The Blind Man Sees

Luke 18:35-43

February 26, 2023

Well, as we come to Luke's Gospel this morning, you can turn your Bibles to the end of Luke 18, Luke 18, and verse 35, Luke 18:35. And this is Jesus' encounter with a blind man near Jericho. It might interest you to know that this is the first place in this Gospel, also the only place in this Gospel where Luke provides a narrative account of Jesus healing a blind man.

Jesus had said back in Luke 4:18, the recovery of sight to the blind is part of his Messianic mission. Luke 7:21, we find a general comment there on "many who were blind he bestowed sight," but this is the first narrative account, and the only narrative account in Luke's Gospel to focus on such a dramatic miracle as giving sight to the blind. This is the first time we get time to really see this in living color.

Might also interest you to know that this miracle, giving sight to this blind man. This is the last narrative account not

just in Luke's Gospel, but all three synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This is the last account that focuses on Jesus performing a miracle. This is the end of his miracle ministry, you could say. Now to be sure, Jesus does make use of divine power, when he curses the fig tree, when he heals the ear of Malchus. You remember the servant of the high priest when Peter tried to whack him with a sword at Jesus, the place of Jesus arrest. Jesus healed his ear there.

But obviously, also we can think about the resurrection. That is a great act of miraculous power, divine power on display there as well. But this is the last public healing miracle recorded in the Gospels. Even the resurrection, though obviously it's become publicly known, the resurrection itself was not a miracle that was performed in public and for the public. Jesus post resurrection appearances, all of those were to believers only, not to unbelievers.

So, this is the last healing miracle, an account of a healing miracle, an account of his messianic power validating his messianic ministry, this is the last account like this in the synoptic Gospels, in all the Gospels. So, what is it about this healing miracle in particular? What is it about this miracle that the Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, want

us to see? What do they want us to understand? Why do they end Jesus' miracle healing, miracle ministry here? Let's look at Luke 18:35 to 43 and find out.

"As he," as Jesus, "drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.' And he cried out, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought near to him. And when he came near, he asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you? He said, 'Lord, let me recover my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people when they saw it, gave praise to God."

If you think back to what we have covered most recently in Luke 18 and reflect on that a bit. We notice how neatly and how perfectly this account sums up everything we've been learning in chapter 18. We go back to the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector as they went up to the temple to pray, and we see there that the hero of the story turns out to be quite the

reverse of what was expected by all the people who listen to Jesus. But the hero of the story turns out to be the tax collector, and the tax collector is the hero of the story because he prays this simple prayer, "God be merciful to me, the sinner."

What is the cry of the blind man? Same thing, isn't it? Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me, or literally mercy me. Same prayer prayed by the tax collector, and he repeats it twice here. Next, we see after the parable of the tax collector, the Pharisee, we see the rich young ruler. We see the little children coming to Jesus. We see that Jesus blesses them, and he uses those infants as an illustration of true citizens coming into the Kingdom who are helpless and dependent. They are the exact opposite, right, of the rich young ruler. Who is rich, strong, capable, independent.

So, which one does the blind man resemble? The infants, right? Not the rich young ruler. He is polar opposite. Stark contrast to the rich young ruler. Finally, when Jesus talks privately with the twelve at the end of that section, versus 31 to 33. He talks to his twelve closest disciples. He uses very plain language about what's gonna happen to him in Jerusalem, his suffering, his death, his resurrection. And what does this

say in verse 34? They don't understand. Jesus made the truth so plain for them so. So clear, unmistakably clear, and they didn't get it at all.

So what hope is there for them? In fact, we could ask the question if those men represent, as they do, the foundation stones of the church itself. If the church will be built on the truth that they confess, and what is given to them as far as revelation, and they will write it down. What, if these men represent the foundations of the church, what hope is there for any of us. If they don't understand, what hope is there for any of us understanding? If the twelve who walked with Christ for three years are so spiritually dull at this point, and so blind. Well, what hope is there for any of us?

And this account answers that question. This blind man who had no advantages at all. A man with severe limitation. This man who has not walked with Jesus for the last three years. This man who has not heard Jesus' teaching ministry in person, who has not seen his miracles performed, but rather who's just been sitting by this roadside begging so he can eke out a living. Somehow, in some way, he seems to have perfect clarity. He has the gift of 20/20 spiritual vision. We don't know anything about him before this. What happened? Let's get into the details and

trace the progression as much as we can from this account. And there is a progress that's demonstrated here, and we'll trace that progress through the points of our outline.

Here's the first point, starting in verse 35, and we can just write down, from begging to listening. From begging, to listening. Luke tells us, "As he drew near Jericho," as Jesus drew near Jericho, "a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging." So, we're into the journey again. Jesus and his disciples are on the move, and they are here at this point in the narrative, at the final stage of a long journey to Jerusalem. It started back, as we said in Luke 9:51, when Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem. And now at this point in the narrative, they're almost there, they're mere, some, 18 miles away.

And after this account, the next account with Zacchaeus, they're gonna leave Jericho and they're gonna head up the road to Jerusalem. Luke doesn't emphasize it, but Matthew and Mark tell us that there is a great crowd there, following after Jesus. It's pretty familiar sight. Once again, Jesus is journeying. There's a massive crowd around him, surrounding him, perhaps numbering in the hundreds along the road as they're, ah,

traveling along with him. But once they arrive in Jericho, that number increased to probably the thousands.

Why would that be? Why so many people? Why are so many people with him on the road and then with him, once he arrives in the city of Jericho? Well, Jesus and his disciples, as we've been tracing their path, they've made their way from Ephraim to the region between Samaria and Galilee, and then south from there through the region of Peoria and then westward across the Jordan to Jericho. They are taking, at this point, the typical route of Jewish pilgrims. They are heading to Jerusalem to attend one of the three annual Jewish feasts. That's what they're doing.

