

Luke 18 (Part 3): 28-43 • The example of Bartimaeus

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You'll remember what we covered last week was that conversation between Jesus and the rich young ruler concerning his question to the Lord: What do I need to do to inherit eternal life? Do you remember?

And he was a man who believed in the goodness of man. And not only that, he believed that it was within the realm of possibility to be good enough to make it to heaven. And he believed that his goodness would come about through keeping the law.

And you'll remember that Jesus tested him. He tested him to see... Or not to see, but to show the man what was really going on in his heart. And He tested him with one of the commandments. One of the commandments was to *"love your neighbor as yourself."* And this young man believed that he kept all of the commandments.

And Jesus tested him. And He said, all right, fine. Take everything you have and sell it, give the money to the poor. And that should have been no issue whatsoever, if this man truly loved his neighbor as himself. But the Bible says, he went away sad because he couldn't part with his wealth. And it was a very difficult lesson, very challenging lesson for the young man.

But it's a good reminder to all of us, just how hopeless we are, in trying to impress God with our goodness. How hopeless it is for us to try to earn God's favor by being good enough. Whether you're trying to keep the law or whether you're trying to be a good Christian.

And on the heels of that rather painful situation... By the way, I think the rich young ruler may be the only person who ever came and talked to Jesus and went away worse than he was when he showed up. Pretty much everybody else walked away, changed in a very positive way. But this man, it says, went away sad because again, he was unwilling to give up all that he had in terms of earthly wealth.

But on the heels of that conversation, we pick up a comment by Peter in verse 28 where he says, "... *"See, we have left our homes and followed you."* (ESV) And that's exactly what I would expect Peter to say.

He's basically saying, we're willing to give up what he couldn't. Just wanted to remind You of that. You hear people do that. They're always reminding God of things that they think maybe, He might have forgotten about. Lord, I just need to remind You about this issue that's going on..., or ...something that I've done.

The Lord's response is very interesting. *"²⁹ He said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰ who will not receive many times more in this time, (meaning in this life) and in the age to come eternal life."* And I like that.

Because Jesus makes it clear in that statement that there is a special recompense for all those who have willingly sacrificed something of the comforts and good things of this life in order to serve God. And He basically promises here that whatever you and I, may have given up for Him, we'll get it back. Don't worry about that. In fact, He says we'll get it back many times over. Not just in this life, but also in the life to come." And it's another way of saying, God will be no man's debtor. God isn't going to owe any man anything.

I think about missionaries over the years who've gone to places that you and I wouldn't even want to visit. But they've willingly left behind the comforts and conveniences of life, even sometimes prosperity. Given up prosperity to go live in a perhaps, even a poverty level sort of an existence just so they can share the gospel. Just so they can be a blessing to other people. And wherever there is a genuine desire for people to sacrifice what they have, to give it up willingly to serve the Lord, to be obedient to the Lord, God promises an abundant response from heaven.

And by the way, that response that, or that statement that He makes at the end of verse 30, did you catch that? Where he says, *"and in the age to come eternal life."* Please don't think that what He's saying there is suggesting to you and I that because of our sacrifices, we can somehow earn eternal life.

That's not what He's saying. Remember this: The only sacrifice that ever earned eternal life is the one Jesus made. Not the ones that you and I make. We do it out of love. We do it out of love for Him. We are compelled by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Moving on, it says, *"³¹ 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 spit 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."*

It's interesting, isn't it? The disciples heard these words. I mean, they heard the words that I just... That you just heard. That you just heard me read and yet somehow some way they just didn't get it. It was... We're told it was hidden from them. And we're not really sure how that all happened. But it was probably for the best. Who knows what they would have done, how they would have reacted had they really gotten the full brunt of what Jesus was saying.

But what we do see from these few verses here, is that Jesus made a promise. And it's a very simple promise. He said this, everything that the prophet said would happen will happen. It's simple. And particularly what He was talking about was His suffering. And you'll remember we made the point that the Jews tended to kind of ignore the suffering Messiah prophecies.

Because you see in the Old Testament there are characterizations of Messiah that are given in two ways. He is referred to as the suffering Messiah and the triumphant Messiah. And the Jews couldn't figure out how to reconcile those two things. They just kind of ignored one of them. And they just focused on the triumphant Messiah.

And yet Jesus makes reference here to all the things the prophet said about Him and His suffering. And He said, they're all going to come to pass. Which is an interesting reminder to you and I. That even if we might be ignoring the Word of God, it's still going to come to pass.

