



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 10:46-53 Mark

“Miracle in Jericho”

TRANSCRIPT

Let's look at our text. We're back in the gospel of Mark, Mark chapter 10, and we'll look at verses 46 through 52 and conclude our chapter this morning.

“Then they came to Jericho. And as He was going out from Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, a blind beggar *named* Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ And Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him *here*.’ So they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Take courage, arise! He is calling for you.’ Casting aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. And answering him, Jesus said, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ And the blind man said to Him, ‘Rabboni, *I want* to regain my sight!’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your faith has made you well.’ Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him on the road.” May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Shall we pray?

Heavenly Father, we do thank You for the privilege that we do have to come together this morning, this Sunday morning, and open the Scriptures together as the body of Christ, as a people who have been chosen by You from the foundations of the world, who have been purchased by the blood of Your Son and who have been brought to You through the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit. We do thank You for Your grace which we see in every person of the godhead.

And we are reminded of that this morning as we consider this event in our Lord's life and this journey that He made through Jericho. And we pray that You'd instruct us upon this very point, that You would remind us of the grace that we have received, that You would instruct us on the condition from which we have been saved and the costs that that salvation cost You, the blood of Your Son, the death of Your only begotten Son. And we pray that as we consider these things, Lord, You would give us hearts filled with gratitude and with that gratitude lives that are devoted to You. And we confess that there are so many things about this life that are attractive and that can draw us away from a yielded faith, a life of service, things that in and of themselves may be good, but not the best. And so we pray that You would help us to focus on the best, that You would fill us with love for Your Son and that we might live lives that are pleasing to Him.

Father, we are reminded in our passage of the grace that You have extended, and that is grace that touches every aspect of our life. We are a people in need of Your mercy in every way, and we remember those who are sick and in need of Your supply. We pray that You would give health and You would extend mercy to them. We pray for the men who work every day and seek to provide for their families, and it is difficult, and they work hard, and times are not easy. And so we pray that You'd give energy and that You'd give encouragement, and that they would see the fruit of their labor and that they might be blessed of you, be able to provide well for their families. And we pray, Father, for those who are vacationing at this time. We pray that You'd give them good rest and we pray that You'd give them a safe journey to and from. You might restore them and return them to our fellowship.

Pray for our nation, Father. Pray that You'd give wisdom to our leaders. We pray for President Clinton, pray for his cabinet, and we pray for the men, women of congress and the senate, and we pray that You'd bless them and those on the high courts. We pray that You'd give all of these people wisdom to govern this land well. And yet, most of all, Lord, we pray that Your Spirit would move across this land and bring many sons to glory. We pray that You'd bring people to faith. We pray that You'd populate Your kingdom and use us, and stir us up to preach the gospel.

Pray for the time we spend now, Father. We pray for our hymn, that You would bless it as we sing it and prepare our hearts to study the Scriptures together. And we pray these things in the Savior's name, Amen.

What is the chief end of man? If you're familiar with that famous question of the Westminster Confession of Faith, then you know the answer is man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. John Piper in his excellent book, *Desiring God*, has given a bit of a twist to that answer by rephrasing it in the words, "the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever." And I think he has a good point in that. Our purpose in life is to glorify God in everything that we do, from the mundane to the very sublime. Paul makes that point very clear in 1 Corinthians 10:31, where he says we're to glorify God in our eating and our drinking, the most basic things in life. Well, then certainly we're to glorify Him in the greater things of life, the more sublime things of life.

Everything that we do is to be laid at the altar of the Lord. We are to glorify Him through our obedience and through our service. But if it's empty obedience, if it's service without joy, that has no appeal to God. He's not pleased with that at all, regardless of how great our sacrifices might be. He wants willing, wholehearted service. He wants us to enjoy Him, and He wants everything that we do to be done out of a sense of joy and gratitude for Him. That's the logical consequence of understanding who He is and what He's done for us. If we have joy in our heart for our Lord, then we will naturally, logically seek to bless Him, to serve Him, to obey Him.

And that's the kind of service that pleases Him, joyful service that comes from a joyful walk with the Lord. That's what He's created us for. He's created us very simply to have fellowship with Him, to follow Him and have fellowship in that way. And glorifying service follows from that. It follows from genuine joyful fellowship.