The Jews, as we have noted before, they avoided Samaria when traveling to a feast and they wanted to avoid contact with unclean people and certainly for them, the Samaritans were in that category in particular, because they were like half breed mix between Jew and pagan and completely corrupt in their religion and in their practices. So, in order to prevent any ceremonial impurity, any disqualification for them from participating in the feasts, they avoided that whole area.

They avoided the western route, which was the quickest route down to Jerusalem from Galilee. They didn't want to go

through Samaria, so they took the eastern route down through Perea and then through Jericho and then up to Jerusalem. It's the same route that Jesus and his disciples have been taking. And so here we see them as they approach this feast time, they're accompanied by crowds of Jewish pilgrims who are travelling up to Jerusalem.

It's the time of Passover, and this Passover as we know it commemorates the exodus from Egypt, God's redemption of Israel, bringing them out of Egypt. This is the Passover that commemorates that, and it's followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It's a festive time. It's a time of rejoicing. It's a time of great joy and excitement in Israel.

At this point in time, the Passover is only about a week away, and unbeknownst to these pilgrims, this one who is traveling with them, this Jesus of Nazareth, they don't know this, but he himself is going to be this year's Passover Lamb. He is the once for all sacrifice that God has provided for the nation to take away their sins. He's the final sacrifice and he's walking with them along the road. They come into Jericho. And as we are going to spend this week and next, at least next, in Jericho, it is the setting for this account and it's the

setting for the next account with Zacchaeus. So, let's take a moment to get a little bit better acquainted with this city.

It's an ancient city. It's called the oldest inhabited city on the planet. Jericho goes all the way back to Joshua's Day, but we can extend its time all the way back further than that. But commercially we can see why, because commercially and militarily, Jericho, was strategically located. It was a frontier city that was a gateway between east and west. It's part of that fertile crescent that runs from Mesopotamia in the east and connects the Mesopotamia down to Egypt in the west.

So, when you think about this, Jericho city, this frontier city strategically placed. Think about the traders, those who the caravans would flow in and out of Jericho, who brought to Jericho and through Jericho the world's goods. They enjoyed there all kinds of foods from all over the parts of the world, seasoned with the best and the most exotic spices of the world. The traders brought medicines, cures, perfumes, fashions, the latest trends, the latest philosophies, the latest gossip, the latest news. All that came in and out of Jericho. And of course, along with that gold, silver, precious stones, treasures from around the known world.

As the gateway to Jerusalem also, Jericho was a key military city. It was a military outpost for the Herodian dynasty, so it was a well-fortified place. It was well supplied. Always, always well connected. Attended there by well-trained soldiers. And as anybody knows, soldiers who are far away from home, they like to spend money. They're bored in a place that's not their own, so they want to go out, have a good time. Lots of ways to make money from the soldiers that are in town, lots of ways to get their money from their pockets into your own. That happened in Jericho.

Jericho was also a site where a lot of the priests who attended the Ministry of the Temple in Jerusalem. A lot of the priests live in Jericho as well. So, it's a thriving city, it's a well populated city, and it's also a city that is the gateway to Jerusalem. Strategically very, very important. Only 18 miles from Jerusalem, it's about a six hour hike. Since Jericho sits at eight hundred and forty-six feet below sea level, it makes it the lowest city on the Earth and since Jerusalem is sitting up above in the Judean Hills. It's a two thousand four hundred and seventy-four feet above sea level. Well, that makes the road from Jericho to Jerusalem below sea level to above sea level. It's quite a climb.

So many of these pilgrims before they made the trek during these three feast times every year. Before they made that track, it was really a, more than a half mile ascent from below sea level to above sea level. They like to stop for a day or two in Jericho, get a little rest, get a little refreshment in a prosperous and beautiful city.

The warmth of its climate, which is really a well-watered city as well. They brought water into the city from nearby springs via aqueducts coming into the city, they channeled water into the city, so it turned Jericho into a veritable oasis. In fact, the name Jericho means place of fragrance or simply fragrant. It's known as the City of Palms. It was a fertile, prosperous city. According to Josephus, it was the richest part of the country. He called it a little paradise.

Jericho's name, fragrant, place of fragrance. It refers to its prosperity and its name pertains to the, the product that was extracted from a balsam plant. A highly sought after plant that produced from, from it they could produce perfume, a perfume that was sold at a very high price. Also, oils were extracted from that plant that were used for medicinal purposes. All this came from a balsam plant that was grown and was plentiful in the region.

Edersheim tells us that it was Mark Antony who bestowed the revenues of Jericho's balsam plantations as an imperial gift upon Cleopatra, the Egyptian Princess. And she in turn sold them to Herod, here grew, according to Edersheim, palm trees of various kinds, sycamores, the cypress flower, the mural balsam, which yielded precious oil, but especially the balsam plant. So instead of Anthony giving her a vial of perfume as any normal guy might give, lavish gift in and of itself, Anthony gave her an entire perfume industry.

So, all the perfumes she could ever want to douse on herself bathe in whatever, but also all of its revenue too. She sold it back to Herod. Herod the Great rebuilt, beautified, fortified Jericho, he turned it actually into his winter palace, and the Herodian dynasty used it for a winter palace. He protected the city with walls and gates. He set up 4 forts nearby at its flanks, residents and visitors to Jericho they would enjoy the protection there of that city.

And so, they enjoying that protection, that peace and safety, they could enjoy its comforts as well. It's pleasures. There's a theater there, an amphitheater, a hippodrome for races that Herod built. A public bath and all those things. So, year round warmth meant that Herods, royal entourage could come down

from Jerusalem in the winter, where it was cold and damp up in the hills of Judea. And he can come down in winter and soak up the warmer climate. He could bathe in the spring fed pools, he could swim in the Jordan River and he did that, and there are accounts of that.

