

Comments on Mark Chapter 10

10:13-16

13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. 16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

16 In the ninth chapter of Mark (9:33-37), Jesus had responded to the apostles' selfish ambitions for roles of honor and rulership (not leadership) by taking a child up in his arms and saying, "*Whoever receives a child like this in my name, receives me.*"

14 Now, Jesus is very displeased with them because they, in apparently ignoring his recent teaching, had rebuked those who brought Jesus their children to touch. Jesus continues his lesson to his disciples by saying, "*Suffer (permit, allow, do not hinder) the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*"

1. Regardless of your position, God is not going to be impressed with you if you have no time for children. And he will be very displeased if you hinder little children from coming to him.
2. The kingdom of God is inhabited by those ("of such") with childlike faith, unaffected love and never ceasing wonder. While we are advised to be as wise as serpents, we are also to exhibit the childlike "harmless as doves." There is a certain innocence, almost naivete, that becomes the Christian. Jesus reinforced this idea by saying whosoever will not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will not enter.

16 "*And he, (Creator of the universe, Father of all mankind, the Saviour on his way to the cross, upon whom every eye was turned and of whom every tongue spake, with all the demands of the multitudes upon him) took them (little children) up in his arms, put his hands (soon to be nailed to the cross) upon them, and blessed them.*"

What saint, what pastor, what evangelist, what business owner, what billionaire, what president or what king would not trade places with one of these little children?

Such a child would spend the remainder of their days remembering the strong hands, the protecting arms, the loving eyes, the affirming words, the gentle touch, and the blessing. The blessing would have lingered throughout life. The memory would comfort through every dark night. The warmth of his embrace through the cold winters. The life blessed by the Master would have been a testimony of his grace.

In later years, the child, now grown old, would reminisce and a smile would illumine the wrinkled face. Wonder would show in the eyes made dim by the years. If, during the persecutions, the grown woman or man facing torture or death were taunted by their accusers, the memory of his touch would make worthwhile the suffering for his name. The persecuted would escape into the memory of being held by Jesus and be comforted by the knowledge that he was holding them still, and in a short while he would take them up in his arms once again, put his hands upon them and bless them.

Even today, the man or woman or young person willing to approach him in true humility and faith may find themselves lifted up in his arms, touched by his hands and blessed with his own blessings.

10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

We've been told that God loves everyone. Is that true? Does God love Satan? Did he love Esau? Does he love the person who sows discord among brethren? (How many ways are there to get on God's hate list?)

"Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him." It seems that when Jesus really loves someone in a special way, that he invites that person to a life of sacrifice and self-denial.

10:22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

But there was no appreciation of the eternal over the temporal. What might have been? Would he have become the thirteenth apostle? Would he have been positioned to take the place of Judas?

He had received the most coveted invitation and *"he went away sad."*

He had mixed emotions it would seem. He wanted to identify with Jesus but not all the way. He was willing to be a believer but not a fanatic. He wanted a relationship but not an exclusive one. But the kingdom was entrusted to those who had left all to follow him (v 28).

10:23-27

23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

25 *"The eye of a needle."* I have heard, read and even taught that Jesus was referring to the door within the gate, otherwise known as the wicket gate (and even Judas gate). This small door would allow a man to enter into a city without opening the large gate thus exposing the city to danger. A camel might squeeze through the small door, but only by being unloaded of all it carried.

26-27 However, there is no indication that Jesus intends this. The apostle's astonishment and Jesus' use of *"With men it is impossible"* leads to the conclusion that it is nothing short of a miracle for anyone, particularly a rich person, to be saved.

It appears that *"they that have riches"* and *"them that trust in riches"* are alike *"hard to enter into the kingdom of God!"* So that not only the "trusting in," but the merely possessing of riches make it impossible for a man to enter into his kingdom. *"With men it is impossible." "But not with God." "With God all things are possible."*

10:28-31 (Luke 18:18-27, Matthew 19:16-30)

28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. 29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, 30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. 31 But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

28 Immediately after the rich, young ruler went away and Jesus commented on the difficulty for rich people to enter into the kingdom of God, Peter *"began to say"* *"we have left all and have followed thee."* Matthew records that he also asked, "What shall we have?" Jesus had promised the young man, *"you shall have treasure in heaven."*

Peter does not seem to share Jesus' love for the young man. His concern seems entirely self centered. "What shall we have?"

29-30 Jesus' answer was general rather than specific. It applies to everyone. It's almost like he was saying, "Not only you, but anyone who prioritizes and seeks my will, and my gospel shall receive a hundred times anything he has not prioritized, or has sacrificed. He shall receive this "in this time" as well as eternal life in the world to come. There will be persecutions that accompany the blessings of this time.

31 But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Verse 31 almost seems out of place, but it is the theme he has been trying to impress upon them, and will continue to stress until the end.