So the question as we reflect upon that, assuming that that's true, and I believe it is, the question is how do we get that joy? That, I think, is a very important question because there are a lot of things in our lives that we enjoy doing. Maybe going fishing. That's not a great joy in my life. I can't catch fish. But I know some men, some women like to fish, and so that's a great enjoyment in their life that they look forward to. Or it may be going to work and engaging in business. But how do

we come to the point where we enjoy the Lord more than anything else so that we want to spend time in prayer with Him, so that we want to serve Him even at great cost, and glorify Him in all the things that we do? Well, as I say, that's an important question and one that I think our passage addresses because it is about coming to the Lord, not just coming to the Lord, but following Him, having a relationship with Him, and I think we see in here the motive behind that.

A central figure of our passage is a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, whose name means "Son of Timaeus." And to appreciate him, I think we need to see him in contrast to some of the other figures that we have seen in this chapter, all of whom in some way touch upon this theme of following Christ. There was the rich young ruler who came to Christ with a great deal of enthusiasm, but who when invited to follow Him could not do it, would not do it because his wealth was more important to him. He was entangled by the things of this world. And then there were the two disciples, James and John, who eagerly expressed their willingness to follow the Lord into suffering and even into death for a price. They wanted thrones and glory, and if they could have those thrones and glory, then they were certainly willing to follow Him. They had a willingness, but there was too much of the spirit of the world in it, a spirit which is just hungry for honor and for power.

And it's against these men that we're introduced to Bartimaeus, a man who had no wealth, a man who had no prospect of glory and power, but a man who knew very well his desperate condition and follows the Lord without invitation, without hope of reward, who follows Him with an overwhelming desire to simply be near Christ, with an overwhelming desire to draw near to Him because of the grace that he had received. And that, I think, is the key to the question that we've asked. How do we get that joy, the joy that pleases God, the joy really that's necessary if we're truly to glorify Him? Well, we get it by reflecting upon who we are, by understanding the grace of God. Understand the grace of God, we have to understand who we are and what we have received at cost to God. And that cost was the cross.

Now we are in a section of Mark's gospel that began back in chapter 8, which some have entitled "The Way to Jerusalem." And this passage this morning ends that section because next week He arrives at Jerusalem. But the Lord has left Galilee and left that great Galilean ministry that occupied so much of Mark's gospel. He's

traveled south. He's crossed the Jordan river into Perea on the eastern side of the Jordan. And now He's crossed back over and come to the city of Jericho. And from there, He will make His ascent through the mountains of Judea and to Jerusalem, and there to the cross. And the closer that He draws to that city, the longer the shadow of the cross is cast over His path, increasingly predictions of it have become a part of His instruction to the disciples.

Three times He has predicted the cross since chapter 8, explaining to the disciples that before the kingdom, there must be the cross, and explaining that that is the heart of His mission. If we don't understand the cross and if we don't see the cross in the work of Christ, then we've failed to see His mission. He came to die. And so He's been explaining that to them. Three times He's given predictions of the cross, and each time a little greater revelation has been given. And then we read in verse 45 of our passage, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." He was on the road to Jerusalem to do that, a road that led to the cross and a way that passed through Jericho, a place where He would perform a great miracle and a miracle that is illustrative of what He would accomplish at the cross, a miracle that shows both His power and His mercy. In fact, we could say that with this passage, Mark moves from words about His passion to words about His compassion.

Jericho is famous to us as a city of miraculous conquest, the city that Joshua defeated when he marched Israel around it and its walls fell down. Well, Jesus is the Greek form of the name Joshua, and in Jericho He demonstrated that He is the greater Joshua when He made a far greater conquest in that city. There are, however, some apparent difficulties in this passage that we need to address before we look at the miracle itself and the events that followed there.

Mark, as well as Matthew, records that the events that we will study this morning unfold as the Lord was going out from Jericho. Luke, on the other hand, records that these occurred as He was approaching Jericho. We believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, and so we seem to be faced with a difficulty there, maybe even a contradiction in the Scriptures, and so we have to ask ourselves how do we reconcile these two statements? A variety of explanations have been offered, all of them really very good explanations.