Josepha says that even in winter the inhabitants could only bear the lightest clothing of linen. In fact, they wore linen in that city year-round. Another source says that Jericho had water for elaborate reflecting pools lined by fifty statuary niches. A niche is a decorative recess in an exterior wall. So, it's an inlet or inset, an alcove that displays artwork and statues, all of its decorative and all of its beautified and beautiful, and all of this reflecting pools that are lined by these fifty statuary niches. They are all in a sunken garden and at each end of the garden, several buildings. And at the east end, a grand stairway of one hundred and fifty feet long that rose to a prominent building, looking down upon the garden and upon the stream.

Obviously made an impression, this city, beautiful, comfortable, living at ease. So, no wonder Herod loved Jericho. He loved that city. In fact, that's where, where he chose to die is in the City of Jericho. And after his death, his son

Archelaus improved the city even further. According to Edersheim, he says that the new palace and its splendid gardens are the work of Archelaus. All around were waving groves of feathery palms, rising in stately beauty. Gardens of roses and especially sweet scented balsam plantations, the largest behind the royal gardens, of which the perfume is carried by the wind almost out to the sea. It's the Eden of Palestine, fairyland of the old world, that's Jericho.

And this is why Jericho at this time in our story, in Luke's account, Luke 18. This is why Jericho at this time is just bursting at the seams with people. Crowded with pilgrims, caravans of traders who've come into the city from east and west, north and south, hoping to cash in on all these people. Take their money and make it their money. Take would, take one person's money, make it their own.

So, this is also the perfect place, by the way, as we come into our story, Luke 18:35, perfect place for beggars to sit by the roadside begging. The volume of people passing by meant an increased opportunity for charity and the time of year, the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a time when, when Israel is to remember that they were slaves traveling from Egypt

into the land of Canaan. All this prosperity would, that they now enjoyed would incline their own hearts toward generosity.

So, if you're a blind man, if you're begging for your living, near Jericho is the perfect place to be and at Passover time is the perfect time to beg. These generous hearted pilgrims flush with cash. Maybe some of that cash can be sent over to you. I'm certain that these beggars made a lot of their living off of these pilgrims at this time of year.

So, here's our man, this blind man. He's about to meet Jesus. As Jesus and his disciples enter into this famous historic city and what we see here in this account as we see the man stop begging in order to start listening. In order to stop being concerned about his physical needs. Pay attention to what's happening around him, to listen in to the conversation.

Need to point out here, even if we don't spend a lot of time of it, that there are ah, discrepancies at this point among the synoptic Gospels. I'll just mention two of them now, briefly reconcile them and move on. First, we, we noticed that in Mark and Luke, both of them write, Matthew, Mark and Luke all talk about the blind man healed here near Jericho; all three of them do. It's very significant and it does, as I said, end Jesus' miraculous ministry, as they record it, but Mark and Luke

mention only one blind man and Matthew, he talks about two blind men. So, which is it? One or two?

This is very easily resolved when we understand Jesus did heal two blind men. When we see discrepancies or apparent discrepancies in the, the accounts and especially the synoptic accounts, what we want to do is harmonize those. So, we take the different accounts and kind of put all the pieces together and say, okay, what makes sense out of all this. And so, it's easy to understand that Jesus did heal two blind men, as Matthew says, but Mark and Luke, they simply feature the most vocal and prominent one among them. Whom, Mark names.

Same thing happens when Jesus heals the Gerasene demoniac. Matthew records two demoniacs. There were two there, but the most prominent one, the most vocal one, that's who Mark and Luke focus on. So, Mark and Luke are focusing on the most vocal and prominent one of these blind men, these blind beggars, and Mark actually gives him a name. The man's name is Bartimaeus, literally son of Timaeus. So, he apparently this Bartimaeus became a well-known disciple in the early church. Time we get to the end of this account. We're gonna, we're gonna understand why he became so well known.

Secondly, though, in another apparent discrepancy. According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus heals the man when he was leaving Jericho. According to Matthew 20:29, it says as "And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside," so you can hear the discrepancy there. Mark 10:46 says something similar. "They came to Jericho," he says, and then, "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."

In Luke's narrative, as we've read it, the miracle seems to have happened as Jesus drew nearer to Jericho. So which is it? Is it when he's going in? Is it when he's coming out? I can tell you how many trees have been spilled to make the paper upon which much ink has been spilled. Killing trees, making paper, spilling ink, all of it to harmonize these accounts. There are some commentators, conservative commentators, who say that Matthew and Mark are referring to old Jericho, which at this time was in ruins, probably a, a mound of this old destroyed city. Matthew and Mark referring to the old Jericho. Luke refers to the new Jericho, the Herodian Jericho.

And so, it's as Jesus and his disciples in the crowd are leaving old Jericho that they encounter these two blind men. And then Luke says as they're entering Jericho, so he's thinking about the new Jericho. If he's in the middle of the old and the new city makes sense. It seems to clear up the apparent contradiction. I'll just tell you that that seems a bit of a stretch to me. And that's because it was only the latter, the new Jericho, Herodian Jericho that was populated at this time and inhabited, the other one was in ruins. Probably wouldn't even seem to Matthew, Mark, or Luke that that was actually worth calling a city.

So, I think that though it's, though it's a way of reconciling these accounts, that's not where I go, but many do, many do, and it's a legitimate a viewpoint. Others say that Jesus healed one of the blind men on the way into Jericho. So, there's two blind men he heals the one on the way into Jericho and the other one on the way out of Jericho. Gospel writers have simply condensed the events, collapsed the timeline, and thereby caused confusion to the reader.

I don't like that one either, because I don't like saying that all three writers, all of them, have proven to be highly competent, capable of amazing clarity, and by the way, backed by

the clear truth giving, illuminating Holy Spirit, who guarantees the accuracy and the clarity and the perspicuity of the Gospel accounts. I don't like that viewpoint or that way of reconciling, but some hold to that. Still, others they follow John Calvin, who sees this as a two-part event that's condensed into one account.

