

MARK 10:46-52

As we examine this passage today, I want to briefly draw your attention to 3 elements of the story: the physical miracle, the metaphor, and the message.

THE MIRACLE ITSELF

And it was an extraordinary miracle. I think it's possible to become a little blasé about the miracles of Jesus because we're so familiar with them and we've read them so many times. But if we'd been there on that day, you and I would have been astonished.

We're not told what had caused this man's blindness – whether it was a progressive degenerative disease or a congenital disease from birth. But whatever it was, Jesus fixes it instantly, without a scalpel or operating theatre – just by the power of his words. And this is one of many occasions when Jesus did this kind of thing: he just spoke, and miraculous stuff happened!

Now this shouldn't surprise us, because the Bible says that the reason why Jesus was so often able to **boss the physical world around**, was that he was the one who had created it all in the first place.

Colossians 1:16 says,

“For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him.”

So, what is happening here, is that the Creator of the whole universe has turned up, the one who spoke the stars and the galaxies into existence, the one who shaped the whole Earth and carved the mountains and the valleys by the power of his voice, and he's turned up in a dusty corner of Judea and recreated some poor bloke's eyes for him.

So, at its very simplest level, this story ought to cause us to fall on our knees and worship Jesus, because it declares him to be none other than God in the flesh.

It leads me to ask you the question, who do you say Jesus is? Because you can't read the Gospel stories and decide that he was merely a good man or a clever religious teacher. The Gospel's won't let us do that, because they confront us, time and time again, with his extraordinary, miracle working power, the likes of which this world has never seen before or since.

No other religious leader in history can lay claim to these kinds of miracles. Mohammed never healed a person's blindness. Buddha never raised anyone from the dead.

If you are trying to work out who Jesus is, the Gospels won't allow you to settle for any half-hearted nonsense about him being just a good man or clever teacher. You must confront the evidence of his miracles, and they lead us, inexorably and irrevocably to the only logical conclusion; that this is none other than God in the flesh.

THE METAPHOR

It's important that we not only understand the power of Jesus' miracles, but also their purpose. Because they were intended to convey a message. The miracles of Jesus are physical metaphors of the message that he came to proclaim.

Toward the beginning of his earthly ministry, in Luke 14:18, Jesus quoted from Isaiah to describe the essence of his mission on Earth:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”

The **good news** Jesus is speaking about is the good news of forgiveness for sins and a restored relationship with God. The **prisoners** Jesus is speaking about freeing are people like you and me, chained to our rebellious natures, locked out of God’s presence because of the vast record of our disobedience. And the **blindness** that Jesus is talking about healing is our inability to even perceive our predicament, let alone do anything about it.

To a world that is desperately lost and blind and imprisoned, Jesus says, “I have come to open the eyes of your indifference and unbelief, to break the chains of your bondage to disobedience, and to proclaim the good news of forgiveness and a restored relationship with God!”

And all of the miracles of Jesus that are recorded for us in the Gospels, all of the wonderful acts of healing that he did, are metaphors, physical illustrations, of what Jesus wants to do in each one of us spiritually.

So, when we read today’s miracle story, it’s more than just an interesting historical incident. It’s meant to teach us stuff.

THE MESSAGE OF THIS STORY

So, we come to the message of this story, and I want to suggest to you that there are four things it teaches us.

1. SALVATION IS A DESPERATE NEED FOR US ALL

I want you to note the DESPERATION of Bartimaeus. This guy is absolutely determined to encounter the saving power of Jesus for himself. And he won’t be put off by anyone or anything. Did you notice that people were telling him to “shut up!”? Verse 48 says,

“Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

He was apparently yelling out so much and so loudly that the crowd were really getting annoyed. But he kept yelling, he kept crying out, because he knew that only Jesus could fix his problem.

And friends, that is exactly the point we all need to get to in order to be saved – in order to be reconciled to God. We need to get to that point where we recognise that we are in a dire situation, and that only Jesus can help us. We must reach that point where we realise that our own pitiful attempts to fix ourselves and somehow present ourselves as acceptable before God are woefully inadequate, because only Jesus can forgive our sins and restore us to God.

Have you reached that point yet? Have you thrown yourself upon the mercy of Jesus, the Saviour? Have you stopped relying on your own misguided sense of self-righteousness, and placed your trust in Jesus alone as your Saviour?

That was the desperation of Bartimaeus, and it’s the same desperation that we need in order to be saved as well.

2. WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH

In verse 52, Jesus says:

“Go, your faith has healed you.”