One – and perhaps this is the better solution – lies in the fact that at this time, there were two Jerichos, the old city that we're very familiar with which lay largely in ruins at this time, and a new city about a mile away that had been built by Herod. And so it may be that Mark and Matthew were writing their account of these events under Jewish influence, and so they mention that historical city of Jericho, while Luke, under Gentile influence, refers to the new site. If that's so, then the Lord is leaving the old city of Jericho, the ruins of that city, and approaching the new city, the populated city, where blind Bartimaeus sat begging.

Now Bartimaeus wasn't alone. We would think so from reading Mark's account. We would think so from reading Luke's account. But Matthew mentions two men. And there again, we have what has been seen as a difficulty and a possible contradiction, but I think unnecessarily because Mark doesn't say that there was only one man. He just mentions one man. He focuses upon Bartimaeus and is the only one, by the way, that mentions his name. So evidently Bartimaeus was a well-known figure to many in the apostolic circles and perhaps even the man who took the initiative of the two in seeking the Lord's mercy. And so Mark focuses upon this one man, Bartimaeus. Whatever the reason for that, there's no conflict in the text.

Now Bartimaeus had taken his seat along the road, probably near the gate of the city where the traffic would have been heaviest and he could collect the most alms. And as he was sitting there, he heard a large crowd approaching. Now there's nothing unusual about that. Caravans of pilgrims pass through Jericho on their way to Jerusalem to the great feasts in that city very often. This was a well-traveled road, and so there was nothing particularly unusual about a large crowd passing by, but there was evidently some unusual excitement in this crowd because Luke writes in his account that as he heard the multitude going by, he began to inquire what this might be. And when he was told that the Lord was passing by, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Obviously, the Lord's reputation had preceded Him because Bartimaeus knew immediately who Jesus was and knew a great deal about Him, calling Him the "Son of David." How he learned of the Lord we're not told, but you can imagine that being a beggar, sitting by a well-traveled road, all day he would pick up information from all over the land of Israel as merchants and pilgrims were passing by. Jericho was a

very important city at that time and would have had many, many merchants passing through it, many pilgrims with a great deal of information as they talked to one another. And he would have learned much about the Lord and His ministry when travelers from Galilee brought news of the young Rabbi up north who was casting out demons, who was healing the sick, and who was teaching as no man had ever taught.

And being blind, Bartimaeus may have become very good at listening. He had very little else to do and it would have been a wonderful way to pass the time to listen to all the news that would have been spoken as people were going by him. And as he picked up on the news, he made some significant connections between the miracles that he heard reported that the Lord was doing and the wonders that had been predicted in the Old Testament about the Messiah to come. You see these, for example, in Isaiah chapter 29 and chapter 35. There we're told that when the Messiah comes or as it's said in Isaiah 35, "when God visits His people," that the lame and the dumb would be healed and the eyes of the blind would be opened.

And so hearing that Jesus was performing these miracles, he concluded that He was the promised Messiah. He was the son of David. And that must have filled him with great hope. Because here a man who has sat in darkness for so long without any hope of regaining his sight learns that there is one in the world, there is one in that very land in which he lived, who was giving sight to the blind, who was performing the very miracle that he needed. And so he must have been filled with hope as he put these things together. And yet, it also must have been hope that was mixed with discouragement because he was blind and he couldn't leave. He couldn't go from Jericho up to Galilee. And he was left there, separated by a great distance and helpless to go, left to his darkness in Jericho.

So you can imagine the excitement that he must have felt when he learned that Jesus, the one to whom he could not go, had come to him. He was passing by right in front of him. And so immediately he cried out to Him, "Have mercy on me!" And that is an evidence of his faith. In fact, it's an act of faith and we see the reality and the vitality of his faith because it's persistent faith. You see that against the response of the crowd to Bartimaeus. Look at verse 48. "Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he began crying out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'" The crowd became indignant when he began to seek mercy from the Lord and ask the

Lord, in effect, to stop and render aid to him. They told him to stop. They wanted the Lord to continue on.