Darrell Bock summarizes Calvin's view, saying "Bartimaeus cried out as Jesus entered into the city and then he was eventually healed with a second blind man upon Jesus' departure from the city." So, you can see Bartimaeus crying out, Jesus passing by, entering into the city, and then coming out and then healing Bartimaeus. So, all three writers condensed the story, just using different details. That's a creative way of reconciling. It's possible.

There are other commentators. These are liberal commentators who throw up their hands and say this matter is irreconcilable, it's a total contradiction. It's an unforgivable contradiction. We just have to live with the contradiction. And then they accuse conservatives of trying to harmonize accounts. They're just trying too hard. They have to narrow a view of divine inspiration. So, in their more liberal view, with a much looser view of inspiration and inspiration that allows for

errors and contradictions. They say this is unnecessary. They say it's no problem to admit a few errors in the Bible. Even some small contradictions. After all, the writers are what? Only human. Well, that's a bunch of rubbish. We know that.

Believing as we do the doctrine of inspiration that all Scripture is *theopneustos*, God breathed 2 Timothy 3:16. God does not breathe out errors and contradictions, not one. There are no errors. There are no contradictions. God does not make mistakes. He doesn't stutter; he doesn't contradict himself. He speaks clearly. Scripture is perspicuous, meaning it is completely clear. Anything that we see, we come across, it seems on the surface to be irresolvable, we need to stop for a moment and recognize that the fault is on the interpreter, not on the Scripture.

Just as Jesus was absolutely crystal clear when he spoke to his disciples, wasn't he the twelve? I mean, you and I understood this right? With the benefit of hindsight, with the benefit of a written cannon. We understood it. The disciples, they didn't understand it, Luke 18:34. The problem was in them. The problem was in their vision, their ability to understand, their ability to see the expectations that they took into hearing Jesus words clouded the truth from them. You could say

the same thing when we come across things and on the face of it seemed to be irresolvable.

We need to recognize that while we may not have a solution now, at this point, at this particular time there is a solution that will yet be revealed. So, with patience and with diligent exegetical work, and by God's grace, we'll find it, we'll get there, it'll be resolved and reconciled. And that's really the spirit of the comment of Leon Morris, one commentator who says, "The answer to this apparent problem is that there is a solution," he says. "For this Scripture too, is inspired," he reminds us. "However, we do not now have the solution to these problems." That's exactly the right spirit.

That's exactly how we need to handle things that come up in Scripture that we binders seem to be at odds with one another. And though there are commentators who have maybe settled for something that's a, a weaker resolution or some who say there is no resolution. I'd still like to take a crack at this. So here goes. Here's what I think may be going on here. Mark says they came into Jericho, and it seems that almost as soon as they entered into the city gates, they went out of Jericho again, according to Mark's account. That's how he words it. They went into Jericho and then they went right out of Jericho. And both

Matthew and Mark say they were followed by a great crowd. And this really gives us a bit of insight here.

Why would they enter into Jericho and then seem to leave so soon after arriving in Jericho? After all, they've been on the road for a long time. They're looking forward to rest and refreshment. Maybe a bath? Some good food. Well, this massive crowd of pilgrims that's been traveling along with Jesus, they entered that city with him and guess what, they're joined by a massive crowd within the city, inside the city that formed up very quickly from within the city, because everybody knew this Jesus of Nazareth.

They heard about him. They knew about his three-year long ministry, his miracles, his teaching. So, this instant crowd bustle, hey, did you hear? And everybody's swarming into the place by the gate. So why would Jer, Jericho residents know so much about Jesus and be so excited about him? Again, being such a short distance from Jerusalem there's constant communication between Jerusalem and Jericho, up and down the Jericho road.

So, they knew what had happened very recently in Bethany, just up the road before you even get to Jerusalem, you come to Bethany. They knew that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead.

That had created quite a stir. So, Jericho had heard of Jesus. They knew about him.

So, this traveling band of pilgrims, some of them ahead of Jesus and his company, they announced the news in this massive group of people, quickly gathering, swarming, overwhelming the gates of Jericho, so everyone there is eager to hear Jesus speak. Possibly see some mighty miracle performed by him, maybe even taking their own sick out there, their demon possessed out there to be healed. So, Jesus takes everyone outside the gates almost immediately so he can speak to them in a more open space.

So, was he coming into Jericho or was he leaving? Yes. Both are true. That none of the synoptic Gospel writers explained these kinds of details. That's not surprising at all. There's no need to repeat what's already readily apparent, that Jesus is popular, that he's extremely popular in Israel.

He's very well-known at this point in his life and ministry he is publicly celebrated by all the people. He's paraded around as a hero. He's seen as standing up to the leadership and the authority. And is he the Messiah? Maybe. Maybe this is the time when the Kingdom of God is going to come and he's going to overthrow the Romans. And, so all this is happening, all this is in the air, all this excitement, it follows him all the way up

the road from Jericho to Jerusalem as he enters into the city, and people cry out, "Hosanna in the highest."

So extra details. More explanation about that that we already know that's unnecessary for all three synoptic writers. Luke in verse 35, Luke simply summarizes the situation, just sums it up, and the more literal reading, it says they're in verse 35 "as he drew near to Jericho." That's not a bad translation, but the more literal rendering would be, now it happened.

That's not actually left untranslated in the ESV text, but now it happened as he was near Jericho or as he was close to Jericho. That's a legitimate translation. The grammar can simply indicate here close proximity to Jericho. Doesn't need to be pressed into, into specifying an exact itinerary and where he exactly was. It could be more general at this point. So, following this account you can see in Luke 19:1, it says literally there that he entered into Jericho. Literally it says there and "entering Jericho he was passing through."

