

October 24, 2021
Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Mark 10:46-52

JESUS, SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Mark, the 10th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

Every Sunday morning we sing:

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us. (LSB 186)

In the Service of the Sacrament, right before the Words of Institution, we sing:

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. (LSB 198)

On Ash Wednesday and at the bedside of the dying we pray the Litany, saying:

O Lord, have mercy.

O Christ, have mercy.

O Lord, have mercy. (LSB 288)

Over and over again: ***“Lord have mercy!”*** Perhaps, to you, it seems so repetitive. Why do we *so often* cry out to the Lord for mercy? ***First***, it is how the Bible teaches us to call upon the Lord. After the prophet Nathan rebuked King David for committing adultery with Bathsheba, (cf: 2 Samuel 12:7) David prayed to the Lord:

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.” (Psalm 51:1)

“Have mercy on me, O Lord...” was the cry of the Canaanite woman whose daughter was possessed by a demon. (cf: Matthew 15:22) ***“Lord Have mercy...”*** was the cry of the man whose demon possessed son suffered from seizures and would fall into the fire and water. (cf: Matthew 17:14–15) ***“Jesus, Master, Have mercy...”*** was the cry of the ten lepers who lifted up their voices to Him as He entered a village. (cf: Luke 17:11–13)

Second, we cry out to the Lord to ***have mercy upon us*** because a true disciple of Jesus recognizes that he or she is nothing more than a beggar who, by the mercy of Christ Jesus, denies himself, takes up his own cross, and follows Jesus on His way of suffering, trusting in Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation. (cf: Mark 8:34, 10:52)

In our Gospel text this morning Jesus is drawing near to Jerusalem where He will be brutally crucified on Calvary's cross. The road to Jerusalem goes through the city of Jericho. After Jericho, He will be making His Triumphal entry into the Holy City on Palm Sunday. But on this day, having witnessed Jesus' miracles and heard His teaching, a great crowd of people were following Him.

As Jesus, His disciples, and the crowd are leaving the city, a blind beggar, Bartimaeus, was sitting by the roadside. It was an excellent place for a beggar to beg, because of all the people traveling to and from Jerusalem. While scripture records few details about Bartimaeus, in the culture of that day a blind man lived a hopeless life and was better off dead. There were no laws to protect people with disabilities. They were no programs to educate or teach them a trade. They were unable to work. They were unable to steal. Their whole life was spent begging for coins or scraps of food to sustain their life. Such was the life of Bartimaeus: hopelessly sitting at the roadside, begging for those passing by to toss a few coins into his lap.

But, while having no marketable talents, Bartimaeus has one special skill. The blind are outstanding listeners. Studies have shown that for people who have lost one of their senses, their brain adapts to the loss by making the other senses stronger. Typically, the blind have increased senses of hearing, smell and touch, which made Bartimaeus an exceptional listener. His place along the road was not only an excellent place to beg, it was also a wonderful location to eavesdrop on conversations and be educated on current events. And in some of those many conversations, Bartimaeus apparently had heard about Jesus, the miracle worker and teacher from Nazareth who healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and had compassion and love for the lost and helpless. By hearing the Word of Jesus, the Holy Spirit created faith in the heart of Bartimaeus. He believed that Jesus could help him. As Jesus and the crowd drew closer, he began to cry out and say:

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47)

The blind beggar cries out with a confession of faith and a prayer all at the same time. He confesses Jesus as the Son of David, the Messiah. He knew from listening that this Jesus of Nazareth was from the line of David, the line from which the prophets had foretold would come the Messiah. And even though the crowds rebuked him, telling him to be silent, he cried out all the more, saying:

“Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:48)

Bartimaeus has faith that Jesus is the only One who can heal him.