We're not told why that was. It's a calloused response on their part, to be sure, but it may have been they didn't want their progress hindered as they were making their way toward Jerusalem and the great feast of passover that they would celebrate there. It may be that the Lord was in the midst of teaching them a lesson and they didn't want that lesson interrupted, or it may have been that they had simply become hardened to seeing beggars along the roadside and were insensitive to his need. Now we don't see a lot of blind beggars or beggars of that kind sitting along the roadside as you would if you went to Jerusalem today, because they're there and you can walk down the main streets of Jerusalem and go to the great gates of the old city, and you see the beggars lined up. Where the most people are walking, they're sitting. And when you first see them, you're filled with empathy. But if you travel by there every day and you see them day after day, pretty soon you begin to not see them. They become invisible. You begin to become indifferent to their plight. That's human nature, it's sad to say, and perhaps that has something to do with their insensitivity towards this man. Because in our Lord's day, the land was filled with the blind and the lame and the lepers, and they'd seen so much of this that they just cast him aside.

Whatever the reason, Bartimaeus' cry for mercy was met with opposition. And that's really to be expected. When Christ is passing by, so to speak, when men are being drawn toward Him, when an interest in the gospel is being awakened within a person, we can be assured that there will be opposition, and perhaps that's really the main reason here. Perhaps there was no real plausible explanation as to why these people were opposed to him, but there was opposition there because there was a heart that was looking for the Lord Jesus Christ. And when that happens, there's going to be opposition.

John reminds us that the whole world lies in the evil one, and the evil one does not give up his captives easily. The Lord indicates that in the parable of the sower. You remember how He describes in that parable the sower goes out, the picture of the evangelist giving the gospel in the image of seed that is cast and it falls on different types of ground. And on some ground, it doesn't have a chance to really take root because the birds of the air come and they take it away. And then as He explains, we

learn that the birds of the air are a picture of Satan's activity when He says, "The evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in the heart." When the gospel is preached, there's going to be opposition. When Christ is, so to speak, passing by, there's going to be opposition to those that are moving toward Him.

C. S. Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters* develops this when Screwtape, this chief demon, writes to his demon nephew Wormwood to advise him on how to keep his patient, as he calls him, from coming to faith. And Wormwood has not really been doing the right things, and Screwtape informs him, "Don't let him get into arguments and debates about the truth. Keep him away from the truth." And he gives him some instructions along these lines, and then he concludes by saying, "Do remember, Wormwood, you are there to fuddle him."

Well, that's what Satan seeks to do, and one way or another, he seeks to fuddle those who would come to the Lord. And sometimes he's successful, but he's not always successful in fuddling his patients or in snatching away the seed that has been sown. There is, as that parable points out to us, good ground. There is that ground or those hearts which have been prepared by the Lord and the Word of God will find its way to that good ground, and it will take root.

And it was taking root in the heart of Bartimaeus because the crowds could not fuddle him. He wouldn't let this opportunity pass by, and in spite of the opposition, he persisted. And Mark writes, "began crying out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'" And He did because – and here's the fundamental point, or a fundamental point, I should say – Christ can never be fuddled by Satan or by crowds or by anyone. The crowds tried to silence Bartimaeus, but Jesus didn't silence him. Instead, He stopped. We read in verse 49, "said, 'Call him *here*.'" Bartimaeus' cry for mercy, his faith arrested our Lord as it always will.

Men may become calloused to the needs and the concerns of others. You and I may become calloused to one another, but the Lord never ever becomes calloused to our situation. He knows it perfectly. He knows it well. And He's involved with us. And we see that here. Those who call upon Him will never be rejected, never be disappointed. As He says in John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." And so He stopped.

One is calling out to Him and He always hears. And He stops and He sent some of His disciples with a message. "Take courage, arise! He is calling for you."

Now that expression, "take courage," is found seven times in the New Testament. And six of the seven it is used by our Lord. This is the only time when it is used by someone other than the Lord. And yet, they give the same encouragement that the Lord gives. It's the Lord's encouragement and they give it because they know the mind of the Lord. They know the mind of the One who had sent them to Bartimaeus. And in expressing His mind, they are revealing Him to be not only powerful, as we will see in a moment and as we have seen throughout this gospel, not only powerful, but also merciful.

