



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Mark

November 26, 2017

Blind Faith

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I'm going to ask you to get your Bibles open to Mark, chapter 10. While you're doing that, I think it's also appropriate that we acknowledge that the holidays aren't always easy for some people. There are a lot of different reasons why the holiday season can be difficult for many, so I just feel compelled that we just have a moment of silence for all the Cougars fans this morning, if we can do that. I don't sense a lot of sorrow or sympathy from most of you, but I expected that.

I hope you are satisfied, that you've had a great few days with family and food. I personally ate like a maniac and was so thankful for the dark side of the turkey, the only side worthy of eating. I do have to say, though, I am grateful for the white meat, because if it wasn't for the white meat, we would have never had the invention of gravy, and gravy just heals all wounds, doesn't it?

It's the only way you can choke that stuff down, but it also makes the mashed potatoes so much more interesting. So, thank you, white meat lovers, for inventing gravy. Sorry about that, that you had to do that, but we're grateful.

We are in Mark, chapter 10, and Jesus is passing through Jericho now. He's on his way to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is 18 miles away. He will enter Jerusalem for the very last time. He's going to enter riding on a donkey as the Lamb of God who will be sacrificed to take away the sins of the world. Then, just 40 days later, he is going to depart Jerusalem on the clouds, ascending back to heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father.

Today, we come to the last miracle of Jesus that Mark records in his gospel. It's a miracle that I believe Mark is intending to remove all doubt that the one they are about to brutally crucify on a cross is by no means an ordinary man. I believe Mark wants us to stop here and focus on what is about to happen in order to actually make more sense about what's going to happen on the cross in just the next few chapters.

I know you just sat down, but I'm going to ask you to stand now for the reading of God's Word. We're going to pick it up in verse 46, right where we left off last week. If you're new, again,

welcome to you. This is what we do. We go through books of the Bible verse by verse, and we are now at verse 46 in chapter 10.

"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. 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!'"

And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' And Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.' And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

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.' 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."

Lord God in heaven, in the name of Jesus, we stand now before your written Word and we pray and ask that anything that would be distracting our hearts and minds from learning, growing, changing, or coming closer to you... We pray, God, that you would settle that down, calm our hearts, and give us peace.

God, help us to remember that you are on your throne. You are sovereign. You love us. God, whatever it is that's worrying us, we pray you would just give us confidence right now that you are in control. God, we pray that this passage would draw us nearer to you. Help us to see it clearly. Help us to desire to obey it, to love it, and to live it. In Christ's name, amen.

I love this scene, you guys. It's really perfect. You have the downtrodden. You have the villains in the story. You have a plot twist right in the middle. Then, you have a hero, and then you have a happy ending. It's just the perfect place for us to be today on Thanksgiving weekend. It's a great passage to preach.

I've titled this message *Blind Faith*, but I don't want that to be misleading, because this passage has the potential of getting us off track a little bit. In fact, I'm going to admit to you that in some of my preaching and teaching of this very miracle in this passage, I have allowed it to lead us down a path I think is less helpful than what Mark and the Holy Spirit intend for it. In other words, if we're not careful, we can do what I've done in the past.

We could spend a lot of time trying to figure out how Bartimaeus did this. How did he get Jesus to answer him? How did he get Jesus to do the miracle? Once we figure that out, we can go out of here with the exhortation to try and imitate Bartimaeus as best we can. I would have still titled the sermon *Blind Faith*. The main idea would have been, "If you need Jesus to do a miracle, then here's the recipe. Here's the formula for miraculous answers to prayer."

The sermon points would sound something like this. Can I just tell you I'm embarrassed? Because these have been my sermon points for this passage and other Gospels when we've been there. The sermon points would simply be these. "If you want a miracle, just be loud." Then, "Be persistent."

Next, "Ignore the Negative Nellies in your life, those people who tell you it's too late, or God isn't concerned about that." Then, finally, "Be specific." Those would be the points. If you stirred all that up just right, like a genie in a bottle, Jesus will pop out and he'll answer your prayer. Just pray like Bart and we'll be deserving of our prayers being answered.