So, it seems that he came to Jericho. There's this hustle and bustle, big crowd gathered. He takes them out. He teaches, he heals Bartimaeus and his friend there, comes back into the city. And that's when he is what, looking for Zacchaeus. Says in

verse 5 in chapter 19, he's compelled to find Zacchaeus. He is under divine necessity to find Zacchaeus. Why? Because "I must stay in your house," he tells Zacchaeus. So, Jesus had to return to the city. He had to reenter into Jericho in order to seek out Zacchaeus, and he's not gonna continue on to Jerusalem until he finds Zacchaeus.

Kind of worth meditating on, isn't it? That even as Jesus faces the most critical point in his life and ministry. As he faces the cross. As he anticipates the pain and the humiliation of crucifixion by the Romans within one week. Even now, he still has time to go out looking for Zacchaeus. Time to go seek this man out, those whom Jesus seeks, we know that every lost sheep, he always finds him. So, Jesus, he's been on the move. Now he's stopped to seek and save a couple of his lost sheep. What's the telltale characteristic of Jesus sheep?

John 10:27 says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. That's gonna happen here as well. With a blind beggar named Bartimaeus and his friend. He's sitting there along the side of the road, begging, and all of a sudden something's different about this crowd. Their conversation is different. What they're talking about it. Who is this that

they're talking about? What's going on? He stops begging. He starts listening.

That brings us into a second point, verse 35, number two, from hearing to believing. So, from begging to listening number one and number two from hearing to believing. We're going to see this from the blind man's perspective, it says as he drew near to Jericho. A blind man is sitting by the roadside, and we know from reading on that this man is soon to be revealed as a disciple of Jesus Christ. He has the infant-like qualities of every true kingdom citizen.

First of all, just by the fact that he is blind, he is deprived of the most important of the five senses. And if you had to give up one of your senses? Which one would it be? If someone took away your sense of taste, would you be okay? Your smell would it be, what about your sight? That's the last one that we're gonna want to give up, right? He's without it. He's got no advantage of physical sight. And so, there's not much that this man can do, which is why he's sitting by the roadside begging.

Notice he's no lazy beggar. He's not like modern day vagrants who roam the streets of our modern cities who are saturated with drugs or alcohol. This man isn't out here because

he loves his freedom and loves the great outdoors and doesn't want responsibility or being encumbered by a job. This man is out here doing what he can do. All that he can do. Picture of him sitting shows the level of his inability. He's been reduced to such a pitiable condition.

He's a man after all. He's got a sense of worth and dignity that's tied to his ability to provide and protect for others. Certainly, to provide for himself, by work, and here he is immobile. Here he is sitting. Why? Because he's unable to move safely. He's unable to move and take steps confidently. Why? Because you can't see anything. Try walking through the streets of Greeley with your eyes closed with a blindfold around you. Terrible feeling of vulnerability.

But he's not doing nothing. He's doing what he can do in that society. He's begging. Puts himself in the most advantageous location that he can, near to the pilgrims who are entering into Jericho passing by. He puts himself there at a time when they're most inclined toward generosity, near the Passover, and he hopes for charity.

By the roadside he appears to be alone. We know that there are other beggars with him, as Matthew says at least one other. But he's sitting away from the city. He's out by the roadside.

This man has no home to live in, he's got no family to care for him, and in the state of affairs, he's judged by everyone as being under a divine curse. That's why he's blind. John chapter 9, right? It's either he who sinned or his parents who sinned, but somebody sinned and that's what explains his blindness. He's getting what he deserves. Being under a divine curse, he's counted to be unclean. He's a social outcast. He's rejected by God and so rejected by man, and deservedly so. Merciless, pitiless condition.

Verse 35, "as Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man is sitting by the roadside begging. And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant, and they told him Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." Now once he hears that name, Jesus of Nazareth. We're about to learn something else about this blind beggar. We're going to find out what really defines him, and it's not his lack of physical sight. It's not his pitiable condition. It's not his poverty. It's not his apparent cursedness.

What really defines him is a possession of spiritual sight. Amazing spiritual sight and the evidence is in verse 38. After hearing a crowd go by, he's inquired what this meant. They told him Jesus of Nazareth is passing by and he cries out. Jesus son of David, have mercy on me, not Jesus of Nazareth, "Jesus, son

of David." That is a title. It's a messianic title, well recognized, son of David.

We've known that ever since the beginning of Luke's Gospel and Gabriel's announcement to Mary. Luke 1:32 to 33, "He will be great. He'll be called son of the Most High. The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

That's tied to 2 Samuel 7, the Davidic Covenant, a promise made to David that one of his own descendants, his offspring, will sit on his throne. That's him. This is a messianic title going all the way back to 2 Samuel 7, and everybody knows it all through Israel's history. This is very interesting. The people in this crowd, all of whom walking by they take their physical sight for granted. They're hardly even noticing their next step because they're so used to travelling on foot with great confidence.

They take their physical sight for granted. They've been traveling with Jesus; they've been walking the road with him all the way through Perea into Jericho. They're going to go up to Jerusalem with him as well, and they tell this poor blind man nothing more than this, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." Yeah,

that's certainly true. That's who he is. It's accurate to distinguish this Jesus from a whole lot of other men in Israel named Jesus. He's the Jesus who comes from the town, the little town, the insignificant little place called Nazareth. That Jesus is who we're talking about.

But seriously, come on. Is that his most distinguishing characteristic? That he comes from Nazareth. Those seeing, people of this crowd. They don't really see who he is, do they? They have no spiritual perception, no sight, no ability to see, understand, discern, get to the bottom of things, get to the nub of the issue.

This man hears one name, and he immediately makes the connection. Simply hearing his name. Finding out what all this commotion is about, it's due to someone passing by called Jesus of Nazareth. He immediately knows more about this Jesus than the crowd does. Way more. This Jesus is none other than the Messiah. He's the son of David. How does he know that? Because he's so smart. Because he's been freed up from daily work and labor that he might just think and ponder like a monk sitting by the side of the road.