Even if you and I say, well, I don't happen to believe that. It doesn't really matter what you believe or not. It's going to come to pass. I don't really believe Jesus is coming back again. I don't care. He said, I'm coming back again. And that's what's going to happen. It didn't really matter.

We think that somehow we create a reality today by our beliefs. It doesn't matter if I was born a boy. If I say I'm a girl, I'm a girl. And I create my own reality. I'm sorry, that's not the way things work. God created reality. And His reality is very clear as it relates to the prophetic statements that are given to us in the Scriptures.

And every single one came to pass concerning His first coming. And every single one came to pass related to His death, burial, and resurrection, and His second coming. Which is still on the calendar, by the way. And it will come to pass. And I like that. I really do. These things will happen with a certainty.

And then the final scene of this chapter. It says, verse 35, *"As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging."* And we know, by the way, from Mark's gospel, that this blind man was named Bartimaeus. Bar, is son of. His name was Timaeus. But they were to call him Bartimaeus, because that meant son of Timaeus.

"³⁶ And (it says,) hearing (the) crowd going by, he inquired what this meant." All he hears is a crowd. He can't see anything. He's asking the people around him. And ³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." ³⁸ And he cried out, (he begins to yell, and he says,) "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

You know what's interesting? Bartimaeus is the only character in Luke's Gospel who refers to Jesus as the *"Son of David."* It happens actually a lot in Matthew's gospel because that's one of the focuses that he wants to give. But in Luke's gospel account, only Bartimaeus does it. And *"Son of David,"* means, "You are the long awaited Messiah." Okay? I mean, that's another way of saying: Jesus, Messiah; Jesus, the chosen one; Jesus, the anointed one. Right? It's that the same thing.

"³⁹ And (it tells us here in verse 39 that,) those who were in front rebuked him, (They told him to be quiet. Told) ...him to be silent." And we don't really know why the people sought to silence Bartimaeus. Maybe some of them objected to the fact that he was calling Jesus, Son of David. And thus, equating Him with the Messiah. We don't know.

More than likely, it's because people didn't think that a blind beggar really had any, I don't know, right. Or maybe wasn't important enough to call out to this prophet or something like that. It's just like, hey, shut up. You're nothing. And that's probably the way they saw him.

But it says here in verse 39, at the end of it. It says, *"But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"* And then something amazing happened.

If you look with me in verse 40, it says, *"And Jesus stopped and (He) 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." And I can well
imagine.*

But the healing of blind Bartimaeus provides for us several things. Not the least of which is a wonderful view looking in at the heart of God, which we'll talk about. But it also provides a very inspiring example of persistence in the face of opposition.

Isn't it interesting, for those of you that were around a couple of weeks ago and we started chapter 18. Do you remember what the very first parable was all about? We started chapter 18 with the topic of Persistence in Prayer. Remember that? And isn't it interesting that almost like bookends, we come to the end of chapter 18 and we're dealing once again with this issue. This same issue of persistence in prayer.

And the parable that started this chapter, remember, was the woman. The widow who kept coming before the unjust judge crying out for justice. But he didn't care about justice. He didn't care about people period. And he didn't want to give her what she asked for. And yet she kept coming. Remember she kept coming over and over. And he finally gave her justice simply because he wanted to get rid of her. It's like, this woman is not going to stop, until I finally give her what she wants. I'm going to do it. And he does.

And Jesus used that example, that parable, to contrast the heart of God. Who is the exact opposite of that cruel old judge who didn't care about people. And He wanted you to know that, so that you would be persistent in prayer, and keep going on.

And here now we come to this story of blind Bartimaeus. This man who is a real life example of that kind of persistence. And really, because Bartimaeus is doing in this story something that's no different than what we do in prayer. He's calling out to God. He's crying out for mercy. That's what you and I do in prayer. Right? He's simply calling out to Jesus, as He's passing by through Jericho. And what's happening is the crowd is telling him to be quiet.

And the crowd that is trying to silence him, or squelch his cries for mercy, is another picture. Bartimaeus is a picture of us. And the crowd is a picture of all those things that are constantly trying to shut us down from persisting in faith, in our cries to God related to whatever it is we're asking for.

And the crowd can be manifest in our lives in many different ways. It can be people who are constantly chirping in your ear and giving voice to unbelief. Do you have some of those people in your life? Maybe people you work with or something like that. Or family members even, who are chirping in your ear and being just like the crowd. What are you praying for? You're praying, you're wasting your time praying. You just need, you need to do something. You just need to get up and do something. Stop praying. Or whatever they might say. I don't know who you think you're talking to. It's no different. Is it? No different than the crowd that's telling Bartimaeus to be quiet. Be quiet. Stop crying out.