10:32-34

32 And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, 33 Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: 34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

As Jesus led them toward Jerusalem, the apostles began to feel apprehensive. Jesus had started preparing them for his death as early as Caesarea Philippi (8:31, 9:30-32). Now that they were approaching Jerusalem (they might arrive before this day was done), the fears they had kept down were now at the fore of their thoughts. “*They were amazed*” (Gr *thambeo*; probably frightened, terrified) and “*afraid*” (Gr *phobeo*; alarmed, probably exceedingly afraid). The use of both terms emphasizes the fear they felt as they followed Jesus to Jerusalem. Again, for at least the third time in this short gospel, Jesus tells them what awaits him in Jerusalem. They were already fearful, but sometimes, knowing what is happening, or what is going to happen, regardless of how bad it is, is better than not knowing.

I wonder if Judas shared their feelings. There is no indication, here or elsewhere, that he felt any differently than the other apostles about Jesus’ foretelling his passion until the last supper.

I also wonder if Jesus’ mention that he would rise again tempered, even a little, their fear of what awaited them at Jerusalem? It doesn’t appear that they even heard that part of the prophecy.

It is as though they never comprehended what the Master was saying. His sufferings and death were too horrible to contemplate and his resurrection too fantastical for their minds to grasp. Even though they had seen him raise the dead on at least three occasions, and perform more miracles than they could count, there seemed to be a total disconnect between him raising someone else from the dead and him coming back from the dead himself.

10:35-45

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. 36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? 37 -- They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. 38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? 39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: 40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

Not only did the apostles fail to comprehend what Jesus repeatedly told them about his upcoming death, but it is astounding that almost every time he mentioned it, they immediately began arguing among themselves about their own ambitions and positions. Mark 9:31-34 which led into Jesus' teaching about receiving children, was interrupted by John (9:38) with a self centered, authoritarian statement. Mark 10:32-34 which was followed by James and John asking for the highest positions in the coming kingdom (vss 35-37), and Luke 22:19-22 which led quickly into "a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." Besides the total insensitivity, there was no lack of ambition and self-centeredness.

10:42-45

42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. 43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: 44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. 45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

In response to the apostle's bickering about position, Jesus returned to a theme about "*the first shall be last*," a theme that he would revisit at the last supper and seek to emphasize as his last great lesson before his crucifixion.

10:46-52

46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. 50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? -- The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

46 Coming from the other side of Jordan, Jesus passed through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. He did not tarry in Jericho but seems to have walked straight through it. "*And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho...*" He had his face set toward his destiny and would not be deterred.

Blind Bartimaeus

The blind beggar sat at the exit/entrance of Jericho to appeal to travellers going to and from Jerusalem. When he heard Jesus was passing by, he began to shout out to him. No doubt he had waited for just such a moment from the last time that Jesus had visited Jericho and Bartimaeus had missed his opportunity at being healed. And although he did not know it, truly

this was his last chance to ever get the attention of the Master. Jesus was leaving Jericho for the last time. He would never visit Jericho again.

47 From a desperation born of need and desire, the blind man began to cry out. *“Jesus, thou son of David.”* He knew the name and was not afraid to use it. He also knew that Jesus was said to be the Son of David. He was willing to risk getting in trouble with the authorities by proclaiming Jesus to be the rightful ruler of Israel, the inheritor of the throne of David.

48 Many *“charged”* (Gr *epitimaō*; rebuked, forbid, censure severely) him to shut up. The *“many”* may have included friends or family. Perhaps there were other beggars in this place of coming and going; those who were lame or handicapped in some other serious way. Doubtless, the majority of the crowd (*“a great number of people”*) were curiosity seekers. Any other beggars (surely there were more beggars at this prime location) seem to have forgotten their own needs and were carried away by the spirit of the crowd. For no one else was recorded crying out for healing. It is easy to forget our need and be influenced by a crowd that seeks to be entertained.

It is likely that the crowd was irritated by a blind man who did not know his place. They had come to see the famous Jesus, not some blind beggar. Bartimaeus as interrupting their entertainment. Jesus passing through was the most excitement these people had seen in weeks or perhaps months. *“Be quiet, blind man! Don’t disturb us” Don’t disturb the Master!”*

Their censure and anger did not faze Bartimaeus. He could hear their disdain but could not see the lack of concern on their faces. Perhaps he was accustomed to being a non-person. One of the worse things that can be experienced by a handicapped person, or a homeless person, is to be ignored. Hope struggles to survive when people walk by without acknowledging the presence, the very existence of another human being. More welcome than coins in a cup is a kind word and to be looked in the eye.

The son of Timaeus, blind and beggar, had experienced hopelessness for too long. When he heard that the man who had opened blind eyes was passing by, the last sparks of hope, scattered in the far corners of his darkening soul, somehow came together for one, great, passion-filled effort. He ignored the nay sayers. He ignored his critics. He ignored the crowd, handicapped and whole. His need was greater than his pride. His desire was greater than their scorn. And at the moment of opportunity, his faith was greater than his doubt.

“He cried out the more a great deal.” “Cried out” (Gr *krazō*; croak like a raven, scream, shriek, vociferate).