And those two must go together if good is to result. Power without love, power without mercy is simply brute force. Mercy without power, mercy and compassion without the ability to actually change things often is nothing more than sentiment. But in Christ, the two are joined together for all who believe in Him, for all who seek Him. And so the Lord says through His messengers, "Take courage." It's a command of hope, one that the Lord often spoke in His ministry to ease those who were doubting, to ease those who were in distress. And we see it all the way through His ministry.

And one time – and only one time – is it used after His resurrection, and that is the case of Paul. Paul as you remember was arrested in Jerusalem and he was put in prison there before being sent to Rome. It was a very dangerous time in Paul's life. And Luke records this in Acts 23:11. Men in that city were plotting his death, and we read that "the Lord stood at his side and said, 'Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.' " As we read on in that passage, the plot is uncovered. Paul is spared and his mission was fulfilled. Nothing can frustrate the will of God and nothing can fuddle His people when they are walking with the Lord, when they are walking in obedience, when they are following Him.

And the Lord is just as intimately involved in our lives as He was in Paul's. He did no more for the apostle Paul, as dramatic as that may seem and as dramatic as it was, but He did nothing more for the apostle Paul than He is doing for you and will continue to do for you now and throughout your life. He's intimately involved in

your life, just as He was in the life of the apostle Paul and Bartimaeus, for that matter. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and He encourages His saints with those words, "take courage," because He's in control. Because He knows everything fully and perfectly.

He says that today through His messengers, encouraging sinners to come to Him, to take courage. He says it to all who hear His call. Now, you may fear the effects of coming to Him. I don't know the spiritual condition of everyone in here. I think most everyone in here is a saved man, woman, or child, but I don't know the state of your heart ultimately. And so assuming that there may be some in here who don't know Christ, you may have a fear within you that if you come to Him, you'll lose everything. You'll lose your friends. You may jeopardize your job. All of your ambitions for life, all that the world has to offer may slip away from you if you come to Him.

And that can be a hindrance and so the Lord says, "Fear not. Take courage." It may be that some things will be lost in this life, but take the worst case scenario and assume that you lose it all. Is that any great loss ultimately? Because there's nothing that you can lose that you won't lose anyway ultimately. You will either lose it, it will be taken from you, or in the end you'll be taken from it. We can't hold onto anything in this life, but the Lord does give this promise. He says, "Take courage." As He said earlier in this passage, whoever loses house, or family, or friend, or job for My name's sake or for the sake of the gospel shall "receive 100 times as much now in the present age, and in the world to come, eternal life." There's nothing that we can hold onto in this world that compares to what we will receive – now, in this life, as well as in the world to come. So, "Take courage! He is calling you." They say to Bartimaeus.

And in verse 50, Bartimaeus responds without hesitation. "Casting aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus." Now that's faith in action. That's vital faith. That's a living faith and it's immediate faith. He shows no concern for the few coins that he collected that day, for any of his few worldly possessions. He casts them all aside. Doesn't even look for a guide to help him to the Lord. He simply abandons everything for Christ. And when he comes to Him, the Lord does what, at least at first glance, may seem a bit surprising. He asks him a question, and one that we

might think is so obvious it doesn't need to be asked. But He asks him. He says, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

Well, you know what he wants Him to do for him. Didn't the Lord know that he wanted to be healed, that he wanted his sight restored? Did He think possibly he wanted more alms? What was it that the Lord was thinking when He asks this? Didn't He know? Well, of course He knew. The Lord knew precisely what Bartimaeus wanted and needed before He ever came into that city of Jericho, but He wanted Bartimaeus to reflect on his need and then to ask, and in so doing, express his trust in Christ. What He's telling Bartimaeus to do is pray. And in praying, state his requests.

