

Luke 18:35-43 See Jesus

For those that may have gone ahead and read through our passage today you'll see it is about healing. Certainly a physical healing. But is there a greater, more important, more miraculous healing happening in the text? Yes! We're going to talk about healing. But where this encounter with the blind man takes us, is, that though we have our physical ailments, illnesses and disabilities, beyond any miracle of healing, is our faith and trust in Christ. Faith in Christ is never conditional on whether *Jesus heals us physically. Faith in Christ, trusts him, unreservedly, like the Blind Man.

Whether we've been walking with Christ for a long time or we've never believed in him, the question he's asking us today is: "What do you want me to do for you?"

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

³⁸ He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹ Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

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

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

Jesus stops and heals a blind man. Though he is the one to be on the receiving end of Jesus' physical healing, Jesus singled this man out, to demonstrate to all the others in the crowd, the passers-by and his disciples, that he received a miracle far greater: *healing of spiritual blindness*. His *physical eyes* were opened, but more importantly, through his faith – "your faith has healed you." – his *spiritual eyes* were opened.

Let me take you to a number of verses throughout the bible that align with what Jesus was doing here with the blind man

Ps. 13:3 *Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my **eyes**, or I will sleep in death,*

Matt. 13:15 *For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their **eyes**. Otherwise they might see with their **eyes**, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.*

Luke 2:30 (Simeon) *For my **eyes** have seen your salvation,*

John 3:3 *Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."*

Recall what Jesus said to Martha in John 11:40 *"Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Faith precedes seeing the glory of God.*

That's what's happening in this text...

Why was this such an important stop for Jesus and his singling out of this man? Because *"he wanted to show the crowd, what he can do in his power, when people call out to him and put their faith in him"*

Folks I've very intentionally mentioned all of that, as the focus of this scripture, not because, believing the Lord for physical healing is wrong. In my view we absolutely must pray, in faith, for all those who are unwell in their physical bodies. In fact, I urge us to do so! That comment will answer the question do I believe God heals today? YES!

That being said, I'm very conscious, even within this room, there will be different views on God's healing. Some of us carry deep and searching questions about healing. Let me make several comments before I move on.

1st, the area of healing, biblically, is a complex matter.

2^{ndly}, that God heals, that he can heal and does heal, never means he will. Whatever the Lord does, or however he does it and for whomever he does it, *it will always be for his glory.*

Martin Luther said: 'The sea of God's mercies should swallow up all our particular afflictions.' Name any affliction that is upon you: there is a sea of mercy to swallow it up. If you pour a bucket-full of water on the floor of your house, it makes a great show, but if you throw it into the sea, there is no sign of it. Afflictions in themselves, to us are very great, but let them be considered within the sea of God's mercies we enjoy, and then they are not so much, they are nothing in comparison.¹

Faith doesn't disregard affliction, but it does place our sometimes overwhelming affliction next to the always overwhelming mercy of God in Christ.

Thirdly, there may not be physical healing for you, but when you call on the Lord, and cry out to him for mercy, you will be saved to be in eternity with him. That is the *ultimate healing.*

In the same way the Blind Man had the opportunity, the word of God invites us to see Jesus 'walking' by, today, asking: *"What do you want him to do for you?"*

¹ <https://www.inpraiseministries.com/articles/the-sea-of-gods-mercies>

Where I want to encourage us today is to **“See Jesus”²**. That’s is to say I will trust you unreservedly. See him, despite any physical impairment or illness we might have. See him, so your spirit is healed and you have eternal life and you are full of faith in him, leading to your praise of him.

Physical healing is one thing – and so enormously important – but spiritual healing – that is our eyes being opened to see the Lord – is quite another. That’s where our encouragement sits today.³

The 1st thing we saw the Blind Man do is *Call on The Lord...*

Call on the Lord

The first detail Luke gives us...v. 35 *As Jesus approached Jericho*

No detail Luke gives us is insignificant. Please keep in mind everything I’ve just mentioned to you about what Jesus’ primary ministry was, and now what makes this stop so important.

In his lifetime Jesus would have travelled Galilee to Jerusalem many times, a gruelling trip, climbing around 1000m in altitude just from Jericho (sits about 250m below sea level). Jesus was heading to Jerusalem, about 25kms away, for Passover, which also meant for him, his death on the cross. Jesus would have known the inevitability of what was coming up.

Now what makes this stop significant, was that Jesus’ first miracle was in Cana, in the North of Israel, and what we’re looking at today, the last miracle of his ministry, in the South, at least in Luke’s gospel and therefore one last opportunity, for people to have their eyes opened and believe in him.⁴

v.35 *As Jesus approached Jericho.... a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.*

Though Luke doesn’t give us the man’s name, Mark (Ch. 10) does: *Bartimaeus*. Bartimaeus will have been there - sitting by not just any roadside, state highway 1! - with dozens of other **beggars** particularly because it was Passover season with travellers making their way to Jerusalem. He was *blind* and a *beggar*.⁵

This was a common sight in Jesus’ time. Though it may not necessarily be a blind person, the sight of someone begging, in the main street or outside a supermarket is not completely unfamiliar to us.