The double or triple emphasis reveals a desperation that had taken hold of Bartimaeus. In a last-ditch effort to get the Healer’s attention, the man who could not see, but who saw more clearly than anyone else in the crowd, put everything on the line. He shouted. He hollered. He screamed and he would not stop.

“Son of David, have mercy on me!”

49 *“And Jesus stood still.”*

The Creator of the universe, on his way to his most important appointment (“for this cause came I into the world” John 18:37) was stopped in his tracks by the desperate cry of a blind beggar.

How far was Jesus from Bartimaeus? How much noise was the “great number of people” making? Did those in the immediate vicinity of Jesus hear the blind man? Was it the cry of his lips that got his attention? Or was it the desperate plea of the heart expressed in that cry that caused Jesus to stand still? Were the apostles unaware of the faith of Bartimaeus as they were unaware of the faith and the silent cry of the woman with the issue of blood? Regardless, Jesus heard. He always hears. The clamor and press of the crowd, the praise and acclaim of a multitude cannot drown out the desperation of a person in need.

There are no non-persons with God. Jesus never ignores your need. Your cry and your faith can stop him in his tracks.

Call him!

Call begets call. When a person in need calls on Jesus, he returns the call.

“Jesus! Help me!”

“Come to me,” he returns.

Those who are bound with pride will not cry out. Those who are intimidated by the crowd will not make a scene.

“They called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.” Were these the same people who tried to shut him up a moment earlier? How fickle the crowd and how quick to switch sides if it seems the popular thing to do. Some of those who ridicule you don’t do so from their heart. They are only following the crowd. And some of those who stop ridiculing you and suddenly become friendly, have not experienced a change of heart; they are simply hiding their meanness once the crowd is not with them. Small people are cowards.

50 When he heard that Jesus had called him, Bartimaeus, in one fluid motion, stood up while taking off and “casting away” the garment that had identified him as blind, and came to Jesus. Oh! The sincerity and the faith exhibited by the person who, hearing the call of the Lord, repents in their place or even while on their way to an altar. Those who are tired of their old life, recognizing and being willing to admit their sin and spiritual need, do not hesitate to forsake their old identity, knowing that a new and better life awaits them.

“He came to Jesus.”

Oh! The crowd and the angels held their breath. What wonder. What promise. What potential. God, help your church to create the atmosphere, make the time and encourage away any hesitation on the part of those in need so they can come to Jesus. It must be Jesus. No one else can help. God forbid that our programs, our plans, our gifts, our schedules would get between Bartimaeus and Jesus. Let all of us – the best preachers, the most anointed musicians, the most powerful churches, and the most loving saints – do what we can do to bring someone to Jesus. Not to us. Not to our gifts. Not to our programs. We must bring them to Jesus. And then get out of the way and let Jesus do what only he can do.

51 Jesus asked him, “What will you that I should do unto you?” Jesus knew full well what Bartimaeus needed and what he wanted. His question was full of promise. Not just, “what do you want me to do?” Not just, “What do you want me to do for you?” But “What do you want me to do to you?”

Jesus did not come to do something for you. He came to change your entire life. He will do something wonderful and powerful to you. He will alter your existence. Your past will be cast away like Bartimaeus’ shameful garment. Consider carefully your answer. When the arrows are in your hand, don’t hesitate to thoroughly thrash the ground (II Kings 13:18, 19). When Jesus asks you what you want him to do to you, and the answer is on your lips, that is not the time to ask for less. When he who owns the cattle on a thousand hills asks you such a question, do not ask for a handful of pennies. It is not the time to be bashful or reticent. Neither is this a time to seek shallow and vain wants. You should always be aware of your greatest need. Then, when the Master asks, “What do you want me to do to you?”, you can answer without hesitation, “Lord, that I might receive my sight.”

“I’ve always existed on leftovers and the pity of strangers. I am not a beggar by choice. I have listened to the footsteps of those going to Jerusalem only dreaming of going there myself. And recently, I’ve heard the stories about Jesus, the Son of David in whom Israel hopes. I want to see you for myself. Lord, open my eyes so that I can see. Open my eyes to your glory. Open my eyes to your love. I not only want to see. I want to see you! I want to see myself as you see me. I want to see my potential. I want to see your will and your plans for me. I want to see others as you see them. I want to see your kingdom. “Lord, that I might receive my sight!”

10:52 *“And Jesus said – Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.”*

His faith? His faith had been exercised in calling out the name of Jesus. Faith is more than mental assent or intellectual agreement. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13).

“And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.”

Jesus gave the option, as he always does, for Bartimaeus to “go thy way.” God does not always place conditions on his goodness. He doesn’t remove our will when he touches us. He heals and

blesses and then stands back to see how we will respond. He doesn't take away our free will even when he has been most beneficent. At times he plainly invites, "Follow me." But whether spoken or not, the offer to follow him is there for the sensitive individual to grasp hold of.

The chapter tells the sad story of a rich, young man turning down an offer from the King of kings to be a follower and ends with the newly healed beggar following Jesus in the way.

"Many that are first shall be last; and the last first."