Or it could be... The crowd could be for you and I, the whisperings of the enemy. The whisperings of the evil one, who absolutely loves to accuse God, when He doesn't seem to answer in the timeframe that we think He should. And the enemy comes along and begins to speak into our hearts and minds, lies and deceptions related to God.

He's really not listening. He doesn't really care about you. You've committed so much sin in your life that He's pretty much done with you. And those are the things the enemy loves to seed into our hearts so that we'll just give up. And just say, you know what? Enough! I'm done. I'm done with this praying thing.

Or, the crowd could be manifested in our lives by our own flesh. Many times we ascribe things to the enemy when it's frankly just our flesh. I mean, because our flesh is so prone to discouragement.

Again, when answers from the Lord are not immediately forthcoming, it is common for people to become discouraged. Common for people just to kind of... It's like, well, where is the Lord? Been praying and praying about this.

But I want you to look again with me in your Bible at verse 39. And I want you to take very special note what Bartimaeus did when the crowd told him to be quiet. It says, "*And those who were in front rebuked him,...*" And you know what a rebuke is. Right? It's a harsh statement that says shut up!

Look what he did. If this isn't highlighted in your Bible, perhaps it should be. "*But he cried out all the more.*" And that, brothers and sisters in Jesus, is a wonderful and inspiring example for you and I, about what we should do. How we should approach these sorts of issues in prayer.

Because there's always going to be someone, or something, circumstances, or the enemy, or your neighbors, or your family members, or somebody who is

going to say, stop it already! Just be done. Enough! And you and I, need to be prepared for that. Because if we're not prepared...

Chances are, Bartimaeus... This isn't the first time people tried to shut him down. When you're a beggar on the side of the road taking whatever you can get from people as they pass by. I imagine, he dealt with opposition in the past that probably prepared him a little bit for a situation like this.

Are you prepared for opposition? Are you prepared for the kind of opposition when you are praying and asking God to touch a particular area of your life, for the kind of stuff that's going to come along, purposely to discourage you and to get you to stop. Are you prepared for that? Are you prepared to carry on in prayer, to continue on, to press on, to do like Bartimaeus did, and to cry all the more? It's a beautiful example. I love it.

And frankly, one of the most encouraging things about Bartimaeus crying out like he did, is the fact that Jesus responded. I love that part of it. I mean, it would have been kind of a nasty story if Bartimaeus cried out and Jesus just kept going, wouldn't it? We wouldn't be talking about it like we are today.

Here's this... This is a crowd. This is a huge crowd of people moving along at whatever pace Jesus is moving along. And there's just this huge mass of people moving through the area. And there's one man, one lonely man. And you can tell he's not in the front. It says, the people in front of him said, we're telling him, be quiet! Be quiet!

So, he's back. He's like, what's going on? Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. He starts just calling out. Trying to get his voice above the people - above the crowd. And I love this. This huge progression of people. Jesus stops the whole parade. He stops the whole thing. I heard the call, the call of faith. He heard the call. So, He stopped the whole thing. I love that. I really do.

Jesus stopped. And right there, right there you guys, in those two words, Jesus stopped. That's God's heart for you and I. That's His heart. Okay? You want to know the heart of God? Look no further than Jesus. He is the exact imprint of the nature of God. You want to see God's heart? Look right here. Jesus stopped.

Here's a man whom society had largely written off. This is the kind of guy you walk by and if you're in a good mood, you throw a couple of coins his way. Maybe. But other than that, he is a forgotten commodity in society. He's someone that people don't even think about during the day. And Jesus stopped

the whole procession to attend to this man. And He called him. And then ultimately, as we saw, healed him.

And that is God's heart for you and I. And I just kind of wonder how many of us are willing to just open our hearts and cry out like this. And to know that Jesus is going to stop for you? Do you need Jesus to stop for you? Many times in my life, many times. I have needed the Lord to stop the world and just talk to me. I need You. Jesus, I need Your touch. I can't go one more minute without You. I need You to stop. I need You to stop and listen. I need You to stop and I need a touch.

And I don't know if that's you, but I... The thing I love about this story of this blind man is that he was willing to call Jesus to stop. Even when the crowd was telling him to be quiet. Even when the opposition was telling him to forget about this. He kept calling.

And how we in the body of Christ, need to learn from this lesson. And not just read it. But to learn from it, to embrace it, and to walk it out in our lives. Are you willing to pray until you are really, truly, praying? Are you willing to pray until you know that the Lord has stopped and touched you in a significant way?