² Which means “see him” with your eyes of faith

³ It is not your physical body, or your ability or lack of that saves you, it is your belief in Jesus Christ, having, seen him.

⁴ Ironically, while many struggle to see who Jesus is, a blind man has full clarity of vision - Bock, Darrell L. “Original Meaning” In *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Luke*. By Darrell L. Bock, 474. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1996.

⁵ He had these two difficult things going on his life. We don’t know if he was born blind or was blinded by illness, or injury, nor do we know the extent of his blindness.⁵ We don’t know if blindness made him utterly destitute or being poor led to his blindness. Either way he was in bad shape.

Blind beggars were viewed as the lowest of the low in the community, only Tax Collectors were more despised, and therefore weren't getting any help from anywhere. Difference being of course that TC's were wealthy, blind beggars by contrast had *nothing!* So important to note this was a hopeless situation.

100's if not 1000's of people making their way up to Jerusalem, and in the middle of all that commotion Bartimaeus asks (v.36) *"what's happening?"* and the crowd responds *"Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."* His eyes might not have been working but his voice was.

Now I want you to see what happens next: the crowd said (v.37) *"Jesus of Nazareth is passing by"* ...but Bartimaeus **called out** *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

It's evident that Bartimaeus knew something of Jesus and who he was. Maybe he'd already been hoping Jesus would be passing by and that's why he'd placed himself on the road. What is also evident is that faith – despite his personal circumstances and the way he'd been treated - faith had arisen in the heart of Bartimaeus. Howso?

He called out *"Jesus, Son of David..."* Bartimaeus was expressing his faith in Jesus as Israel's promised King⁶. Son of David was one of the names of Jesus taken from the Old Testament, summarised in Matt. 1 and Luke 1:32⁷. Bartimaeus knew enough of God's Word to recognise Jesus as the Son of David.

Not only did he call out *"Jesus son of David"*, he called out, *"have mercy on me"*

He knew who Jesus was and what Jesus could do. Notice again what Bartimaeus was asking for? Mercy.

"You know Lord of all the things I've got going on, I'm really feeling quite upset about being like this and living like this I could really use a little help with this, and that, and if you could provide this..." No, he boils it down to one word. Mercy!

All he wanted was mercy for his hopeless situation but the leaders of the group with Jesus had different ideas...⁸

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

Going by their response the crowd hadn't paid much attention to what Jesus' ministry has been. To the crowd Bartimaeus was just another nuisance along the road side. But to Jesus, Bartimaeus was another opportunity for Jesus' power to be seen, for his mercy to be given and his name to be glorified. He was all compassion for the hurting, poor, lame, the sick and blind. Jesus' concern was precisely for people like Bartimaeus.

⁶ [Call him! \(thegospelcoalition.org\)](http://thegospelcoalition.org)

⁷ *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,*

⁸ What we read in v.39 gives us an indication of how Blind Beggars were treated

The group were blind to that. They're yelling at Bartimaeus "shut up", he's shouting, in faith, at the top of his lungs, "Jesus!" And Jesus is saying "Ok..."

It will not surprise you that the crowd here represents any influence, any force of evil, any comment, any discouragement, any unbelief, anything that is opposed to what Christ wants for you. I've learnt, and am continuing to learn valuable lessons myself in this area. Battled comments made to me, until almost believe they're true, until I'm reminded of what Jesus says. And Jesus says, "*just hang on, call on me, I'm the truth!*" If our life is fuelled by the opinions and put downs of others, we will very quickly run out of gas!

Bartimaeus, literally, wasn't letting anything get in the way of meeting the Lord "*He shouted all the more...*" he's so desperate to see the Lord. Listen again to what he says "*have mercy on me*"

Is calling out to the Lord, "*have mercy on me*", the first words we use...?

Many of you will be familiar with the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, tradition tells us is built over the birthplace of Jesus. One of the first challenges any visitor there is faced with, is needing to navigate a small rectangular doorway less than 5 feet (1.5m) in height, called "the Door of Humility" It means that a person has to physically bow down to enter in. As if you're bowing in reverence before God. I'd like to think it was built that way intentionally for that purpose.⁹

Either way, even if that door serves as a metaphor, if we're reluctant, reticent, or unwilling to bow down, we can't '*go in*'. We've already learnt in Luke that we need to humble ourselves in order for God to lift us up. If we don't bow down, we'll keep bashing our head – I know what that feels like!

Bowing down as he cried out for mercy¹⁰, is what Jesus saw Bartimaeus doing. Not an ounce of self, just utter desperation and dependence.

I think Luke is telling us here that often we need to reach the point of utter *desperation and dependence* - and God orchestrates that - before we're willing to call on his mercy. I'm mindful Jesus doesn't do things we want him to do to make us comfortable. He does things *he wants to* do to humble us, to make us faithful, and for his glory.

Paul the apostle gives us a great summary of Gods mercy and indeed the gospel of Jesus.

⁹ [The Door of Humility - University of Saint Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary \(usml.edu\)](http://www.usml.edu)

¹⁰ Throwing himself at the mercy of Jesus.

