

## Title: “Desiring Blindness”

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Mark 10:46-48, Hebrews 7:25-27

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**Service Readings:** Jer 31:7-9; Heb 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52

**Summary:** *If we know the character of God, we know our standing before him. And if we know our standing before Him we begin to appreciate His divine intercession.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

<sup>46</sup> And they came to Jericho. And 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. <sup>47</sup> And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>48</sup> And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

We’ll start this morning with a simple question: in the passage I just read, who is blind? That seems like an overly obvious question, but I’d like to explore it for just a moment. The scene opens with Jesus and a large crowd on the move. These people had no doubt seen with their eyes the miracles he performed. They had watched him drive out demons and heal the sick. They wanted to see more, and so they followed him on his journey. They saw *what* he did, but they didn’t understand *why* he did it. And maybe they didn’t even care. In front of them stood a man who could *do things*; this is what they saw.

Contrast that with poor Bartimaeus. He couldn’t see anything. Not once before this encounter would he have been able to watch the miracles of Jesus. He may have heard of them, but he had never witnessed them. And yet, he calls out to Jesus. But he doesn’t immediately ask for sight. He doesn’t ask for a physical miracle but for a spiritual one. He pleads for mercy: “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Over here we have a group whose eyes can see but whose heart is blind. Over here we have a man whose eyes are blind but whose heart can see.

Over here we have a group who places their trust in what they can see. Over here we have a man who has confidence in what he hopes for and assurance about what he does not see. So, let me ask again. In this passage, who is blind?

<pause>

Over here, Bartimaeus' eyes fail him but his faith does not. He understands that the person standing before him is the son of David, sent by God. But not only does he know Jesus' standing, he knows his own. Here stands a beggar: sinful and blind. Here stands a man who is unworthy to be in the presence of God and even less worthy to speak to him and ask for favor. But what other hope does he have if not from Jesus? What other option does he have if not to call out to the only one who can give him what he so desperately needs? And he calls out to Jesus, not for sight but for mercy.

When I read this passage, I often wonder how this blind man could seem to have so much more faith in Jesus compared to the others that were following him that day. They saw with their own eyes the miracles that he performed – and yet they failed in their presentation of that faith. And we see this not just in today's passage but all throughout the Gospels. Time and again we read about the followers of Jesus, even his closest disciples, who exhibited this same deficiency. Remember when they were in a boat during a storm and Jesus was sleeping? "Wake up," they called out to him! "The boat is sinking. Don't you care that we'll soon drown?" Or when they fled from him during his arrest? Or when they locked themselves in a room after his death? How is it that after experiencing so much, they still seemed to be blind to who Jesus was.

I wonder if sometimes our own eyes get in our way. I wonder if sometimes we become desensitized to God around us. For example, the sun rose this morning, just like it did every other day of our lives, and we expect it to rise again tomorrow. And so, we seem to take that miracle for granted. Our sun rises every morning because God sustains creation through Jesus. The very second he stops being active in his creation, it all goes away, it all disappears. But that's not what we see. We see the sun rise every morning and think nothing of it.

And I believe that sometimes we also take for granted God's mercy for us. We know that he is always ready to forgive us, the repentant sinner, and in faith we approach him often with our sin. But in our repetition, do we begin to raise our standing before him? Do we begin to see him more as a friend or family member, someone who we know will *always* forgive us and so we don't have to be too careful about our actions?

<pause>

When I read today's passage, I hear a reminder from Bartimaeus. What I hear him tell me is that sometimes it is probably much better to be blind, because when we can see, and we can all see, our eyes become focused on the things of this world. And we build our lives from the things that we see. Our jobs, our possessions, and our pride all become distractions to that which we should focus on instead. We keep the responsibilities to ourselves, our families, and our friends in front of our eyes. We ensure that our children are fed, clothed, and cared for and that our financial futures are secured. We measure ourselves against the rest of the world and even against our own selves; we challenge ourselves to be the very best that we can be. This is what our sinful eyes gaze upon. They look out across the landscape of our lives, and this is what they see. And off in the distance, there on the horizon, we see a cross. And we know what that means, and we even travel to it so that we can gaze up it on a regular basis. For some, it might be every Sunday and for others it might be every day, but regardless of how often we focus our attention on it, a distraction of life always

shows itself in the periphery of our sight, and we become distracted once again to the things of this world.

But to be blind means to have all these distractions removed from us. To be blind means that we see nothing but that cross. There are no distractions to shift our focus; just the cross. And when all we see is the cross, we see our standing before God. We see that we really have nothing to call our own: not our salvation, not even our God. Nothing. All we have is eternal separation from him. That is all we can call our own. And when we realize that, it is *then* that we truly see. And what we see is Jesus, arms out, offering us the forgiveness that he earned on that cross. You see, when you have nothing to call your own, you come to realize that it is not what *you can call your own, not what you can claim as yours, but what Jesus can.*

And what Jesus claims is you. As we read in our Epistle:

<sup>25</sup> Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

<sup>26</sup> For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

Jesus came to earth to claim you. He lived, and died, and rose again to *claim you*. And this morning, you gathered in this church, not to claim something, but to be claimed. God is here, right here, right now, to remind you of the claim that he has on you. That is what being adopted is all about. It is not something you have, but something you *are*. And you are his. But you can only see God's love if you are blind to the world.

And so, this morning I'd like to ask you to consider where you need to pray for the blindness of Bartimaeus so that all the distractions of life fall by the wayside and where all you have left is your view of the cross and your voice to cry out "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Let us pray.

Today your mercy calls us  
to wash away our sin.  
However great our trespass  
whatever we have been.  
However long from mercy  
our hearts have turned away.  
Your precious blood can wash us  
and make us clean today. (LSB 915)

Amen.