

## **SLIDE COLLEGE WELCOME BACK**

Wednesday, August 30th 6pm

## **SLIDE 1 PETER PROMO**

But for today, we're in Matthew 20...last week here.

## **MATTHEW SLIDE INTRODUCE**

So, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Matthew chapter 20.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Matthew 20,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
  - under every single chair.
  - You'll find Matthew 20 on page **825**.

We're jumping right in today...verse 29:

## **MATTHEW 20:29**

**[29] And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him.**

## **EXPLAIN: THE ROAD**

So, if you look at the macro-structure of the Gospel of Matthew.

- From chapter 19 on,
  - we find the journey of Jesus...
  - heading to Jerusalem,
    - where he will ultimately die.

We saw this last week...

- and today, we know how far they've made it.
- They are just leaving Jericho.

So, the road from Jericho to Jerusalem is about 18 miles.

- Jerusalem is 2500 feet above sea level.
- And Jericho sat some 825 feet below sea level.
  - So, more than 3300 feet of elevation gain in 18 miles.

This is why you'd always "go up" to Jerusalem.

Additionally, this road between Jericho and Jerusalem

- is the setting of one of Jesus' most famous parables:
- the Parable of the Good Samaritan.
  - "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho,
  - and he fell among robbers..."

## **EXPLAIN: SETTING**

So, this is the setting:

- Jesus and his 12 disciples are on their way up to Jerusalem
  - on the rather treacherous road from Jericho.
- And a great crowd followed him.

Now, who made up this crowd? Well, it is likely two groups of people.

- First, devout Jews would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem
  - for the Passover festival,
    - So, there were likely thousands of people
      - walking this road with Jesus,
      - who are Jewish religious pilgrims.

BUT, Jesus has also amassed a pretty decent following.

- So, there was the dual excitement
- of those making the trek for the Passover...
  - AND those following this messianic rabbi.

Verse 30:

## **MATTHEW 20:30**

[30] And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

### **EXPLAIN: PARALLELS**

So, this story is told in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

And in Matthew's version we find two blind men.

- But in Luke's and Mark's versions, there is only one.
  - Matthew doubles things three times in his Gospel...
  - And most scholars think it's a way
  - of reaching his target audience, the Jews,
    - because two were needed as witnesses
    - to verify an event.

But we don't know for sure whether there were two or just one healed.

In the end, it doesn't really matter...

- But these blind men are sitting by the roadside,
  - probably in order to beg alms from pilgrims passing by.
    - There were very likely MANY beggars,
      - blind and otherwise infirmed,
    - along this very well traveled road...
    - especially in light of the Passover festival.

This would have been a lucrative opportunity for beggars.

- Similar to how people with signs asking for money
- tend to pick busy intersections and well traveled routes.

## EXPLAIN: BARTIMAEUS

But, while Matthew says there were two blind men,

- And Luke says there is one blind man.
- Mark does something very interesting.

Here's his verse:

### SLIDE MARK 10:46

[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.

### POINT 1

Ok, so if you've been around church for a while, you may have heard of Blind Bartimaeus.

- And the reason scholars think Mark identifies him by name...
- is because after this event...
- Bartimaeus may have been a part of Mark's church.

But it's here I want to make my first point.

I think this story is about **SLIDE IDENTITY**

IDENTITY.

- If you look at the heading in our Bibles for this section...
  - Which were added much later, by the way...
- You will see "Jesus Heals Two Blind Men"...

And if you look at Mark's version you'll read...

- "Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus".

And it got me thinking...

- Why do we tend to define people by their brokenness?

Just think about how we do this with characters from the Bible.

- Blind Bartimaeus.
- Doubting Thomas.
- The Woman Caught in Adultery.
- The Demon Possessed Man.

We call them by what they HAD done...or who they ONCE were...

- And yet, each one of these people...
- was radically transformed...
- after an encounter with Jesus!