Here's the problem with that approach. The problem is that that approach to prayer puts all of the emphasis on you and me. That approach to prayer and the need for God's intervention puts all the focus on us, and I don't believe the disciples applied this miracle like this to their faith and life. They didn't start imitating Bartimaeus. There's no evidence that the disciples got together and wrote a book called *The Prayer of Bartimaeus*.

We don't see any teaching or preaching in the Scriptures anywhere where they had those points focused all on Bartimaeus. We don't see them trying to pray like Bartimaeus. The bottom line is Bartimaeus is not the hero of the story; Jesus is. Bartimaeus is not the leading man in this scene; Jesus is.

So, here's what I think we should do. I think we can keep the title the same, *Blind Faith*, but I want to move the spotlight over a little bit. You see, we Christians take a lot of guff from a watching world for being gullible, for blindly believing what we believe. I absolutely disagree and I agree at the same time, because if there's ever a miracle that opens our eyes to what blind faith really is, to the value, power, and place of blind faith in a Christian's life, this is it.

I'm no longer embarrassed or afraid of that accusation, to be honest with you, and here's why. Let me give you some points. Let me give you some application I think will lead us on a much more helpful path, going forward.

1. *Blind faith always starts with knowing I have no hope.* I think this is Bartimaeus' greatest contribution to the whole story. He knows himself better than most of humanity knows itself. Here's what we know about him. He's a blind beggar. He's sitting on the ground on a dusty roadside because that was the life sentence of most crippled and handicapped people in that time in history. There was no place for them in society. They just plopped them on the side of the road to beg and survive. That was the sentence of having handicaps and special needs in that day.

Mark tells us he's also the son of Timaeus. That doesn't tell us much, but I think Mark wants us to know that Bartimaeus is a real person with a real family. He's a real man with a real name. This actually happened to a real person. This isn't some made-up myth sometime later in the Jesus story. This Bartimaeus is a real guy.

We also know he knows Jesus is approaching. He must have heard the crowds talking about it, or one of his fellow beggars who was close by who wasn't blind maybe was telling him, "Hey,

you're not going to believe it. Jesus is in town. He's coming right by us!" We also know he must have known something about the miracles Jesus had already done, but honestly, there's nothing about him that stands out or suggests he's a hero on any level, including on a faith level.

The bottom line: he's a person with no hope. No hope of his life or his circumstances getting better or changing. I just wonder if you've ever been in that moment where it strikes you that at that very moment, it feels like there's absolutely no hope of this thing changing. There's a cloud of desperation that hangs over this man every second of his present and his future hopes.

You see, blind faith is born on the side of the road, where human answers and solutions no longer exist. Blind faith is born in those desperate places where we can't see any hope. Bartimaeus, no doubt, knows this about himself, his life, and his circumstances. He's the parent who has the struggling child. He's the person who can't get out from underneath the cloud of depression or anxiety.

He's that one in the marriage that is hanging on by a thread. He's the person with the prognosis that isn't good and the options are absolutely running out. He's the one who feels trapped and helplessly stuck in the rut of life-enslaving sin. These are some of the birthplaces of blind faith. There's no gullibility here. There's just honesty. There's just honest, hopeless surrender. Blind faith always begins with realizing there's no hope.

2. Blind faith is about believing Jesus actually cares that there's no hope. Now the spotlight moves over from the person with the blind faith to the object of his blind faith, Jesus. Blind faith is fueled by the belief in a compassionate Savior. Notice Bartimaeus' words. He says, "**Son of David, have mercy on me!**" It's a little peculiar, but mercy is his only hope.

He had nothing of value to offer Jesus. All he could do was to believe that somewhere in Jesus was a compassionate, merciful heart. Understand this, church. Understand that mercy, by definition, is not getting what we deserve. So, the mercy Bartimaeus was asking for sounded like,

"Jesus, Son of God, please don't walk by me. Not you too. Every day, I hear the footsteps and the conversations of people going about their lives, pretending not to see me. Please, Jesus. Don't pretend I'm invisible. Jesus, don't condemn me to this roadside begging. I know this is all I can hope for in this life, but Jesus, please have mercy on me. I have nothing to give you. I have no one to go to you on my behalf. Son of David, have mercy on me. Don't treat me like I deserve."

