

# Glorifying God

## Mark 10:46-52

<sup>46</sup> They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup> When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>48</sup> Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>49</sup> Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” <sup>50</sup> So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup> Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” <sup>52</sup> Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

## Theme Statement

Bartimaeus is a model of discipleship because his trust and hope are centered on Jesus, who answers his call for mercy. Although physically blind, he *sees* who Jesus is and responds in faithful following.

## Exploring the Word

*The unknown author of Mark put individual stories about Jesus and his community into a framework of a long sermon that leads its hearers, step by step, to the crucifixion of Jesus. Originally, the entire text of Mark was likely delivered orally from memory. It is thought that it took written form about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.*

The book of Mark is the only one in the Bible to call itself a gospel, which means “good news.” The good news in Mark is that the kingdom of God has come in Jesus (Mark 1:1). All of Mark now illustrates the truth of this as it tells of Jesus and his preaching, teaching, and healing. In the course of this proclamation, hearers are challenged to believe the good news and follow as disciples. The healed blind man, Bartimaeus, becomes a model of such faithful discipleship.

The words *worship*, *praise*, and *glorify* do not appear in this study text, but Bartimaeus does worship and glorify Jesus by focusing on him. In the commentary below, notice that Bartimaeus persistently and faithfully *calls out* to Jesus, *runs* to Jesus, *trusts* Jesus enough to ask for the one thing needed, and then *follows* Jesus. These are all important parts of worship.

### **Mark 10:46-47 “Have mercy on me!”**

Jesus’ encounter with the blind beggar Bartimaeus is the last healing miracle in the Gospel of Mark, capping off the important discussion of discipleship. Just before this passage, Jesus has announced for the third time that he will die and rise in Jerusalem. The disciples still do not understand what this means and focus instead on who will be given seats of glory when Jesus comes into power (10:33-41). Jesus does not condemn James and John for their spiritual blindness, but persists in teaching his disciples that

following him means a life of service and not a life of glory and power (10:42-45). Enter Bartimaeus. He is a poor, marginalized beggar who faithfully cries out to Jesus for mercy. He does not ask for glory as James and John did. Although physically blind, Bartimaeus sees (understands) that his salvation is in Jesus.

### **Mark 10:48-49 “Call him here”**

The crowd, still not understanding who Jesus is, orders Bartimaeus to shut up. To them he is a bother rather than a person in need. Bartimaeus will have none of it. He cries out to the Son of David even more loudly. The title “Son of David” is very important here and in verse 47. Blind Bartimaeus *sees* who Jesus truly is, the promised King of the Jews from David’s line who comes to save. Jesus is the one that Israel has been looking for, the one who has been sent to give the blind sight (Isaiah 42:6-7). Bartimaeus called out two times, but now Jesus does the calling. It is key that some form of the word *call* is used three times in this single verse. This is not only a healing story; it is a story of the call to discipleship.

### **Mark 10:50-52 Following on the way**

Jesus stops and takes time for Bartimaeus, just as he has for others, like the woman with the hemorrhage (5:25-34). Jesus asks Bartimaeus the same question he asked James and John (10:36). Unlike James and John, who focused on glory and power, Bartimaeus asks to regain his sight. He is a model of faith, trusting in Jesus to give him the ability to see, both physically and spiritually. Where does this gift of seeing lead? Not to personal gain and glory but to following Jesus—following Jesus into Jerusalem where he will die. Once-marginalized Bartimaeus becomes part of the Palm Sunday crowd that glorifies Jesus as they shout, “Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (11:9-10). Later, on the other side of the cross and resurrection, he and other

followers will be forgiven and strengthened to share the good news (16:14-15).

## The Word Today

Perhaps Martin Luther had Bartimaeus in mind when he wrote in his Large Catechism that “true honor and worship” are when “the heart should know no other consolation or confidence than in God” (Stjerna, *The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther 1529*, p. 302). Bartimaeus looks for consolation and mercy from God. He does this because he has trust and confidence in God. He acts on this trust when he jumps up and comes to Jesus, telling him of the one thing he needs. When he follows Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, he visibly validates that his trust and confidence are for real.

What is the first thing that Bartimaeus cries out? “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” This plea for mercy is a form of worship. We practice it in our own worship today when we sing the Kyrie, confess our sins, pray, and petition God through hymn singing. Maybe you can think of the hymns that best express your own prayer for God’s mercy. Why would we even bother to ask for God’s mercy, unless at least one little part of us trusted that God would hear and answer? As imperfect as our faith is—and always will be, this side of heaven—the trusting part of us knows that our consolation is in God through Jesus Christ.

Luther warned his readers that the worship of God was more than observing a day of rest. I think he wanted us to have the energy of Bartimaeus, who threw off his cloak and ran to Jesus. Luther points out that even nonbelievers can rest on Sunday. He wrote that the point of a holy day is to hear God’s word, engage it, learn about it, and retain it. This leads to living out our faith, which Luther called

“faith active in love.” There’s nothing ho-hum about Bartimaeus’s response to Jesus. No, he is all-in. The writer of Mark says, “Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way” (v. 52). “The way” means the path to the cross and beyond. This is no casual relationship taken up when convenient. Following “on the way” is a day-in and day-out commitment to live praising God and loving the neighbor. Such commitment is a life lived glorifying and celebrating God.

## Questions for Discussion

### Beginnings

1. What words or phrases help communicate the meaning of these two words: *glorify* and *honor*?

### Exploring the Word

1. What does Bartimaeus ask Jesus for in Mark 10:51? What do James and John ask Jesus for in Mark 10:37? What is Jesus’ response in each situation?
2. How does the crowd respond to Bartimaeus’s pleas for mercy? How does Jesus respond?
3. What does it mean to say that blind Bartimaeus *sees* Jesus?
4. What actions does Bartimaeus take that reveal his confidence in Jesus?
5. How is Bartimaeus a model of faith and discipleship in this text?

### The Word Today

1. Prepare for a mock interview of Bartimaeus by pondering questions like these: What led him to call out to Jesus? Why did he call Jesus the “Son of David”? What

was it like to be marginalized and then included? What wisdom would he share with Christians today? Add your own questions. Consider how Bartimaeus might answer each of these questions.

2. Complete this sentence in your own words: Instead of saying that Sunday is a day of rest, I would describe the importance of Sunday in this way: \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Martin Luther wrote that our comfort and confidence are in God. What are some of the things in our lives that we are tempted to trust in rather than God? What is it we hope they will do for us?

## Closing Prayer

*Lord God, we celebrate your mercy and love. We give you thanks for the gift of new life and faith we have received through Jesus Christ. Forgive us when we are blind to your love and purpose. Renew our faith every day so we may see the way to worship you and serve our neighbor. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Further Study

Mark 5:21-34; Luke 18:35-43

## Daily Readings

M. Isaiah 35:1-6a

F. Mark 10:42-45

T. Psalm 96

S. Psalm 146

W. Psalm 115:1-3, 9-18

S. Mark 10:46-52

T. Mark 10:17-22

## Memorization

### Mark 10:51

Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again."