

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Pentecost 22B (Proper 25B)
October 24, 2021
Mark 10:46-52

Lord, Have Mercy on Me

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. 47 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!" (Mark 10:46-47 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

The account of Bartimaeus is a story of the Christian life. For though he is physically blind, his spiritual sight is fine. Though he was a beggar, he knew who to beg from. Though deterred by others, he did not stop praying and confessing. Jesus had mercy on him and restored his sight. His faith had made him whole, had saved him. And he followed Jesus on the road on the way to Jerusalem and the cross.

But the disciples were another story. Their physical sight was fine. They could go about without bumping into things. But their spiritual sight was lacking – as it often was. Jesus had just told them for the third time what was going to happen to Him in Jerusalem. "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise." (Mark 10:33-34). And James and John seem not to have heard Him at all. They asked Him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." (Mark 10:37). They thought Jesus would establish an earthy kingdom and they wanted what they thought were places of honor, prestige, and power. They were spiritually blind as to who Jesus really is and what He had come to do.

And the other disciples were not any better. They were indignant at James and John. For they too were spiritually blind. They too thought that following Jesus would lead to achieving places of honor in this life.

But Jesus, wanting to give them sight, told them "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45). Jesus needed to open their eyes to see that greatness in the Kingdom of God was in serving others.

And this brings us back to Bartimaeus who sat begging by the side of the road. Being blind, he could hardly do anything else. He had nothing in himself to care for himself and provide for the needs of this life. He depended on the generosity of others. When he heard the commotion of a crowd going by, he couldn't see who it was. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" He confessed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the greater Son of David, who would save sinners. This Jesus was the Son of David who would sit on the throne of an eternal kingdom. This was, and is, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Furthermore, Bartimaeus begged for mercy. He was suffering the effects of a sinful nature in a sinful world. Though neither he nor his parents had done anything in particular that he was being punished for, he was getting what he deserved. Yet, he asked for mercy from the only One who could give it. In this he is joined by the Canaanite woman seeking help for her daughter. Neither of them deserved any kindness or regard from Jesus, yet they received the mercy they asked for.

Even then, when people tried to quiet him down, to muzzle him, he would not be deterred. He continued to cry out, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Such is the way of faith. It will not be silenced. It will confess who Jesus is and the mercy He comes to give.

And when Jesus stops and commands him to be brought to Him, the people told him that Jesus was asking for him. Instead of trying to silence him, they now encouraged him. In his excitement, he got up and came to Jesus. When Jesus asked him what he wanted Him to do for him, he replied, "That I may receive my sight." It's not that Jesus didn't already know what the man wanted. After all, God knows what we need before we ask and even without our prayer. But God wants us to ask so that we will know from whom all blessings flow. And when Bartimaeus's eyes were opened, he was fully restored in body and soul. Though he who had been blind could see by faith who Jesus is, now he could see Him with his eyes. And he followed Jesus on the way - to Jerusalem, to the cross, to death, to resurrection, to life eternal.

We too are like Bartimaeus. We too are beggars before God, deserving nothing by His wrath and punishment. We are by nature blind, unable to see spiritual things or do anything pleasing to God. In our blindness, we often think of this world, the here and now, its pleasures and excitements, as all that is or is most important. Too often we are blind to God's Word and what He wants to do for us, and how He wants us to live. Too often we turn a blind eye to God and His Word.

But Jesus does not leave us in our blindness. He came into this world to save sinners. He came to restore sight to the blind, for He is the Light of the world, and no darkness can overcome Him. He comes to open our eyes that we may see our sin, and, more importantly, our salvation. For His salvation is His gracious and merciful gift to us through His blood shed on the cross.

More than that, as we suffer physical, mental, and emotional afflictions of any kind, when we have no one to help, with no merit or worthiness in us, we too can cry to our Lord Jesus for

mercy. For that is what Jesus has come to give. The Lord is merciful. That's why He tells us to call upon Him in the day of trouble and promises to deliver us (Ps. 50:15). Likewise, the Psalms teach us how to beg for mercy: "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by." (Ps. 57:1). "But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." (Ps. 86:15; see Ps. 103:8; 111:4; 112:1; 116:5; 145:8). Cry to Him for mercy and He will most certainly give it. He may not heal or fix you as you might want, but He will assuredly give you mercy. And His greatest mercy is the forgiveness of all your sins and life with Him now and forever.

And having received His mercy, follow Him. Follow Him on the road He lays out for you for He is with you always. Thus, you pray, "Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy." That's the cry of faith. "Lord, have mercy on me!" Don't ever stop such prayer. Don't let anyone deter you. For that is the beggar's prayer, your prayer, at all times. Keep praying, and the Lord Jesus will show you mercy in overflowing measure.

As He did for blind Bartimaeus, so does the Lord, Jesus Christ have mercy upon you. With His Word of the Gospel, "He is calling you" to Himself, to "take heart," to rise up and live by faith in His forgiveness. He opens your heart and mind to see and know God rightly in Him and to follow Him "on the way" of the cross and into life everlasting. (Lectionary Summary). Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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