You see, a person with blind faith understands and believes that Jesus, above all else, is a merciful, loving, caring, compassionate Savior. Go ahead and accuse me of having blind faith all day long. He alone can save us from what we deserve.

I think that right about now there are a couple of you who are in tune enough where you're starting to scratch your head. You're starting to wince a little bit. You're thinking, "Wait a minute. Bartimaeus did not deserve to be blind. I mean, he's an innocent man. He's a victim somehow of physical ailment here that's causing his blindness."

To that, I would say to be very careful. Be careful that you don't mistakenly believe that somehow, Bartimaeus is morally or spiritually more deserving because of his circumstances. Don't ever forget that ultimately, his blindness was not his greatest need, not by a long shot. Whether he was born blind or blind later in life, whether he was a decent man or a wicked man, mercy is still what he needs most right now. It's what all of us need most right now.

You see, Jesus is the only one who can give lasting mercy for both body and soul. Don't ever forget that every sickness, disease, and act of hatred toward another human being is the result of sin destroying the human heart. When Adam and Eve decided to push God out of their lives and be their own god, everything changed. Everything was broken from that point forward. From that moment on, mercy became every human being's greatest need. True, biblical blind faith is about believing in our need for mercy, first and foremost.

3. *Blind faith is about believing Jesus hears our cry for mercy.* Get this, now. It's one thing to believe Jesus cares in a general sense. He cares about the universe, the big stuff, and the really serious stuff, but where blind faith really changes things is when you actually believe Jesus cares about you. That's when our faith really matters, when we're convinced that he cares about you and me.

Look at verse 49. The first few words of that verse are so powerful. He's crying out for mercy. The people are rebuking him, telling him to be quiet. In verse 49, it says, "**And Jesus stopped...**" Jesus stops. Think about this. Jesus has less than two weeks to live. He's going to take the sin of the entire human race upon himself and he's going to make the ransom payment for the souls of mankind, and the payment would be his own suffering, shed blood, and death.

He's going to allow the creation, rebellious and broken by sin, to arrest, condemn, mock, humiliate, torture, and nail the Creator to the cross so he can rise victorious over death and provide forgiveness and eternal life to all who will believe. This Jesus stops for this blind person. You see, blind faith believes Jesus created all things and sustains all things, from all the molecules in the universe to the galaxies in the universe. He hears our cry, your cry, my cry for mercy.

Paul Tripp preached it like this. He said something like, "We never pray a prayer of mercy to our Savior that he will receive as an interruption." There's no prayer for mercy that interrupts Jesus. In other words, Jesus is never too busy. He's not preoccupied with the extraordinary pains of the universe.

He's not disinterested or too tired for you. Jesus stops. He stops for you who are afraid. He stops for you who are sick. He stops for you who are tired. He stops for you who are lonely. He stops for you who are chained by sin. He stops for you. Blind faith is believing he cares and he stops for those who pray for mercy.

4. *Blind faith is about believing Jesus can do what we can't do for ourselves.* This is moving. In verses 49-51, it says, "**And Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' And they called the blind**

man, saying to him, 'Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.' And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?'" I love this scene.

Jesus probably couldn't see Bartimaeus in this massive crowd of thousands, maybe tens of thousands. He could hear him, but it's most likely Jesus never saw the guy. I wonder if Jesus even knew the guy yelling that was blind. Of course, when Bartimaeus came to him, Jesus knew.

Yet what's also moving about this story is that Bartimaeus can't see Jesus. He has no idea what Jesus looks like. He has no idea how big this crowd is. He has no idea if the people in the crowd are looking at him with, more than likely, disgust and disdain that this grungy blind guy who sits on the side of the road is now standing in front of Jesus. He can't see their jeers.

Do you know what else? He can't even see the compassion in the eyes of Jesus. Here he is, standing before his Creator, broken and helpless on every level, and Jesus stopped, cleared the way, removed all the obstacles, unworthiness, and condemnation he was feeling. Jesus calls him to himself and says, **"What do you want me to do for you?"** The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords is welcoming a beggar like he's royalty.

