Mark Lesson 36 (2023)

**“YOUR FAITH HAS HEALED YOU!”**

Mark 10:46-52

Key Verse: 10:52

“‘Go,’ said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you.’ Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

 Jesus’ healing of the blind man in today’s passage is the last healing miracle recorded in Mark’s account. This event was recorded in all synoptic gospels, right after the incident in which James and John requested their top seats in Jesus’ kingdom, which made the other disciples indignant. (Mt. 20:29-34, Lk. 18:35-43). Probably, it was included to illustrate how desperately Jesus’ disciples needed to be healed from their spiritual blindness. The blind man’s humble attitude and absolute confidence in Jesus were remarkable. Jesus blessed the man’s faith by saying, “Go, your faith has healed you!” This morning, let us think in what sense the faith of the blind man was an excellent example for all of us.

 Look at verse 46. “Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging.” Jericho was a satellite city of Jerusalem, five miles west of the Jordan River, six miles north of the Dead Sea, and eighteen miles east of Jerusalem. (Map#1) Of course, the Jericho of Jesus’ time differed from the ancient Jericho, which had been demolished in history. (Jos. 5:13-6:27) The New Jericho was built not far from the Old Jericho by Herod the Great. The city was beautiful, surrounded by rose gardens and many fragrant trees and bushes. Herod the Great and his successors had their summer palaces, and many wealthy people from Jerusalem had homes there. (Pic#1, 2)

According to Luke’s account, it was also in Jericho that Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see who Jesus was, and Jesus invited himself to stay at Zacchaeus’ house (pic#3). When Zacchaeus showed his repentance, Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Lk. 19:9-10)

 Mark, however, skipped the story of Zacchaeus and introduced a blind man who was begging on the roadside. The name of the blind man was Bartimaeus, which means “the son of Timaeus.” *“Timaeus”* is a Greek name meaning *“honor.”* But Bartimaeus’ life wasn’t so honorable. We have little information about him except that he was blind and a beggar. Most people around us can see quite well with their physical eyes. But according to 2015 statistics, 35 million people worldwide are blind, and 253 million people are visually impaired.

Most of us can see well, so it’s hard to imagine what people must go through. First, blind people cannot access visual information like colors, shapes, or facial expressions. They can’t read printed materials. Moving around can be very difficult. They also have challenges in social situations. The social stigma always followed them. Blindness or any degree of visual impairment can profoundly impact a person’s emotional well-being, such as frustration, isolation, or depression, even though they might be able to develop some level of resilience for their survival. What was worse was that blindness was a sign of God’s curse in ancient society. Life wasn’t easy for this man. His life would be in constant danger. The blind Bartimaeus might be a picture of people lost in spiritual darkness.

 Look at verses 47 and 48. “When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me.’” Bartimaeus had probably heard much about Jesus and his miraculous healing of many sick people. He might have also known that the Scripture had predicted that the Messiah would give sight to the blinded eyes. (Isa. 35:5) That day, when he heard Jesus was passing by, his heart began to pound, and a light of hope sparkled in his mind. He immediately cried out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” However, his humble and desperate cry for Jesus’ mercy caused an uproar and disturbed the crowd of people who rebuked him and told him to be quiet. They didn’t have empathy for this poor blind man. Yet, Bartimaeus didn’t succumb to the pressure of the crowd. He shouted even louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Amazingly, this man didn’t allow people to distract or discourage him. He was persistent in seeking Jesus’ mercy. “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

 Two things spoken by Bartimaeus get our attention. ***First,*** the crowd simply described Jesus as *“Jesus of Nazareth.”* But we notice that Bartimaeus didn’t call Jesus “Jesus of Nazareth.” Instead, he called him “Jesus, Son of David.” According to Mark’s account, Bartimaeus was the first to call Jesus “Son of David”- one of the messianic titles. The fact that Bartimaeus called Jesus the “Son of David” reveals that he believed Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of David, whom the Scripture predicted. (2 Sam. 7:12) In the past, Jesus didn’t allow anyone to openly call him “Son of God” or “Messiah.” Jesus himself avoided calling himself as “Son of David.” He usually called himself the “Son of Man.” It was a messianic secret. However, this time, Jesus allowed Bartimaeus to call him the “Son of David.” It’s probably because Jesus knew his time of death as the Messiah in Jerusalem came close.

 What we also notice is that Bartimaeus cried out for mercy. He didn’t demand his rights. If Bartimaeus, who had suffered so much due to his blindness, could’ve asked Jesus, *“Jesus, Son of David. Please, open my eyes. I have been suffering so much. By the way, why did you make me blind? You’ve got to help me.”* No, he humbly asked for the mercy of God. He reminds us of a man with leprosy who came to Jesus and begged him on his knees, saying, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” (1:40) Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man and said, “I am willing. Be clean!” (1:41)

Bartimaeus, a blind beggar who humbly asked for Jesus’ mercy, was different from Jesus’ disciples, especially James and John, who asked Jesus, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask. Let one of us sit at your right and the other on your left in your glory.” (10:35-37) Their demands for special favor and high position revealed their pride and self-righteousness as if they were entitled to their demands as God’s chosen disciples. Their spiritual ignorance surprised and disappointed Jesus. They were considered spiritually blind.

