admitted their need, while the young man lied about himself and bragged about his character. The young man would not believe, so he went away from Jesus very sad; but the two beggars believed in Jesus and followed Him with songs of praise. “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away” (Luke 1:53).

The “human editions” we have “read” in this chapter encourage us to put our faith in Jesus Christ, no matter what others may say or do. The widow was not discouraged by the indifferent attitude of the judge, nor the publican by the hypocritical attitude of the Pharisee. The parents brought their little ones to Jesus in spite of the selfish attitude of the Apostles, and the blind men came to Jesus even though the crowd told them to keep quiet and stay put. Jesus always responds to faith and rewards those who believe.

But the rich young ruler stands as a warning to all who depend on character to save them from sin. This young man shows us how close a person may come to salvation and yet turn away in unbelief. John Bunyan closed his *Pilgrim’s Progress* with the warning, “Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.” Heed that warning today!

Martin, J. A. (1985). *Isaiah*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 251)*

g. *Jesus and a blind man (18:35–43) (Matt. 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52)*

In this passage and the next (Luke 19:1–10) are two examples of how the nation should have responded to the Messiah. In each case the person who did respond was an outcast from the mainstream of Judaism.

18:35–38. Near **Jericho** a certain **blind man**, hearing all the commotion around him as **Jesus** was **passing by ... asked** those around him **what was** going on. When he was **told** it was **Jesus of Nazareth**, he immediately realized that the Messiah was there, for his words, **Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!** presupposed that he knew Jesus is the Messiah.

Great symbolic value is here in Luke's account. The man was a beggar **sitting by the** side of the road, waiting for something to happen. He was blind and could do nothing to improve his condition. The Messiah came through his town (as He had walked through many towns). Immediately the blind man recognized Him as the Messiah, the One who could save him from his blindness. Spiritual outcasts, unable to help themselves, far more readily recognized the Messiah and asked for His help than did the Jewish religious leaders.

18:39. **Those** in front tried to make **him** keep **quiet**. Similarly, the religious leaders tried to keep people from believing on Jesus. **But** the opposition caused the man to be even more adamant in his faith.

18:40–43. In stating his desire **to see**, the man was confident that **Jesus**, the Messiah, had the power to heal him. When **Jesus** said, **Your faith has healed you**, He was not saying that the man's faith possessed some power. The man had faith in the Messiah, and it was the Messiah's power that had healed him (cf. 7:50; 17:19). In the same way, if the nation had faith in the Messiah, their faith would have healed them of their spiritual blindness. As a result of the man's healing, **he** and **all the people** who **saw** the miracle **praised God**.

Butler, T. C. (2000). Luke (Vol. 3, pp. 302–303). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

F. Dedication to Merciful Acts: Rewarding Persistent Faith (18:35–43)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *Dedicated kingdom living means crying out consistently to God for mercy.*

18:35–36. Jericho marked the last stage of the journey to Jerusalem for Jesus (see 12:51). One last climb up the mountain—and the fateful trip would end. But Jericho was the first stage of the journey for one man, a blind beggar. He sensed a crowd coming and wanted to know what was happening.

18:37–38. The crowd told him Jesus was coming through the town. Immediately he shouted for mercy. He used the messianic title, Son of David, identifying Jesus' royal roots and implying that this one would be crowned in his ancestor's place. Luke does not indicate how this man knew about Jesus.

18:39. The crowd had greater things in mind for Jesus than to tend to the whining of a blind beggar. But the beggar refused to be silenced. He lifted his voice again and again to Jesus.

18:40–41. Jesus illustrated his teaching that it was important to care for the poor. He turned his attention from the crowd to talk to a blind beggar. He had a question for the beggar. What did he really want Jesus to do? The blind beggar did not hesitate. He wanted to see the world.

18:42–43. Jesus did not hesitate. "Your faith has healed you," he replied (see 7:50; 8:48; 17:18). This disabled, poverty-stricken man refused to give up. He trusted in Jesus whom his eyes could not see. He gave God glory and praise, and this started a chain reaction among the crowd. Educated, religious Pharisees could not come to such faith. Even the disciples had

difficulty understanding. A blind beggar joined a sinful woman, a woman who had suffered for twelve years, and a Samaritan leper in exercising healing faith. Of such is the kingdom of God.

MAIN IDEA REVIEW: *Prayer, an essential component of life with God, involves asking God persistently for what you need, believing he will provide. Faith places no stock in personal goodness or personal wealth. Faith prays persistently even as it takes up the cross and walks toward crucifixion. Faith knows it can ask for God's mercy and receive God's rewards for a persistently faithful life.*

III. CONCLUSION

Persistent, Childlike Faith

Jesus related to four different groups of people. He taught the disciples the secrets of the kingdom, hoping they would hear and become bountiful soil. He listened to the crowds, answered their questions, and healed the sick among them. He argued with the Pharisees, trying to show them the true nature of God and his kingdom. He showed mercy and care for society's "underclasses," those with no religious, social, economic, or political power. He made them the center of his statements on the kingdom. He used them as examples of what it meant to be kingdom people. Luke 18 shows Jesus' interaction with all four groups, often in contrast: the poor widow and the powerful judge; the self-righteous Pharisee and the humble tax collector; the helpless children and the disciples; the rich ruler and the blind beggar along with the uncaring crowds.

From these interactions we learn important lessons about persistence in prayer, God's desire to help, the danger of faith disappearing from the earth before the Son of Man returns, the meaning of humble prayer as opposed to proud boasting, the necessity of becoming like a child to enter the kingdom, the relationship of Jesus to the Father who is good, the danger of possessions robbing us of faith, the reward for self-denying discipleship, the inevitability of Christ's betrayal and death in Jerusalem, the hope of the resurrection, the inability of pre-resurrection disciples to understand, and the care of Jesus for the poor and hopeless of society. Luke 18 thus invites us to persist in faith and prayer, maintain a childlike attitude of trust and hope, and give up our trust in possessions and wealth for the true hope in Jesus. Such a life of persistent faith will result in rewards here and hereafter. It will bring us to praise God and give him all the honor and glory. It may guide us to sell our possessions for heavenly rewards.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 18:35-43). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.