Why don't we remember these people...

based on who they are AFTER Jesus changes them?

- Why don't we call him...

THE ARTIST FORMERLY KNOWN AS BLIND BARTIMAEUS...

- cause, spoiler alert, Jesus is about to change his life!

## **APPLICATION: SUFFERING**

But listen...this is a point of application:

**Your SUFFERING doesn't get to define you.**

Gosh, I'll meet with people and I'll say,

- *"Hey, tell me about you!*
- *Tell me your story!"*

And now-a-days I almost always get,

- *"Well, I struggle with this or that..."*
  - *I wrestle with my mental health,*
  - *or my physical health,*
  - *or my family situation."*

And you lead with it as if it's your IDENTITY.

- And hear me...those are definitely a part of your story.
  - Gosh, I have my own load of baggage
  - that I carry around with me, too.

But all-too-often we let those wounds, and scars, and brokenness...

- we let them define us.

**But you are not the hardest things in your life.**

**You are not the sufferings in your life.**

- **You are not your divorce...**
- **You are not your trauma...**
- **You are not your addiction...**
- **You are not your sexual past...**
- **You are not your failures...**
- **You are not your doubts...**
- **You are not what you've done....**
- **And you are not what has been done to you!**

**Those are not what define your IDENTITY.**

### **APPLICATION: SELF-IDENTIFY**

And listen, there's more.

- Your SUFFERING doesn't get to define you.
- **BUT, hear me, NOT EVEN YOU get to define your IDENTITY!**

That's in the air we breathe right now.

- How do you self-identify?
  - YOU do you.
  - YOU figure it out.
  - YOU find yourself.

But listen to me:

The Bible teaches that YOU don't need to figure this out on YOUR own.

- The weight of figuring out your self-identity will crush you!

And God help us, that's what we've told an entire generation.

- We've told them:
  - *YOU figure it out.*
  - *YOU self-define.*
  - *YOU self-identify.*
  - *YOU figure it out!*

**But that's an unbelievably high amount of pressure to put on someone!**

And all it's done is break our mental health and left us...

- more depressed...
- and more anxious...
- more socially inept...
- and more unhappy than ever before!

## TRANSITION

Listen, if you are a Christian, then:

- Only God gets to tell you who you are.
- Only God gets to define you!
- Only Jesus gets to look at you in the face
  - and define your IDENTITY.

You're not Blind Bartimaeus!

- That's what the crowds see when they look at him...
  - that's what we see when we look at ourselves...
- but what does God see when he looks at us?

**If you're a Christian, he sees his beloved son or daughter!**

That's what matters. IDENTITY.

Verse 31:

**BLANK SLIDE**

## **MATTHEW 20:31**

**[31] The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"**

### **EXPLAIN: REBUKE**

Hey, why do you think the crowd told these guys to shut up?  
I've been wracking my brain on this question this week.

- Why are they so insensitive?

I think it's most likely two things:

- First, I think that they were annoyed.
  - In their eyes Jesus was too important...
  - to be bothered by a blind beggar.
    - It comes back to IDENTITY...
    - they don't think enough of these guys!
- But second...
  - I think they were so focused on their religious mission...
  - they overlooked...
    - and even inhibited
    - these blind men.

### **APPLICATION**

So, I do have an application question for you, Christian.  
Are you getting in the way of people coming to Jesus?



- Man, are you so focused on your religious experience...
  - that you miss the people all around you?
- Are you so focused on being near to him...
  - that you're blocking others from him?

Hey y'all, we are always talking about GOING DEEPER here at Fathom.

But we need to be careful...

because going deep is ALWAYS accompanied by reaching wide.

GROWING is ALWAYS accompanied by GOING.

- And if you think you are deep...
  - yet, you are making no room
  - for others to find their way to Jesus in your life...
- then you aren't deep.

### ILLUSTRATION: STAGNANT

Hey, what happens to pools of water that have no outlet?

- When there's no water flowing out...

What happens?

