

Sometimes you can receive insights from the least likely places. When I was growing up, my grandparents had a big bookcase that took up an entire wall of their den. My grandpa constructed the bookcase by hand before I was born. As he was pounding in the thin plywood backing to the shelf, my sister—who couldn't have been much older than 10—said, “Grandpa, if you pound in the backing like that, where are you going to plug in your lamp?” It was true. If he didn't first saw out holes for the electrical outlets, he would have nowhere to plug in his reading lamp.

In Mark's Gospel we have read about a lot of outsiders who get it. The Gentile Centurion approaches Jesus and asks for a miracle, likewise the Syrophenician woman. A nameless father cries out to Jesus, “**I believe; help my unbelief!**” as he petitions Jesus for healing for his son. What an amazing act of faith! Even in this chapter, we read children are held up as the ideal of the kingdom.

Yet those who you would think would get it are the ones still in the dark. My grandpa who was a blue-collar worker his whole life and did countless home improvement projects, needed to be reminded to cut out holes for the power outlets—reminded from a child of all things.

In Jesus' day, the religious elites were the worst enemies of Jesus. The scribes and pharisees were the ones who knew Scripture better than most, yet they couldn't see the fulfillment of prophecies in front of their own eyes. The rich young man was somebody you'd probably want on your team if you were assembling a religious community—think of how much he could have bankrolled for the early church. Jesus turned away this rich man. The disciples who heard from Jesus' mouth many times of his suffering, death, and resurrection, were still unable to understand the events of Holy Week.

And so as Jesus makes His way to Jerusalem, we have yet another person who many of us would write off: Bartimaeus the blind beggar. Yet the shocking thing is that Bartimaeus is the one who has much to teach us! **BLIND BARTIMAEUS LEADS US IN TRUE DISCIPLESHIP.**

First, I. True discipleship means we realize we are blind and needy beggars. “**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.**” Bartimaeus is a man who cannot see. He was reduced to begging in the streets for any amount of money or food he could get his hands on. In those days there was no American with Disabilities Act, there was no Social Security, and no Welfare system. He was completely at the mercy of others to receive his daily needs.

Yet we see how he's treated by the crowd: “**And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent.**” The disciples wanted to act as Jesus' bouncers, and they

want to turn away the children earlier in the chapter, and we read that many want the beggar just to be quiet so Jesus can go on His way.

The thing is: people who have their lives together don't really need Jesus. The rich man had his wealth. The scribes and pharisees had their long robes, their friendly handshakes in the marketplaces, and the best seats at feasts. The disciples thought they were getting in at the ground level of God's Kingdom, Incorporated, and they were busy jockeying for the executive positions.

People who have their lives together don't really need Jesus. That's just as true today. You don't need to be a millionaire to rely on your money: poor and rich alike can depend on it. Is it your properties? Is it your cars? Is it the next social security paycheck? Is it your health? Is it your kids' sports league? Is it your well curated social media presence with its accompanying likes, favorites, and followers? Is it your family that is by no means perfect, but you're proud of how they turned out?

People who have their lives together don't really need Jesus. Luther's last words were, "We are beggars. This is true." The point is not that we need to shed everything. In fact, I've been to Luther's house in Wittenberg, and it isn't tiny. The point is not that money, possessions, health, family, and reputation are bad things. The point is that none of these things count before the Living God. You don't get extra credit points for a boat, a mansion, or a perfect family.

Instead, Jesus is calling us to approach Him just like Bartimaeus: empty handed, fearlessly, and with nothing to lose. "We are beggars. This is true." This saying means you can't use your checkbook, fame, or family to twist God's arm into submission. You don't enter negotiations with paupers. Before the Holy Almighty God who created the Heavens and the Earth you have nothing to bring to the table.

Instead, what did Bartimaeus call out to Jesus? He wasn't asking for a 401k. He wasn't asking for a big house like Zacchaeus the tax collector. Note he wasn't even asking to be healed of blindness—at least not initially. What does he cry? **"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"** II. True discipleship means we depend on the Lord's mercy.