Eph. 2:4-5 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy¹¹, made us alive with Christ (mine: he opened our eyes) even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace¹² you have been saved.*

Let's bend down, to go through the door, bring our circumstances to him and *call out to the Lord* for his mercy....¹³

Believe in the Lord

I really hope we've seen throughout Luke how he (Luke) narrates stories like the one we're looking at today. Take the first part of verse 40, *Jesus stopped*. Now, you might 'stop' somewhere for a coffee, stop for a rest, stop for a chat – the 2 words Luke gives us here have tremendous significance.

Jesus stopped on the way to his crucifixion – the most important event in human history – to show compassion to Bartimaeus. And, I love this, Jesus commands those who were trying to silence Bartimaeus to be the ones to bring him to Jesus and Jesus *knowing what the man needed* asked him what he wanted Jesus to do...

"What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied.

Because of the way Bartimaeus responded we know he believed the Lord, *could*, heal him...and we know he did...but does it mean Jesus, will do what we want him to do?

Jesus asking Bartimaeus this question is similar to the scripture that says (John 14:13-14) *And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

We read also in Matthew and Mark that just prior to Jesus meeting Bartimaeus James and John had come to Jesus with a request: (Mark 10:35-37) *"we want you to do for us whatever we ask."* Jesus responded, *"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."*

You can read the rest of that, but Jesus wasn't about to grant their request.

But he did for Bartimaeus...⁴² *Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you"¹⁴.*

A little word study here. We know that Jesus wasn't referring to Bartimaeus' physical healing – as awesome as that was – because the words *"has healed you"* mean God rescuing believers *from* the penalty and power of sin and into his care.¹⁵

¹¹ God not giving us what we deserve

¹² God giving us what we don't deserve

¹³ For those who are desperate, the promises of the word of God remind us we can cut through others voices, call on him and he hears us. For those quick to criticise, who silence the voice of others and are slow to show God's mercy, Jesus' would command us, to turn that around. Help. Love. Show mercy and be part of a solution for that person or people.

¹⁴ 4982 szó

¹⁵ Same in Matt. 1:21 "...he will save his people from their sins."; Matt. 9:22 "he said, "your faith has healed you."

So when Jesus says “*your faith has healed you*” he means faith was the means through which he came to be saved¹⁶.

We also know this was more than physical healing because of what Jesus said at the very start of his ministry: (Luke 4:18-19) “*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*”

Does Jesus answering Bartimaeus’ request mean he will do anything *what we want* him to do? No.

Is physical healing guaranteed as long as we have faith? (v. 42 says “*Your faith has healed you*”) No.

Is God’s healing always immediate? (v. 43 says *Immediately he received his sight...*) No.

What will Jesus do? He will do, whatever his will is for his glory. For any physical healing we are praying believing for, we are *completely* at the mercy of God for.

What will Jesus do? When you call out to him, when you ask for mercy, when you **believe** in Christ, he will hear you, and you will receive spiritual healing, that is you have *eternal life*. This, is the greater miracle!¹⁷

Trust the Lord for His Healing

Would this have been as much of a miracle if the man’s physical blindness wasn’t healed, but he was healed spiritually? (v. 43 says *Immediately he...followed Jesus*) Yes!

God heals. God never guarantees physical healing this side of eternity, what his healing will look like, or when it will happen, or if. He does however grant us the salvation of our souls when we cry out to him for mercy, and whatever state our bodies are in when we pass to eternal life, we will receive a new body!

In death, we are in eternity with him, where (Rev. 21:4-5) “*He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”* This, is the ultimate healing of healings, being with him!

In 1 Cor. 15: 42b-44 Paul is responding to the question of what our bodies will look like at the Resurrection: *The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

¹⁶ See Eph. 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*

¹⁷ Belief, is trusting the Lord to do what he needs to do or his glory.

Bartimaeus was physically healed, but more importantly on the back of his cry for Jesus' mercy he immediately 'saw' Jesus, as in he was saved. And we know he was saved by what happens next...!

Praise the Lord

⁴³ (He) followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

Bartimaeus' eyes were opened and he followed Jesus, praising God – this is the best evidence of *spiritual healing*. But not just him, all the others. Luke is conveying the fact that what Jesus did with Bartimaeus had the desired effect on the people in the crowd including those who discouraged Bartimaeus. Their eyes were opened, they followed Jesus and also praised God.

The miracle for the one became the miracle of the multitude. What Jesus stops to do in you, or in your life, when he opens your eyes to him, and you worship, can have an effect on others. That also goes to how you pray, how you express your faith, how you encourage others in their faith. Yours and my faith in Jesus can have an effect on others, as seen in today's scripture.

Do hear me, I am not saying today we should have disregard for illness and pain, but I do believe Luther was right. What is so massive to us – like a bucket on the floor – doesn't compare to the overwhelming mercy of God in Jesus. Our response to Jesus' question, as he 'stops' here today – ***“what do you want me to do for you?”*** – is, I want to see you...

John Newton the great hymn writer captured precisely what we've looked at today: *Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.*

Paul in Eph. 1:18 *I pray that the **eyes** of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you...*