There's a word for that: stagnant.

- Those pools get stagnant.

And stagnant water quickly becomes

- a dangerous source
  - of bacteria,
  - parasites,
  - and chemicals.

It is unfit for use!

Have you become a stagnant pool in your "depth"?

## TRANSITION

- So, the crowd rebuked the blind men...
- but they cried out all the more!

This is exactly the kind of persistence that Jesus is looking for!

Verse 32:

## MATTHEW 20:32

[32] And stopping, Jesus called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?"

## POINT 2

There's the second movement of this story.

- First, it was IDENTITY.
- Now comes the **SLIDE INQUIRY**

Jesus asks this question of the men: **what do you want me to do for you?**

I love that question...but think about it for a minute:

- What is the purpose of that question?
  - I mean, even if you weren't the Son of God,
  - you could have figured this one out...
- a couple of blind dudes in front of you saying,
  - *"Lord, have mercy on us!"*
- Hmm...I wonder what they want...whatever could it be?

See, I don't think Jesus needed to know what they wanted...Jesus knew!

- You ever wonder why we pray...
  - if we believe God is all knowing?
- If he already knows...why pray?

You see, the purpose of the INQUIRY was to get them to ASK!

## APPLICATION: ASK

Listen, all through the Gospels...

- there are parables indicating...
- that God LOVES IT...
- when his children ask him for things!

God's like, "*ask me, and ask me, and ask me again!*"

"Ask me that again!"

That was a threat in my house growing up.

- "Just ask me that again..."
- Ask me one more time!"

But not with God!

With God, miracles come to those who ASK.

- ASKING is how we ACTIVATE his ACTION!

That's a place in the sermon to grunt and write stuff down.

- You know..."Mmmm..."
- We'll work on that...

James 4 says this:

### SLIDE JAMES 4:2b-3

You do not have, because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

## APPLICATION: PRAYER

James is like, *you don't ask...*

- *and even when you do...*
  - *you ask selfishly (like last week).*
    - *Jesus, make us the top two in your kingdom!*

So, Jesus makes the INQUIRY

- This is the invitation!
  - Ask!
  - Ask him!
  - Keep asking!

Do you ASK Jesus for what you want him to do?

I'm talking about prayer, y'all.

## TRANSITION

So, he asks these blind guys: *what do you want me to do for you?*

Verse 33:

**BLANK SLIDE**

## MATTHEW 20:33

[33] They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened."

## EXPLAIN: BIG REQUESTS

Now, notice:

- They don't ask for alms.
- They don't ask for money.
- They don't ask for food.
  - They don't ask for something small.
- They don't ask for power...
- They don't ask for status...
- They don't ask to be great...
  - They don't ask for something selfish.

No...

- They ask for the impossible!
- They ask for a miracle!
- They ask for their sight!

## APPLICATION: WEAK PRAYERS

Hey, what do you want Jesus to do for you?

- One way you'll know the answer...
- is to look at your prayer life.

Question:

- if God answered "yes"...
- to every prayer you've prayed in the last week,
- how different would things be?

I mean, really, if Jesus answered your prayers...what would change?

What have you asked him for?

- Are you asking for healing?
- Are you asking for your faith to grow?
- Are you asking for your unsaved friends,
  - and family,
  - and neighbors,
  - and co-workers to be saved?
- Are you asking for peace?

What are you asking for?

You see, sometimes I think we take God off the hook...

- because we're afraid he WON'T answer...
- or maybe he won't answer the WAY we want...
- or MAYBE...we're not even sure he CAN answer...

And so instead, we pray such goofy prayers.

Gosh, we pray things like:

- “Lord, I just thank you for this food...”
- and I ask you to nourish it to my body.”
  - Listen...
    - that’s just what food does!
      - Whether you believe in Jesus or not...
    - Food nourishes your body!
  - You don’t pray before you get in the sower:
    - “Dear Lord, help this water get me wet!”
  - That’s just what it does!