When Peter identified Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ of God, what did Jesus say to Peter? Matthew 16:17, "Blessed are

you, Simon Bar-Jonah!" Blessed are you, Peter, because you are so smart. Sitting on that fishing boat all day, you've used your time well, mentally thinking. No, he says, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." How does Peter know who Jesus really is? How do any of the disciples know who Jesus really is? How does blind Bartimaeus know who Jesus really is? Because God granted it. Gave him the gift of spiritual sight, spiritual perception, by regeneration, by the spirit.

It's a twist of irony, isn't it, in the story. The people who are able to see. They're unable to discern the true identity of Jesus. They've been walking with him, they've been watching him, been hearing him teach amazing things. They talked with him, had conversations. This blind beggar who lacks the ability of physical sight. Who hasn't been walking with Jesus? Who hasn't been interacting with him, talking back and forth with him?

But he has been using his ears well, hasn't he? He's been listening carefully to the stories that have passed by the road for the last three years. He's been listening to the conversation of the travelers. No doubt connecting them to passages of Scripture that he's grown up with since a young

child. He's been hearing, really hearing. He's been thinking, he's been processing.

And by the grace of God, we don't know when the miracle of regeneration happened in his life, but he's put all of his trusts and all of his hope in this one person, Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David. So, in verse 39, when those who are in front or at the kind of the front of the procession, when they rebuked him, telling him to be silent, he's, he's not at all discouraged, he's not at all put off. Instead, Luke says he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me."

Luke interestingly shows a, a progression as he describes this, a man, shows a man here who will not be dissuaded. He won't be shut up. Says in verse 36 Luke tells us he inquired about what was going on around him. This isn't the usual din of the passing crowd. It's not the normal conversation flowing here. Something's different. Conversation is interesting here. That is a, a palpable excitement in the air. I know something special is happening.

There's one level goes up to another level in verse 38 as he discovers that Jesus of Nazareth is a reason for this difference, and he cries out. That's the verb *boao. Boao*, it's to call out loudly, to raise the voice, to shout. He's

projecting and he's not shouting out indiscriminately. He's directing his appeal. He's targeting his appeal to one person, one person only, Jesus, son of David. He doesn't say, hey, everybody bring Son of David to me. He says Jesus, Son of David. He's got one thing to say and one person to say at to, this is prayer. He's got one simple request, mercy me, have mercy on me.

He's fixated in his mind's eye, though he cannot see physically, but spiritually he can see. And he's fixated on this person. Then when the crowd tries to silence him in verse 39, Luke changes the verb from *boao* to *krazo*, *krazo*, to cry out. It could be translated even to scream or to shriek. It's a verb that's used in other context to describe the cries of animals or even demon possessed people. It's obviously not that kind of cry because this cry is not the inarticulate sounds of animals. It's not the, the anguished sounds of demon possessed people.

This man is articulate and he's intelligent, even if the zeal and passion in his voice lifts to a level ten. Blind man has heard about this Jesus. By God's grace, he's come to believe in him. Again, we don't know when regeneration happened, but it certainly happened. He's got eyes to see. He's got ears to hear. He's got a heart that perceives and understands. He is not like the people condemned in the book of Isaiah we read earlier from

John chapter 12. This finally is his chance to see him. This is his chance to see him.

So no, he's not gonna shut up. He is not gonna be put off no matter what they say, no matter how forcibly they try to censure him and shut him up and shoo him away, he will not be silenced. I wonder sometimes if our faith and our expression of faith is as powerful as this man. Or, as it says in John chapter 12, do we love the glory that comes from man rather than glory that comes from God?

Do we quiet our voices down when we pray in public over our meal? When we have spiritual conversations, are we ashamed of the name of the Son of Man? What about among family members who, ah they just don't get it. I've talked to them, to them about the gospel a lot of times and they just don't really want to listen anymore. So, I'm gonna be quiet.

We could take a page or two out of this guy's playbook eh, lift our voices a little bit. Jesus says on his entrance into Jerusalem that if these don't praise, the very rocks will cry out. Is our love and our understanding and our perception of who Jesus is this passionate, this zealous? Beloved, we can all say no, it's not. That there are times when we have cowered when

we've cow towed to the world. We've cared too much what they think.

Why would we do that? We're the ones who see. They're blind, we see. Let's let them know what they're stepping into. It's by the mysterious perfect work of divine providence. Jesus is here and he's about to see, to meet, one of the men that he came to seek and save. We can already see the grace of God has visited this man, and though he lacks the benefit of physical sight that we all take for granted, God has nevertheless given him spiritual sight.

Because clearly, he has ears to hear, eyes to see, a heart to believe, a heart to understand. The blind man hears the news about Jesus of Nazareth, comes to the quick conclusion, this is none other than the son of David, the Messiah. Now the miracle of regeneration will reach its end at a third point. We go from begging to listening and from hearing to believing.

And now, third point, from believing to seeing. From believing to seeing. Jesus singles out above the clamor and the crowd noise, he singles out this solitary voice. He hears this desperate plea. Cuts through the noise, cuts through the, the clamor and the chatter. It's the unmistakable sound of the

bleating of one of his sheep, "crying out to him, son of David, have mercy on me."

I love this because the man's cry arrests the attention of our Lord. Stops him in his tracks. Do you believe that your prayers do that to your Lord? That when you pray, it arrests his attention as he sits at the right hand of the father in heaven and intercedes for you. You should, let this encourage you that your prayers are effectual in Christ. Your prayers are effectual in the Spirit. This man's cry arrests the attention of the Lord, stops him here dead in his tracks. It draws out of him, evokes his kindness, it brings to bear his heart of compassion.

On this man, "Jesus stopped," verse 40, "commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?'" I love this. Notice the reversal here. Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. There's a passive thing going on there. He's commands who to be brought to him. The crowd, right? You get this fickle, spiritually dull crowd, those who would silence one of Christ's sheep, though they've been walking with Christ the whole time. They would silence one of Christ's sheep, and Jesus turns them around in their tracks.