That's exactly what Jesus does. With Jesus, all the man-made barriers we worry about, barriers of race, money, privileges, possessions, accomplishments, or failures... All of that stuff just drops away. Jesus looks at us the same. His heart is pure. His mercy is absolutely open. No matter who I am, no matter where I am, and no matter what my struggle is, I can run to him and find mercy in my time of need.

So, for the very first time in this scene, we hear the blind beggar ask for grace. Jesus says, **"What do you want me to do for you?"** and he says, in verse 51, **"Rabbi, let me recover my sight."** This is grace that he's asking for. It's a sheer gift that only Jesus could give. It's the ultimate act of blind faith. It's the ask. He asks Jesus to do what only Jesus can do. He says, "Please open my eyes. Give me sight. Deliver me from this life sentence of eternal darkness. Let me see the light."

The author of Hebrews, I think, describes this scene this way when he writes in Hebrews 11, **"Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being certain of what we do not see."** That sounds like blind faith to me, doesn't it? Certain of what we do not and cannot see. He goes on in Hebrews 11 to say it is impossible to please God without this faith. So, here he is. He can't see Jesus, but he asks.

This just dawned on me. I read this somewhere. It was probably a bumper sticker. I'm going to get it wrong, but I just remembered. It says something like, "When you can't see Jesus act, trust in his heart for you." That's what Bartimaeus is doing. He's trusting in the heart of Jesus. I would ask you, if you were on the side of the road and Jesus walked by you, what grace would you ask him for right now?

Look at the end of verse 52. **"And Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your [blind] faith has made you well.' And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way."** Now, Bartimaeus follows Jesus all the way into Jerusalem.

We have no more mention of Bartimaeus in the gospel of Mark, but in the gospel of John, we see that Bartimaeus followed Jesus all the way into Jerusalem. Jesus stops Bartimaeus in town and says, "Hey, do you believe I am the Son of Man?" and Bartimaeus says, "Oh yes, I believe." Then it says he worshiped Jesus, so we have no reason to doubt his conversion.

Let me just kind of wrap it up with this. I want you to have no doubt. Jesus cares about our soul. In fact, that's the whole point of this miracle. I think that's the whole thought of Mark placing this miracle right here before chapter 11. It's a picture of the gospel.

It's a picture of mankind blinded by sin, unable to see, please, love, or know God because sin separates us from him. It's a picture of mankind being completely in the darkness of soul, condemned to be justly judged by God as guilty sinners, unable to do or deserve any of God's grace or mercy. This is what this is a picture of, ultimately.

Yet what we also see here is how God mercifully sends his only Son, Jesus, into the world as the Light of the World so save those who will believe. He mercifully sends his Son so we can be saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus. Call it blind faith if you want. It doesn't matter. Yes, Jesus cares about our soul. That's what this whole story is about, but ultimately, never think Jesus only cares just about our soul. Jesus also cares about all the effects of sin in our lives. I think this story reveals that as well. In Hebrews 4, verses 14-16, it says,

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Look at those words, will you? **"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."** Let me ask you this. If Jesus walked in here this morning, sat down right next to you, right now, and asked you, "What do you want me to do for you?" what grace, what mercy would you ask for?

Right now, in all the fun and craziness of a four-day weekend (for most people, anyway), I want to take a quiet moment to just bow our heads and close our eyes. I'm going to ask you to sit still. Just bow your head, close your eyes, and be quiet for a minute. Here's the good news. Jesus is here. By his promised presence of his Holy Spirit within us, he has never left us. He has never forsaken us.

What grace, what mercy should you ask from him right now? Is it comfort in your grief? Is it peace in your storm? Is it healing of your body? Is it deliverance from the chains of a certain sin?

What is it? **"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace..."** Just you and Jesus right now... What mercy, what grace do you need?

While your heads are bowed and your eyes are still closed, let me interrupt you for a minute. For many of you in this moment, you are praying for others. You're praying for loved ones, and that's okay, absolutely, but don't think for a minute that it's selfish to pray for you. Jesus didn't lecture Bartimaeus and say, "Bartimaeus, there are a lot more bigger problems people have." He stopped and he listened, so don't be afraid to pray for you right now. Ask him for what grace, what mercy you need.