*Lord, bless this food.*

*Lord, bless this day.*

*Lord, help me find a parking spot.*

And I’m not saying God doesn’t care about those things!

- But listen, would anything really change...
- if God answered your prayers?
  - You’d be well nourished...
- but anything else!?!

Jesus inquires... **‘what do you want me to do for you?’**

## **APPLICATION: I AM PRAYING!**

And now listen, maybe you’re like,

- *“Pastor, I’ve been asking!*
- *I’ve been praying the big prayers.*

- *Prayers for my husband to come to faith.*
- *Prayers for the cancer to go away.*
- *Prayers for my kid to come back to church.*
- *I'm praying for the miracle...*
- *but it's like he's not even listening!"*

And that's real!

But I heard Tim Keller, addressing that question, put it like this:

- if you knew what God knows...
  - about time,
  - and circumstances,
  - and the future,
  - and everything...
- if you knew what God knows,
- then you would answer your prayers
- the exact same way that he does.

We just don't know what God knows.

We don't see what God sees.

We're limited.

## KIDS ILLUSTRATION

We know this about our children, right?

- Imagine your child is 4-years-old...
- and you're like 34.

And imagine that your 4-year-old asks you to go and play in the street.

- All the other kids on the block are playing in the street.
- The street seems like the place where all the fun is being had.
- Life and life to the full is found in the street...if you're four.

So, your 4-year-old asks you that.

What do you do?

- Well, you don't let them, right?
  - Especially if you live on a busy street.
    - You show them the boundaries of your yard,
    - and you tell them NOT to go playing in the street.

And when they start to complain...

- that you won't let them have any fun...
- and that you're robbing them...
- and that you're ruining their life...
  - Does it sound like I have experience with this one?

Listen, when they start to complain...

- you just walk them to the curb,
- and you point to that flat and dead squirrel in the gutter,
  - and say, "this is what will happen to you...
  - if you go in the street."

You're not trying to rob them of joy!

No!

- You just know better than them!
- You are even trying to protect them!

**And yet, we are like a 4-year-old when compared to what God sees!**

- The things that you think are good...
  - that you think are safe...
  - that you think are wise...
- might be like playing in the street.

**Listen, even really good things...can become idols!**



And sometimes God...

- may keep you from those things,
- which seem like good things,
- to protect you.

He'll sometimes even break your arm...

to get you to let go of something that could kill you!

## TRANSITION

So, Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?"

And these guys say: *We want to see!*

Verse 34:

## MATTHEW 20:34

[34] And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

## EXPLAIN: SPLACHNIZOMAI

And the Greek term translated *pity*,

- is the word *splagchnizomai* [splough-need'-zom-ahi].

You wanna learn a Greek word...there you go.

- *Splagchnizomai*. Say it with me...*splagchnizomai*

And *splagchnizomai* literally means: *to be moved in one's bowels*.

- I mean, it kinda sounds like that, right?
  - Like an onomatopoeia...
- *Splagchnizomai*
  - Yes, that's Greek potty humor...

But the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and mercy in a person.

- So, Jesus is so deeply moved...
- with love and compassion for these blind men...
- that he heals them immediately.

Compare that to how the crowds were moved by these blind men!

## APPLICATION

Listen, is this how you think of your unsaved friends and family?

- Do you have *splagchnizomai* for them?
  - Are you moved deep in your bowels...
  - with compassion for them?

Because Jesus is.

## POINT 3

But then, the very last words of this event are so important.

**They recovered their sight AND FOLLOWED HIM.**

And it's the last movement in this story.

- We started with IDENTITY...
- moved to Jesus' INQUIRY...
- and finally, the result is **SLIDE ACTIVITY**
  - Jesus gives them sight...
    - and in response...
    - their ACTIVITY...
  - is to follow Jesus.

They follow him!

Scholars point out that this is a tiny little gospel message right here!