He repurposes them. He puts them to some good use. Makes them servants of divine salvation to bring this poor blind sheep near to him. And Jesus wants everyone to see the Lord treats this man better than they did. As if he's saying to them, hey, all of you who are trying to silence and shut him up, all of you who count this life as worthless. All of you who've judged this man's great need as unimportant to you. All of you who would have his voice silenced and his wishes left unheard, unuttered.

Hey, go make something useful of yourselves. Bring this man to me. Bring my sheep to me. This crowd serves the interests of the Lord. He makes them servants not only of himself, but also of this precious sheep. This sheep is blind. He can't run to Jesus with full confidence. So, they say, conduct him to me, bring him to me. The crowd physically seeing but spiritually blind. They serve some purpose, don't they? Conducting the sheep to the shepherd.

Which one would you rather be? Blind Bartimaeus or seeing crowd? Jesus goes on to dignify the man even further, and he does so in public. He does this in plain view of everyone else. He asked him to express his will. Nobody cared about a blind beggar and what he thought. Nobody cared about his wishes, his desires. Nobody cared about anything in that guy's head.

Jesus wants everyone to see this is no worthless beggar. He's a man. He is a human being. He's a man who bears God's image. More than that, he's a child of God. He's one whose prayers are heard, he's one whose prayers are gladly received, and they are immediately granted. So, "when he came near, Jesus asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' And he said, 'Lord', knows who he's talking to, does't he, Kurios, 'Lord, let me recover my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.'"

Matthew tells us that Bartimaeus along with his friend, they asked. They asked Jesus, "Lord let our eyes be opened." Mark and Luke single out Bartimaeus, who says, "Lord let me recover my sight," and perhaps implies a difference between the two, that maybe his friend had been blind ever since birth and maybe Bartimaeus he'd once been able to see, but lost his sight due to injury due to disease, because that's the word that's used there anablepto or anabelpo, is to see again. Sometimes in some context even in, we can see in the next context.

As Jesus passes by the sycamore tree where Zacchaeus is it, says anabelpo, Jesus looked up. That's, could be translated that way, but it also could be translated to receive sight again. Whatever the sad circumstances that led to his loss of sight,

whether he was born blind or whether he had, had loss of sight due to injury, due to disease, we don't know. All is forgotten at this point, isn't it? As Jesus uttered those words, "recover your sight." Bright light floods in. This miracle happens instantaneously.

Just hard for us to imagine this, isn't it? Impossible? Those of us who've always enjoyed the privilege of physical sight to know what it's like to gain that again after having lost it, having no hope of ever seeing again. Verse 42, Jesus says two things there, not just one. First, "recover your sight," that pertains to the man's physical condition, the recovery of physical sight.

And then secondly, "your faith has made you well." And that pertains to his spiritual condition. The ESV translation "has made you well." It makes it sound like Jesus is attributing the recovery of a sight to the man's faith, as if he says recover your sight. Your faith has made you well, your faith has healed you. So, it sounds like he's attributing the recovery of the man's sight to the man's faith, as if he is the reason for the physical healing. It's not so.

That's not what is happening here. Jesus heals those who have faith in those who don't have faith. The presence or the

absence of faith is not the condition by which Jesus heals. He's healed all kinds of people, some people who will use their newfound sight to look at Jesus and tell the leaders crucify him. So, he heals those who have faith and those who don't have faith.

This comment, "Your faith has made you well." This is about salvation, 'cause the verb there is not *iaomai*. It's not about healing. It's the verb *sozo*. Sozo, it can be translated to mean physical deliverance, especially from some great danger, some threat of death, immediate imminent threat of death. But here, and almost exclusively, Luke is using the same verb, *sozo*, to refer to spiritual salvation.

We can see this going back in Luke's Gospel, the notoriously sinful woman, Luke 7:50. Jesus said to her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Formerly demon-possessed man, Luke 8:36, he's not only delivered from a demon, but also saved, *sozo*. Hemorrhaging woman in Luke 8:48, her flow of blood stopped, yes, but Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has," *sozo*, "saved you; go in peace." The Samaritan that Jesus healed of his leprosy, along with nine others. Remember, the Samaritan is the one who returned to give thanks, and he heard Jesus say

to him in Luke 17:19, "Rise. Go your way; your faith has," *sozo*, "saved you."

Looking ahead into the next account, Jesus summarizes his interest in Zacchaeus, and at the end of that account, Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save," same verb, *sozo*, save, "the lost." All those are uses of the verb *sozo*. We can find many more. It's the same way here. Your faith has saved you. Clearly, the powers from God, it's been granted and applied through Christ. But the vehicle or the channel through which God's power is applied to this man, the gift of physical sight and the gift of spiritual salvation, the conduit is by faith. Or as we say, Ephesians 2:8 and 9, "It's by grace through faith and this by grace through faith, this isn't out of ourselves. It's the gift of God." Same thing here.

We see verse 43, the man's theology is not confused. He knows immediately who's responsible. "Immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God." He follows Christ, glorifies God. He's going to pursue Jesus Christ, who he can now see. He's going to give glory and praise to God. He understands the connection. He sees not just physically what's in front of him, but he sees spiritually, perceives the vertical connection.

Three times here this verb for recovering sight. First in verse 40, 41, "Lord, let me recover my sight." Then verse 42, "recover your sight" again, verse 43 "immediately he recovered his sight." Progression goes from request, to command, to fulfillment, and that fulfillment is instant, instantaneous, immediate.

Just, quick footnote of we would defy any so-called faith healer to mimic any kind of a miracle like this, we don't see them legitimately opening the eyes of the blind, do we? This is divine power here. It's effortlessly applied, at a word, at the Lord's command. We need to see something further here. That the real power that was on display that day. The greater miracle that was performed is what happened after this man received his sight. This is the evidence, isn't it?