Now, of course we need to understand that it's Jesus who actually did the healing, but it's Bartimaeus's faith that placed him in a position to be healed. And Jesus here is commending Bartimaeus for his faith.

Now, you might be wondering, where did we see Bartimaeus's faith in this incident? Where was it evident? He doesn't seem to say the sinner's prayer. He doesn't make a confession of faith in accordance with the 39 articles. Where is this faith?

Well, it's in verse 47 and again in verse 48, where, at both points, he cries out:

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

In that simple statement, Bartimaeus is expressing quite a profound level of faith. He is firstly expressing his belief that Jesus is none other than the Messiah, the Saviour who had been prophesied at various points throughout the Old Testament and who would be a descendant of David. The phrase he uses, “Son of David” was in fact a messianic term. He is saying, “I believe you are the Messiah”. And secondly, Bartimaeus is expressing his profound trust that Jesus can actually fix his problem – can heal him, can save him from his terrible condition.

So in this simple little statement, Bartimaeus is expressing faith in who Jesus is and what Jesus can do for him.

And folks, that is precisely the kind of faith that Jesus requires of us as well. In order to be forgiven and be restored to God, a person must believe in Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and TRUST in him, and him alone, for their forgiveness. We must believe who he is and what he can do.

3. FAITH MUST BE BOTH PERSONAL AND PUBLIC

Did you notice the curious question that Jesus asks him? In verse 51, he asks, **“What do you want me to do for you?”**

On the surface it seems like a bizarre question, doesn't it? It's obvious what he wants, isn't it? He's not going to turn around and say, “I want a play station and a new laptop please. And while you're at it, world peace please.”

Jesus already KNEW what Bartimaeus wanted – but he wanted Bartimaeus to say it out loud, and in public. He wanted him to express his belief that Jesus could actually heal him of his blindness.

And this was really the crunch point for Bartimaeus. Because it was one thing for him to shout out that Jesus was the Messiah – which is this big theological concept - but it was another thing altogether for him to personalise that, to say, **“I want to see, and I believe that you, Jesus, can heal me, right here and right now.” You're not just THE Messiah; you're MY Messiah – my Saviour.**

Can you see that this is another level of faith entirely? It's personalising it for him. It's moving it from intellectual belief in an abstract theological concept, to something that impacts him and changes his life.

And Jesus wanted him to say it in PUBLIC. To confess in front of the WHOLE CROWD his belief that Jesus could heal him and save him.

And that is the kind of faith that Jesus requires in us as well – faith that is both personalised and public.

Faith is not something that is meant to be hidden away inside our hearts. Contrary to what some people believe, faith in Jesus is not meant to be a private matter that is never expressed out loud or in public. No.

Jesus actually demands that we own up to our faith, publicly. In Matthew 10:32, Jesus says,

“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my father in heaven.”

What about you? Are you still trying to be an undercover Christian? Are you still thinking that having some kind of quiet belief in God hidden away in the privacy of your heart is enough? Think again! Because Jesus says it's not enough.

4. NO ONE IS BEYOND THE SAVING REACH OF JESUS.

I want to draw your attention to a significant detail that is only found in Matthew's account of this miracle. He records Jesus as not only speaking words of healing to Bartimaeus, but also of reaching out and touching his eyes.

This was something that would have shocked the people of the time because it was believed that serious disease such as blindness was God's punishment for sin and that the sufferers were therefore unclean and untouchable: horrible sinners, being punished by God. And it was believed that by touching such a person, the toucher became unclean as well.

But in a beautiful act of compassion, Jesus reaches out and touches him. He touches the untouchable.

And it's a beautiful picture of the all-encompassing, saving power of Jesus. There is no one in our world who is too sinful for Jesus to forgive. No one who is too far gone to be saved. No one who has messed up so badly that God can't reach down and pick them up and set them on the right path again.

And I want to say to you, that whatever you may have done, however far from God you may have strayed, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for your sins can bring you forgiveness, and his loving hands can guide you home. There is a place in God's kingdom for you, if you will repent and believe, because the grace of Jesus is deeper and wider and stronger than whatever it is you may have done.

CONCLUSION

So, you see, today's Bible story is not merely a nice anecdote about someone who no longer needs to go to spec savers. It's a living parable about me and you. About people who are blind and poor, cut off from their Creator and seemingly without hope. It's the story of a Saviour whose power is unimaginably great, whose love is infinitely deep, and whose mercy can reach down and save the greatest of sinners – even me and even you.

May you know his mercy and his saving grace in your life, today and always.

AMEN.

The Rev'd Kevin Simington