- Jesus changes our IDENTITY...
  - he gives us sight!
- And in response we change our ACTIVITY...
  - we follow him!

And that order is of the utmost importance.

He doesn't demand they follow BEFORE he transforms them.

- No! It's not,
  - *"Hey, if you want to be healed, then follow me!"*
- No, he changes their identity!
  - He's no longer Blind Bartimaeus!
- And in their JOY they follow their Messiah!

Hey, if you've been around Fathom for a minute, I say it all the time:

- IDENTITY precedes ACTIVITY!
  - So many people mistakenly flip-flop those.
- They think that what you DO defines who you ARE.
  - But that's just bad theology, church!

IDENTITY precedes ACTIVITY.

And that's what we see here.

We cannot miss this, church.

- God chooses us and saves us...
  - he removes our spiritual blindness...
- AND IN RESPONSE TO THAT...we follow him!

And the order is really important!

## ILLUSTRATION: KID'S SPORTS

I've historically used a sports illustration to drive this home.

A fun thing we did when my nephews were younger was to go watch them play little league baseball.

- And this was before I was a parent,
- so, I would go to their games...
  - and I'm expecting baseball...
- but have you ever been to a six-year-old's tee-ball game?

Oh my goodness!

- The left fielder...this kid...
  - he was OUT-IN-LEFT-FIELD, you following me?
- Listen, during one inning, I saw him...
  - wearing his glove on his face as a mask,
  - picking flowers...
  - and spinning in circles!

And I'm like,

- "Would you look at this kid..."
  - *Hey, pay attention!*
- Whose kid is that?"

And you meet the parents and you're like, "Well, that explains it!"

But I'll never forget, at one game,

- I look over at the third baseman,
- and he's lying face down in the dirt,
- with his hands by his side,
- and he's using the brim of his hat
- to just scoop up a little mound of dirt!

While a baseball game is happening around him!

## APPLICATION

And I wonder about this crowd following Jesus...

- I wonder if all they see...
- when these blind men cry out...
- is a left-fielder with his glove on his face!
  - *Don't bother Jesus!*
  - *He's got better things to do!*

And then I start to wonder about myself...

- And I wonder if God sometimes looks at me...
  - and to him,
  - I'm lying face down in the dirt,
  - just scooping dirt with my hat...

And yet...he's like,

- *"I'll take him!*
- *That one's mine.*
- *I'll splanchnizomai him!*
- *I choose him for my team!"*

And an angel's like,

- *"Are you sure?"*
  - *Cause I'm not sure that guy has*
  - *the basic intelligence necessary*
  - *to play the game?"*

And Jesus is like,

- *"Hey! How'd you like to be a demon?"*
  - *I'm sure!"*

Church, when God chooses you and me

- he doesn't do so because of our ACTIVITY!
  - It's not because of our ability...
  - or our potential
  - or our performance!

No!

- He starts by changing our IDENTITY.
  - He changes who we are!
  - He removes our blindness!
- He CALLS us to be his disciples...
- and THEN he MAKES us into one!

## ENDING

So, hey, it's Fall...

- it's the start of a new school year...
- it kinda feels like a fresh moment...
- and so, I want to pose the same question to you today:

**BLANK SLIDE W/PADS** WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Like, for real...what do you want Jesus to do for you?

- Do you want this Fall to be the same as last Fall...
  - and the Fall before that?
- Or do you want him to take you to new depths?
- Do you want him to use you to reach wide...
  - to those around you?

Here's the action steps:

- ASK him.
- ASK him!
  - Be bold in your prayers!
- And FOLLOW him.
- FOLLOW him!
  - Do what he tells you to do!

What do you want?

Let's pray.

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.



## RESOURCES CONSULTED:

- <https://bibleresources.americanbible.org/resource/from-jerusalem-to-jericho>
- Carson, D.A. The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Matthew.
- Greear, J.D. *Radical Desperation*.
- Osborne, Grant R. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Matthew.