

Keynotes from Pastor Tims' am Sermon on 3/5/2020

Jesus friend of sinners – Faith

(Please read these notes whilst listening to the sermon audio file.)

Luke 18 verses 31-43

And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spat upon. ³³ And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." ³⁴ But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said. ³⁵ As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ And hearing a crowd going by, he enquired what this meant. ³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." ³⁸ And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹ 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!" ⁴⁰ And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight." ⁴² And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³ And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Here is the narrative of an event that took place over 2000 years ago. It's about a bunch of men who followed Jesus but couldn't understand his mission, and a blind man who Jesus healed. You may wonder what that has to do with us today and why we should study this and other similar narratives. The very good reason is that our eternal life hangs upon it.

Jesus' followers understood that Jesus was the Messiah, but not at this point what he had come to do.

- They thought he would raise an army, defeat the Romans and rule as King over Israel.

- Jesus was actually going to Jerusalem to die

If they couldn't understand why Jesus came, then they can't explain it to us. As eternal life depends on whether we have understood who Jesus is and why he came, we need to know if these men ever got to understand. That's where the narrative of the blind man comes in.

In Jesus' day, it was assumed that the poor and sick were outside God's kingdom.

Jesus shows instead that

the religious and the rich are outside the kingdom (Luke 18:9-14, 18-30) while

those who know they are

sinner seek mercy and find it. Jesus is the friend to those who:

- know they are sinners and have nothing to offer God
- confess their sin and put their trust in Jesus

Confession and faith are the keys to enjoying Jesus' friendship and therefore eternal life.

We see three aspects of faith in this narrative – seeing, asking and receiving.

1. Faith sees Jesus for who he really is

Bartimaeus (named in the other gospel accounts) had nothing and could only beg for money and food. He realises something unusual is going on. **vv36-38** And hearing a crowd going by, he enquired what this meant. ³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." ³⁸ And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

The crowds see Jesus as:

- a human from Nazareth who works miracles and might save them from the Romans, but a human nonetheless.
- They have physical sight but are spiritually blind

Bartimaeus has physical blindness but understands that Jesus is:

- The Son of David – the one of whom God had spoken over the centuries as anointed by him to save his people and rule with justice, fulfilling all his promises.
- The promised Messiah and Saviour.

Many people today only see Jesus as human – a good teacher and a great prophet maybe, but not the eternal God made flesh who came to save sinners from the sentence of eternal death. One of the reasons for this is that they lack a real faith that:

- embraces Jesus as friend of sinners
- sees Jesus as he really is

2. Faith asks Jesus for mercy without giving up

The expectation of the people living in Jesus' day was that the Messiah would bring a period of healing. Jesus uses that as the evidence to prove to John the Baptist that he is the Messiah, when John was imprisoned and appears to doubt. **Luke 7:20-22** "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them."

Bartimaeus exercises faith and reasons this out, seeing what the crowd cannot, even though he is blind:

- he sees that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of David
- he reasons that when Messiah comes, he would bring healing and therefore Jesus can heal him

His faith doesn't just lead him to reason this out – **it leads him to act on what he knows to be true.** He knows:

- Jesus is there and Jesus can help
- he needs Jesus' help and therefore he needs to act

He does the only thing he can do **vv38-39** 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!"

He has nothing to lose and crucially is not put off when the crowds tell him to be quiet. He knows he might never get this opportunity again.

- You may know who Jesus is, having reasoned that he must be more than a human Jesus as he has a worldwide following after more than 2000 years.

- You may have worked out through reading the Bible that Jesus is who he says he is, and therefore able to save you from your sin and give you eternal life

You may have faith to believe that, but you're not acting on it and calling out to Jesus to have mercy on you.

One of the reasons may be because you're afraid of the crowds in your life - friends, family, work colleagues or neighbours.

Right now, Jesus is effectively passing by. He may not ever come near again and this might be the last opportunity you have to seek his friendship and eternal life. Please act now on what you know to be true.

3. Faith receives Jesus' power to save eternally

Jesus was always ready to serve. He was on his way to Jerusalem, going to accomplish the mission his Father had sent him on and to suffer the terrible death that would involve.

- Yet our wonderful Saviour had time to stop and take notice of a blind man. The crowds probably considered Bartimaeus as unworthy to speak to Jesus, because, to them, his disability meant that he or his parents had sinned.
 - Yet, in faith, this man sees Jesus for who he really is, cries out to him for mercy and Jesus calls him to come near **vv40-43** when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight." ⁴² And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³ And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.
 - There is much more going on here than just a physical healing, though that does happen too. Your faith **has made you well** literally means your faith **has saved you**.

Bartimaeus' life has been turned around unexpectedly. Although his blindness probably wasn't a direct result of his sin, he nevertheless was a sinner, because all humanity is born spiritually blind to the beauty of God so we don't worship him as

God. Now his heart has been changed. He's discovered that Jesus truly is the friend of sinners and that he transforms us into true worshippers of God:

- opening our spiritual eyes to see the glory of God
- opening our hearts to love God

What is the cost of having our spiritual sight restored?

- Jesus had to die so that we can see the beauty of God's grace – the Son was punished by his Father, plunged into the pitch blackness of sin, so that all those who trust Jesus can be forgiven and cleansed.
- Jesus had to take on himself our sin, so that it might be removed from us.

The disciples couldn't understand this while Jesus was alive.

- It was hidden from them until the Holy Spirit had come after Jesus had died, risen and ascended into heaven.
- Seeing and believing is a work of Jesus by the Spirit of God, opening our eyes to the truth of who he is and why he came, and moving our hearts to respond in faith.

Cry out to him now for mercy:

- if you are yet to be convinced he is the Messiah
- if you once treasured him as Messiah but now don't see him as clearly as you used to because of the pull of this world.

This narrative teaches us that Jesus is able to restore our vision. **He asks each one of us - What do you want me to do for you?** If we ask in faith for him to restore our sight, he will open our eyes to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We will know that nothing can separate us from the love of God, and will want to follow Jesus, the friend of sinners.