What does Luke tell us in verse 43? Immediately he recovered his sight and he hurried into Jericho to get a warm bath, a cool drink and a good steak? No, right, doesn't do that. Immediately he recovered his sight, hurried off to start a business, make some money so he'd never have to depend on anyone's charity ever again? Not that either. Immediately he recovered his sight he went out, he found a nice girl named Ethel, and he married her and started a family? No.

Interests of his physical body, his pleasure, his comfort, his ease, they're not there. Interest in his future provision, his money, his wealth that's not there. Interest even in family relations, that's not there. None of that. "Immediately he recovered his sight, and he followed him, glorifying God." In Mark's account, when he was called to come to Jesus, it says he jumped up, threw off his cloak, probably the only thing he had in life to call his own. The thing that kept him warm on a cool night, threw it off. Don't need that. Not even thinking about that.

Is there a more beautiful first sight to see when you recover your sight, then to see Jesus himself standing in front of you. And he keeps on using the gift that he has received, of physical sight that Jesus gave him to do nothing more, nothing less than to fix his eyes on Jesus and to follow him forever in discipleship. Such a privilege. One of the most precious of his physical senses. Now that he's received it again, this man puts it into good use, in service to Jesus Christ, to follow him in lifelong discipleship. And that's because that's a precious physical sense, right?

But he'd used the greatest of his physical senses, biblically speaking. He used the greatest of his physical

senses, his hearing. To listen carefully to the truth. To listen out for the news about Jesus. To hear and believe and understand and trust and believe in the gospel. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word about Christ, right? Doesn't say faith comes by seeing the Jesus film. Doesn’t say faith comes by seeing The Chosen. I hope none of you are watching that. Faith comes by watching movies. Crucifixion of Christ or The Passion of the Christ or whatever it is. Faith comes by hearing, hearing.

Most precious of our physical senses to us is our sight. The most spiritually advantageous to us, the greatest of our physical senses, is our ability to hear and listen, that we might understand and believe. Now he uses his tongue for the praise and the glory of God. Why? Because his heart is bursting with gratitude. He can't contain it. He's got the gift now of perfect, complete contentment in Christ. He has Christ. He's able to follow Christ, walk confidently with steps because he won't trip over himself. He could follow him, follow along after him. He didn't care if he's going to the cross, he's there. He knows Christ and he has all he wants.

One final point. This is a very brief point, very short. We see the man went from begging to listening, from hearing, to believing, from believing to seeing, and now verse 43 from

seeing to praising, from seeing to praising. "Immediately he recovered his sight, followed him glorifying God." And notice, and all the people when they saw it, "gave praise to God."

This blind man until Jesus got a hold of him, was counted as a nothing, as a worthless thing, as a unclean outcast. And now, within a few short verses, he's at the head of a chorus of praise. He's a worship leader, rightly so. Why is he leading worship? Because he knows the one whom he believes. He knows the power of the one to whom he offers praise. He has been saved by grace. The crowd, though the crowd is fickle, isn't it? They knew Jesus only as Jesus of Nazareth and that just his location.

They tried to rebuke and silence one of Jesus precious sheep, by countering their attempt to silence the man, Jesus is tacitly rebuking these people. He's putting them in their place. He puts them into useful service in bringing this man near and now, as they see the miracle, now they're forced to give praise to God. I think they're sincere at this point. They're seeing something wonderful that they've never seen before. They are awestruck. They are speechless. Their hearts are overwhelmed. They can't believe what they're seeing.

All that's true, but don't be fooled, beloved. This temporary praise, though it is sincere, it's also short lived.

Verbal profession, even offering praise to God. Singing songs of Hosanna, giving public adulation and worship to Jesus. These are no sure signs of true salvation. There's a word here, the first of the people, *ho laos*. It's typical word for people, but it's going to be repeated in the coming events.

As the people, the Pharisees and the scribes and the priests and all that, they're, they're afraid of, *ho laos*. They're afraid of the people, because they think that Jesus is something special. So, they don't want to kill Jesus or go and arrest him in public, lest the people riot against them. They're afraid of the people. But the people are gonna turn. Many of the people are gonna turn on Jesus. Verbal profession, Church attendance, singing songs together, all those things are no sure signs of salvation. Could be signs of salvation, but there are no sure signs.

You know it's a, a sure sign of salvation. A life of lasting change in obedience to Jesus Christ. That's what matters, that's what counts. We're gonna see the people of the crowd become a fixture from here on in Luke's Gospel as they're attracted to Jesus as they rejoice in him for a time. Ultimately, though, many of them, many will fall short of genuine salvation.

My friend, what about you? What are you living for? Whom do you follow? Are you living according to the dictates of other people? You live in according to their expectations. Do you care what other people think about you, say about you? Are you living for comfort, ease, and prosperity? Are you a health, wealth, prosperity person? An American, after life, liberty, and the pursuit of your happiness. Or do you care nothing more, but for the glory of God with the exaltation of Jesus Christ and that he might be firmly fixed in your vision forever.

Beloved if that's you. Give praise to God because he's been so kind to you in Christ. If that's not you and you've got questions about that, please come talk to me or one of us after the service. We're gonna have people over here at the, over here at these doors. My left, your right. Take you into the prayer room and pray about these things with you. Love to do that, if you don't know for sure that Jesus is your one and only love. Make that certain today, join me in a word of prayer.

Our Father, we give thanks to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, we give thanks to you for Christ. We give thanks to you that you have blessed us with not just mere physical sight, which is precious to us, but spiritual perception. Faith comes by hearing. You've allowed us to hear this gospel and hear the

truth and understand it and perceive and discern that Jesus is our salvation. We thank you so much for this gift of sight, hearing, of understanding. We thank you for the Holy Spirit, who is our indwelling truth teacher, the one who illuminates. Gives understanding. We pray that all the more as the days drawn near to the return of Jesus Christ. That you would allow us to be faithful and vocal, bold, and proclaiming. Giving glory to you in the name of Christ our Savior.