This is why we *so often* in our liturgy cry out to the Lord *to have mercy upon us*. Prior to his encounter with Jesus, Bartimaeus was *physically* blind and without hope. Similarly, apart from Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection on our behalf, you and I are *spiritually* blind and without hope. Even though you have eyes, you do not see. (cf: Mark 8:18) St Paul writes:

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Yet, sometimes, those with eyes of faith, even the strongest Christians are seduced and led astray by the unholy trinity of the world, the devil, and the sinful flesh. Rather than following Jesus on the way, you harden your heart against God and go your own way, traveling your own road, believing that you will find success and contentment apart from Him. Rather than fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things, you trust in your own wisdom, reason, and strength for your spiritual wellbeing and salvation.

But you, a true disciple of Jesus, are nothing more than a beggar who, by the mercy of Christ Jesus, must daily deny yourself, take up your own cross, and follow Jesus on His way of suffering, trusting in Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation. (cf: Mark 8:34, 10:52) Faith that clings to Jesus – prays to Jesus. It doesn't take much to cry out: ***“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”*** Your prayers don't have to be heaping with lots of words or filled with fancy phraseology. You have the testimony of Scripture that this short little prayer, ***“Jesus, have mercy on me,”*** and every other prayer prayed in faith, is heard and answered by your Triune God.

To be sure, sometimes God says ***“no”*** to what you ask for because He has something greater in mind. Sometimes He wants to teach you patience or discipline. Sometimes He knows that what you are asking for will harm you and endanger your salvation. You can't know the mind of God ahead of time. So, simply pray, trusting that Jesus will hear your prayers and answer in the way that is best for your salvation.

The omniscient Jesus knew that Bartimaeus was calling upon Him. But He allowed the beggar to continue to cry out prayer, praying in faith and confidence until finally:

“... Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him.’ And they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.’⁵⁰ And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.” (Mark 10:49–50)

Bartimaeus displays his outward trust and faith in Jesus by throwing off his cloak. A blind man does not normally part from his cloak. It's not only his only shelter from the weather. It's the only tool of his trade. Typically, as he sits begging, his cloak is draped across his lap, depending on those passing by to toss coins onto his cloak. So, when he jumps and throws his cloak, he is not only freeing himself from bonds that might restrain him from running to Jesus, he scatters all the coins he has collected, losing both cloak and coins in the massive crowd. It is Bartimaeus' confession of faith. He knew Jesus had something better to offer him. Our text says:

“Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ And the blind man said to him, ‘Rabbi, let me recover my sight.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.” (Mark 10:51-52)

As often happens, our English translation falls short. In the original language Jesus says, ***“Go your way; Your faith has saved you.”*** Healing, faith, and salvation always are together. Bartimaeus has gained much more than physical healing. The greater work was Jesus rescuing him from sin, death, and eternal damnation by granting him eyes of faith and salvation. The faith that healed Bartimaeus is the faith that saved him. It was faith in Jesus.

Bartimaeus threw off his cloak and trusted Jesus. So too, all Jesus' true disciples must throw away their own wisdom, reason, and strength and whatever else might hinder them from fully following Jesus.

Jesus told Bartimaeus: ***“Go your way.”*** Jesus forces no one to trust and follow Him. Bartimaeus was free to go whatever way he wanted. He could have gone off made up for all those years of blindness, earning money, or taking in all the sights he'd missed over the years, just as you are free to go your way. But with eyes of faith wide open, Bartimaeus followed Jesus on the way to Jerusalem and His cross and so do you.

Faith isn't content simply with receiving healings and miracles from Jesus. Faith follows Jesus on the road to His cross. Like all of Jesus' miracles, this healing was a costly one. It cost Jesus' flesh and blood and His very life on the cross. There He won the victory over sin, death, and the devil – and He shares that victory with all beggars who cry out to Him in faith. By your God given gift of faith, you can daily deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus on His way of suffering, trusting in Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation. Call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks. Cry out:

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47)

Know that our Lord has had mercy upon you and given His only Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all our sins: your sins of hardening your heart against God and going your own way, trusting in your own wisdom, reason, and strength. And as we prayed in the Collect of the Day:

God, the helper of all who call on You, have mercy on us and give us eyes of faith to see Your Son that we may follow Him on the way that leads to eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.