And it's the same of us when we pray. We don't pray to God and make our requests known to Him because God needs to be informed of these things, needs a little help in learning our particular situation. So we sort of bring Him up to speed on where we are. He knows before we ever ask, and He knows better than we know. And yet He instructs us to ask, continually do that. He could, of course, supply our needs without our asking. He could supply our needs before we ever knew we had a need. And, in fact, He does that for the most part. Our lives and all that gives us life in this world comes from Him, and He's constantly supplying that to us. Paul says that in Acts 17. He says, "In Him we live and move and exist." And we don't every moment of our life ask, "Give me life. Give me life." He's doing that. And yet, He instructs us to make our requests known to Him.

He can supply them without our ever asking and supply them more precisely than we can ask for the supply. But He instructs us to ask daily for all of the details of life, because through the asking, we enter into personally fellowship with Him. And that's what the Lord seeks to cultivate in our relationship with Him, through our prayer life and through the various aspects of life, He's seeking to cultivate fellowship with us. And we do that through prayer and as we ask and receive, our faith is strengthened and our fellowship deepens.

And here, He was drawing Bartimaeus into that fellowship with Him, and in so doing, challenging His faith, and in challenging His faith, He is going to strengthen that faith and reward that faith. "What do you want me to do for you?" He asks. And without hesitation, he answered, "Rabboni, *I want* to regain my sight!" To which

the Lord responds, verse 52, “ ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ Immediately he received his sight.”

Now that raises something of a question, at least in my mind, as I read that statement “your faith has made you well.” What does He mean by that? Does He mean by that that the power of this blind man’s faith caused the cure? Because we hear that so often today. People are told that if they have enough faith, they’ll be healed. And the catch there is that if they’re not healed, well, it’s their fault because they didn’t have enough faith. They just have enough faith, they’ll affect the cure. God just really wants to heal everybody and people just keep failing in their faith. And one might appeal to something like this to support that. Is that what He’s saying? Is He saying that Bartimaeus’ faith was strong enough to cause the cure and affected it?

No. That’s not what He’s saying at all because it’s the Lord who heals. That’s very clear throughout. You even have examples in the gospels, John chapter 5, where there’s no faith on the part of the one who is healed. It’s the Lord who heals, just as it is the Lord who saves. But faith is the means of receiving that blessing. And that’s what the Lord means here is faith is the means of obtaining that blessing. Faith is a gift. We want to say it all depends upon us, that ignores the fact that faith is a gift. Faith comes from the Lord. Paul makes that plain in Ephesians 2:8. Grace always precedes blessing.

But the faith that we exercise is our faith. We shouldn’t think that to say that faith is a gift means that there’s some alien faith that somehow comes into our life and acts, and we’re really not a part of it. No. It’s our faith. It’s faith, though, that is generated or produced by God. He moves us to believe. And yet, we’re responsible to believe, to trust Him. And there are no blessings apart from our believing, from our faith.

And that’s the emphasis here in Bartimaeus’ persistent, earnest faith. It’s a good example of how we are to respond to Him with persistent, earnest faith in spite of the opposition, in spite of the difficulties, believe and look to the Lord. But the faith that we exercise, as I say, is ultimately the work of the Lord, and I think we see that behind this because we see in this passage the initiative of the Lord. Bartimaeus

couldn't go to the Lord, but the Lord came to him. And so behind it all – perhaps in a rather subtle way, but nevertheless it's there – the initiative of the Lord is seen.

Now you say, "Well, I really don't see that. I do see the emphasis here that's placed upon Bartimaeus' faith and the exercise of it, but I don't see necessarily the initiative of the Lord, apart from the fact that He did come to Jericho." Well, perhaps it's not as plain here as it is in Luke's account. If you were to look over there, following the encounter that we have here with Bartimaeus and the healing that he experiences, Jesus goes on to meet a man named Zaccheus. And you'll remember Zaccheus, the wee little man who wanted to get a look at the Lord and couldn't see over the people so he climbs up in the sycamore tree, and the Lord's walking by and He stops at that tree. Zaccheus hadn't said anything. He just knew he was up there, stopped, told him to come down, and then He says, "Today I must stay at your home."