We are often like disciples. We sometimes demand God to give us whatever we ask. We even complain that we haven’t received enough of God’s blessings as if we are entitled to them. It’s easy for us to compare ourselves with others, thinking, *“How come they get what they want while I don’t get what I deserve.”* Instead of giving thanks to God and humbly trusting in him, we become anxious and even harden our hearts. Can we say to God, *“I deserve this and that because I have been so good”?* If we think or tell this way, we must realize that we are spiritually blind and ignorant and have a severe spiritual problem.

Yes, of course, we have rights as God’s children. But we must remember that we become God’s children not because of what we have done but because of God’s mercy (Jn. 1:12). God is not obligated to bless us. He does not owe us anything. We are included in God's family only because of God’s mercy and grace. Even though Bartimaeus was physically blind, spiritually speaking, he was far better than Jesus’ disciples because he knew that he needed God’s mercy and didn’t insist on his rights. This also reminds us of what King David cried out in Psalm 51:1, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.” God, our Father, abounds in his mercy.

 Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our sins. He was condemned in our place so that we may not be condemned. He was pierced, shedding his blood, so that we may be forgiven and cleansed from our sins. He was wounded so that we may be healed. We must know that even though we are the rights as God’s children, we are still unworthy of God’s blessings.

 Yet, to have a humble attitude is not easy and automatic because we, in our sinful nature, tend to become self-righteous and proud. Especially we live in a world where people demand their rights – women’s rights, civil rights, children’s rights, teacher’s rights, nurses’ rights, etc. It’s easy for people to demand their rights while neglecting their responsibility, and acknowledging our unworthiness before God is vital because it is the beginning of our faith and is essential for our spiritual growth in Christ Jesus. That’s why Apostle Paul kept saying to the early Christians in 1 Timothy 1:15-16, “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.”

 Look at verses 49-51. “Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him,’ So they called to the blind man, ‘Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.’ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ Jesus asked him. The blind man said, ‘Rabbi, I want to see.’” Hearing the humble cry of Bartimaeus, Jesus stopped. He stopped moving to pay attention to this man. It shows that God’s ear is in tune with the cry of one who is hurting. He hears our groans even when we cannot articulate them in words.

Jesus is the omniscient God who knows all things. So, he could have known what the blind Bartimaeus wanted and restored his sight. Yet, Jesus asked him to specify what he wanted by asking, “What do you want me to do for you?” which was the same question he asked his disciples in the previous passage. (10:36) Unfortunately, his disciples didn’t ask to open their spiritual eyes. Instead, they asked Jesus to give them worldly success, a powerful position, and authority over others.

 And surprisingly enough, unlike the disciples, Bartimaeus’ answer was, “Rabbi, I want to see.” He didn’t demand human success, wealth, or power. He could’ve asked Jesus, *“Lord, would you compensate me with a big house so I can live comfortably for the rest of my life?”*  No, he didn’t. He simply wanted to see through his own eyes. The restoration of his sight. That’s all he wanted. Even though his request didn’t sound ambitious enough to make him great, I am sure Jesus liked his answer. **“Rabbi, I want to see!”** He meant, *“Rabbi, I want my life to be wholesome!”*

 Read verse 52. “‘Go,’ said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you.’ Immediately he received sight and followed Jesus along the road.” Interestingly, Jesus didn’t even touch the man’s eyes, unlike how he healed another blind man at Bethsaida. (8:22-36) Instead, Jesus blessed the man’s faith, saying, “Go, your faith has healed you.” It was to highlight the importance of our faith in him. It means that the source of healing is Jesus himself, but the means of healing is our faith.

Of course, restoring his physical sight would be fantastic enough as of now. Bartimaeus could see his parents and loved ones face to face for the first time, and his life would be restored to normalcy. And that’s not all. And his faith in Jesus healed not only his physical but also his spiritual sight. It means that from now on, Bartimaeus will be able to see more than just the physical world. He can be transformed from a helpless blind man to a restored man who sets out on the road of discipleship. From now, he could see and experience God’s everlasting kingdom in his daily walk through his faith in Christ Jesus.

In many cases in the gospel, physical healing can happen to someone even when they don’t have personal faith in Jesus. But spiritual healing and internal transformation can occur in our lives only through our faith. We must exercise our faith in Jesus Christ for his recovery and true happiness.

Our life in this world is full of challenges and troubles. Looking at our ever-changing situation, we cannot avoid anxiety and fear. We need faith in Jesus more than anything and in all circumstances. Indeed, Jesus, the Son of David, is the promised Messiah who was to come. He offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice for the sin of the world and rose from the dead so that whoever put their trust in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Christ Jesus is full of compassion. He never rejects anyone who comes to him, asking for his mercy, like the blind Bartimaeus. So many people live in darkness because of their spiritual blindness. May we not remain in our pride, self-pity, or sense of entitlement but humbly come to Jesus and ask his mercy so that Jesus would continue to bless our faith and we may be transformed into a new creation and experience a new world of God’s kingdom in our lives now and forever.

Before closing today’s sermon, I want us to read Hebrew 11:1, which states, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see.” Some may say, *“I don’t have enough faith.”* But don’t worry; even if your faith in Jesus is as tiny as a mustard seed, Jesus will move the immovable mountain through your faith. Our faith in Christ Jesus is the firm foundation of our lives. No matter how weak and vulnerable we may be and how dangerous our circumstances may be, we should put our trust in Jesus. Those who trust in the Lord will never be put to shame and disappointment. So, never give up exercising your faith because faith is the victory. **“‘Go,’ said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you.’”** **Faith is the Answer.**