Sometimes you can receive insights from the least likely places. This call from Bartimaeus is the call of faith. By calling Jesus "Son of David," He acknowledged He was something more than just a carpenter. He acknowledged Jesus as the Davidic King who was coming to save His people. Even though he couldn't see, Bartimaeus believed in Jesus as the true Messiah, the one prophesied of old.

Mercy is undeserved compassion shown to others. In the secular Greek world of the time, you would want to appeal to the mercy of the judge so you could get a lessened sentence. Orators wished to appeal to the mercy of their hearers.

They wanted to pluck at their audiences' heart strings, in other words. In the Greek Old Testament, the word "mercy" or "have mercy" appears over 326 times. God's people repeatedly ask Him for mercy.

Likewise, "**Have mercy on me!**" is the call of Christians. We need that undeserved compassion. And we see that Jesus does provide mercy. His entire earthly ministry was a ministry of mercy as He taught and healed those He met. Even chiding the scribes, the rich, and the disciples was an act of mercy as Jesus sought to take their eyes off the earthly concerns which would fade away, but instead to draw their eyes to the eternal things which would not fade or deteriorate with age.

The ultimate act of mercy is shown as Jesus continues His journey from Jericho to Jerusalem to be arrested, tortured, and killed at the hands of sinful men. The crucifixion is God's ultimate act of mercy in which Christ His Son becomes the most wretched, broken, and in need of mercy person ever to have walked this earth.

And that's the point. Jesus takes the pain, suffering, and brokenness, and absorbs it into Himself. There is a great exchange that goes on: your sinfulness, your sickness, your brokenness, and instead you receive Jesus' perfection, health, and holiness. By dispensing this mercy, Jesus ultimately becomes the one the most in need of mercy as He hangs there abandoned on the cross.

It is in His resurrection that He leaves behind that sin, sickness, and brokenness and rises again as a renewed creation. Even as we see our sins on the cross, we look to the empty tomb to see a risen Lord who gives us peace, hope, and eternal life.

Set aside all your badges of pride: your fortunes, your family, your reputation, set all these aside and see yourself as the one who needs mercy from God. As one who is broken and in need of Jesus to make you whole. All of us enter the kingdom of God not as prophetic seers, but as blind beggars.

Finally, III. True discipleship means we follow the Lord who saves us. Not only do we call for mercy, but Jesus calls us, "**And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you."**"

Today "**Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.**" Whether rich or poor, healthy or sick, popular or abandoned, Jesus is calling you just as He called Bartimaeus. You don't need to worry about your credentials. Jesus has mercy on all. Jesus is calling to you!

"And throwing off his cloak, [Bartimaeus] sprang up and came to Jesus. And 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."" We see the mercy of Jesus

in action, Bartimaeus gladly springs up to approach Jesus so that Jesus can heal him.

“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.” At the flip of a switch, Jesus heals this man. His sight is restored. But the irony is that Bartimaeus could see what others didn't, namely that Jesus was something more than a teacher or miracle worker. It was Bartimaeus' faith that made him well.

Dear Christian friend, rejoice. Your faith has made you well. Faith grasps onto those promises of Christ without anything to bring to the table. Faith calls out “Lord, have mercy” and trusts that the Lord will act even though He isn't obligated to help you. Faith in Jesus restores your sight to see that He truly is the miracle worker who has mercy on the last, the lost, and the least.

Faith follows in the footsteps of Jesus. We see that Bartimaeus followed Jesus after being healed. We too are called to follow Him wherever He may go. It may cost us fame, fortune, or even family, but we know that with such a gracious and merciful God, He will never lead us astray. Yes the road may lead to Jerusalem, but what leads to a cross ultimately leads to an empty tomb.

Sometimes you can receive insights from the least likely places. Jesus welcomed all sorts of odd people into His presence: foreigners and fishermen, children and centurions, shepherds and sinners. And there's room for you too to take off your cloak and follow Jesus.