Well, it was all prearranged in the mind of the Lord. He knew before He ever entered Jericho who He would meet, and where He would stay, and where He would dine that day. "Come down. You have to come down because I have to be at your house. I have an appointment with you." He passed through town with a purpose. And He makes that very clear later, when He says to Zaccheus, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." And Bartimaeus was one of those whom He came to Jericho to seek and to save.

It is true, as the Lord said, John chapter 6, "The one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out." That reminds us of our responsibility to believe and to come, and the encouragement that that gives. He's not going to cast us out when we do. But it's also true, as He says before that, "All that the Father gives me shall come to Me." Before the coming is the giving. Before faith is grace. He entered Jericho to seek and to save that which was lost.

And in that light, it's perhaps significant to note that the literal translation of our Lord's words to Bartimaeus, the literal translation is, "Your faith has saved you." And that may, in fact, be the sense that Mark intends for us to understand here. Not only did Jesus make him whole physically, but also spiritually, as well. And when He did, the first sight that filled his new eyes was the face of his Savior. As I read that and think about it, I can't help but think of the hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, who wrote over 8,000 hymns. And what's amazing about that was she was blind from infancy,

and yet as bad as that affliction is – and I can't imagine a worse affliction than blindness – she held no bitterness.

Once a preacher who was feeling sympathy for her said that he thought it was a great pity that the Lord did not grant her the gift of sight when He had showered so many other gifts upon her. And she responded immediately by saying that if she had been given at birth the opportunity to make one petition, the petition that she would have made was that she would have been born blind. And that's a surprising thing to request and it surprised the minister because he asked why. And she said to him, "Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my savior." Well, there's a woman who enjoyed her relationship with the Lord. And as a result of that relationship of joy, produced hymns to His glory, produced a great outpouring of work that was glorifying to God.

Notice Bartimaeus' response. The Lord said to Bartimaeus, "Go your way." That is, "Go back to your things. Return to your home. You're healed. You can leave now. Go your way." But Bartimaeus, we read, began following Him. He began following Him because He was his way and he wanted to share the road with Christ. And so he follows Him. He goes with Him. Now some have restricted this to mean simply that he joined the crowd on the way to the feast. And that is true. I mean, that's almost so obvious that it's not worth saying. And I think it misses the point and doesn't capture the moment that is described here.

The same word, "follow," is used earlier in this chapter with the rich young ruler. And there the Lord instructs him, "Follow Me." Now He doesn't mean, "Fall in line here. We're going to walk down the road and just follow Me." He means, "Become my disciple." And that is what I think it means here. Now, he couldn't do that or wouldn't do that because, as the text says, he owned much property. But here, the Lord doesn't even tell Bartimaeus to follow Him, gives Him no instruction. He says, "Go. Go your way." And Bartimaeus does follow. He'd already left his things behind, cast them aside, and unlike the rich man, he wouldn't let those things, the things of the world turn him back. And I doubt that as he joined the Lord he really gave much thought to the feast that he was going to. He followed Jesus on the road, the road to the cross because he wanted to be near Him, to draw near to Christ, and his motive wasn't thrones of glory and power, but fellowship.

That's the response that an understanding of grace produces. And that should be our response because if we have believed in Christ, we have been saved from things that are far worse, far more tremendous than any kind of physical disability that Bartimaeus had, and the miracle that we have received is certainly far greater than the physical healing that was his. A. T. Pierson said a long time ago, "Every parable of Jesus was a miracle of wisdom and every miracle of Jesus was a parable of teaching." And this miracle is certainly a parable of teaching because it illustrates the spiritual blessing that every believer in Jesus Christ has experienced. All men are born spiritually blind and the fact that some see and some come to the truth is a result of God's grace.

Every one of us were separated from Him, unable to go to Him, left to our darkness as Bartimaeus was. But that's where grace abounds because He comes to us when we could not go to Him, and He gives sight, and He enables us to understand and to believe, and to follow. Realizing that we should follow our Lord like Bartimaeus did, with gratitude, without hesitation, throwing aside every worldly concern that threatens to entangle us. That, I think, is fundamental to answering that question which you raised at the beginning, how we obtain this joy that is so important. How do we enjoy the Lord in order that by enjoying Him, we glorify Him? Well, to do that, I think we have to understand who we were, what we are now by God's grace, and what grace cost. It was the cross. It was the death of the only begotten Son for us.

Now that's the way to wholehearted faith, and we see that here in Bartimaeus, in contrast to so many others. As I mentioned earlier, we see him not only in contrast to the rich young ruler, but to James and John with their concern for security and for power and for glory and for honor.

John Stott has made some observations on them in comparison with much of the church today. He writes, "The spirit of James and John lingers on, especially in us who have been cushioned by affluence. It is true that inflation and unemployment have brought to many a new experience of insecurity, yet we still regard security as our birthright and 'safety first' as a prudent motto. Where is the spirit of adventure, the sense of uncalculating solidarity with the underprivileged? Where are the Christians who are prepared to put service before security, compassion before

comfort, hardship before ease? Thousands of pioneer Christian tasks are waiting to be done which challenge our complacency and which call for risk. Insistence on security is incompatible with the way of the cross."

Bartimaeus didn't concern himself with security. Jesus said, "Go your way," but he chose the way of Christ, which is the way of the cross. Not because he was brave. I doubt that he gave a lot of thought to where he was going and what it would amount to, but he chose to go with Christ because he desired His fellowship. He just desired to be near Him without reward other than the reward of the fellowship that he would have. For him, there could be no greater blessing, no greater joy than to be with Christ wherever that might lead. And we are never more secure, and Bartimaeus was never more secure, than when he was with Christ or when we are with Christ. There is no more secure and stable situation in this world, regardless of how things are, even though the foundations are crumbling, as the psalmist says in Psalm 11, our security is with the Lord regardless of what's going on around us. And so he drew near to the Lord, and that's what each of us are to do.

In Hebrews 7:25, the author of Hebrews states that Christ is "able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." We don't just draw near for salvation and that's it. Drawing near is a lifelong activity, like Bartimaeus, who drew near for salvation and then continued to draw near to Him, continued to follow Him, and the result was his life was changed from a man who sat to a man who walked, from a man who begged to a man who was a friend of the King. Great benefits and great blessings in drawing near to the Lord and fellowshiping with Him.

What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever. Do you enjoy Him? Is Jesus Christ your great desire? Knowing Him, fellowshiping with Him, walking with Him, serving Him? If not, then it should be your prayer, it should be my prayer, because all of us so easily get entangled by the things around us and the concerns of the world. But it should be our prayer that He would visit us in a special way and change our affections from the things of this world to Him.

If you're here this morning and you've not yet come to Christ, the invitation is for you. Come to Him. Believe in Him. Realize your desperate condition, that you

are separated from God, blind to His truth in glory. And if you say, "Well, I don't see that. I hear what you're saying. I know what you're saying. I just don't believe it. I don't think any of that's true." All of that is the evidence of how blind you really are. He is the Son of God, and He's the Savior of men, and He's died in the place of sinners, and invites all to believe in Him. All who believe in Him shall be saved. And so trust in Christ. Turn to Him. Sacrifice of the cross is sufficient to remove all of your sins and make you acceptable with the Father so that in the end, He will present you faultless, spotless before Him in glory. And you can do that. You can turn to Him with the confidence that the one who comes to Him He will certainly not cast out. It's a great blessing and a great promise. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

Gracious heavenly Father, we acknowledge that so often we do become entangled by the things of this world. Not necessarily bad things. It's a good thing to love one's work. It's proper for us to love our families and want to provide for them. It's wonderful to have the opportunity to enjoy the recreations of life, and we need that. And yet the problem is, Father, so often they become more important to us than life itself, and that is what Your Son is. He is the way. He is the truth. He is the life. And so we confess that we take the good things that You give us and sometimes we elevate them beyond Your Son Himself and so we pray that You would visit us with grace to change our affections, that they would have Christ at their center, and we like Bartimaeus would simply come with Him because He is our way and we desire to be with Him for no other reason than to simply fellowship with our Savior.

And if there be any in attendance who don't know Christ in a personal way, pierce their heart, bring them to a knowledge of their lost condition and their need of the Savior. Cause them to look to Him. We pray these things in the Savior's name, Amen.