

*35 And it came about that as He was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the road, begging. 36 Now hearing a multitude going by, he began to inquire what this might be. 37 And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 And those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he had come near, He questioned him, 41 "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!" 42 And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." 43 And immediately he regained his sight, and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.*

There is much to consider in this beautiful story. Many ideas flood in and I hope you will enjoy considering these verses and how perhaps they fit so beautifully and perfectly into the on-going context of Jesus and the kingdom of God.

To begin, I want to consider another miracle. This event was very early in Jesus ministry, in the first 6 months or so not covered as well by the synoptic writers. John gives us some incidents in the first weeks and months, and he gives us the final drama surrounding the crucifixion. Let me read to you what happened from the words of the apostle John;

*1 And on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; 2 and Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the wedding. 3 And when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." 6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. 7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the headwaiter." And they took it to him. 9 And when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but*

*the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, 10 and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; you have kept the good wine until now." 11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.*

An eleven verse account. I want to notice three important truths from vs. 11. This was the first miracle that Jesus accomplished during His time on earth. Before He was finished, John would write that all the books in the world could not contain the volume of the wonders that Jesus accomplished.

The gospels contain a smattering for us to consider, but how I hope that some day in heaven we will be able to see every one. This miracle was the first of a number that we don't know.

Second in that verse; The miracles manifest His glory. Let's consider that for just a brief moment. Miracles are when God sticks His finger into the natural world and causes things to occur that are beyond the natural physical properties of what we understand scientifically as possible.

Water and wine are two different chemical equivalents of combinations of elements. God, after the fall in the garden, introduced death and decay into this world. Cells that form compounds are oxidized over time and change. Decay happens and what was once fresh and beautiful becomes old and changed.

Decay is often the cause of foul odors. Decay often signals danger to the living. It rubs off and spreads. We remove decay safe distances away from us. But God in His infinite wisdom and grace to His creation caused the decay process in some plant materials to form alcohol contents.

And men, over time, discovered that with controlled environments and periodic filterings and purifyings, grape juice can take on delightful properties and flavors. The Bible notes that wine can make the heart merry. Too much wine can cause stupidity and poor judgements. And like any good thing, some

people have to be more cautious than others about addictive mis-use and resulting harm.

The wine at this wedding and the head waiter have a single job to accomplish. Both of them are there to increase the enjoyment of the celebration of a man and a woman coming together in marriage.

When that head waiter tasted the wine, he didn't say it was the best because it lacked alcohol content. It was the best because of its smooth flavors. He knew that the celebration would be enhanced a bit because of the delightful properties of excellent wine.

Christians are serious folks who are to be wise and circumspect and excellent with their choices. But God in His grace to us also makes time for celebration and merriment. I do believe God delights in those moments, even if rare. How telling that what we look forward to is a feast at His table at a wedding celebration in His honor, and if I'm not mistaken, wine is mentioned there.

But what really interests us both in this first miracle and also in the one we will consider this morning is the *creation* process of one thing becoming something else because of the words of God. He spoke and dirt became a man. Only God has the power to make one molecular compound into another distinctly different compounds, or millions of compounds that create living cells, out of something different, or often, nothing at all. Exnihilo.

The slaves poured 30 gallons of H<sub>2</sub>O into clay jars and it instantly turned blood red, and if they had a laboratory to have tested it, they would have found that it had turned from water into decayed grape juice and alcohol, perfectly filtered and I might add, perfectly aged. A laboratory analysis could have gotten down to the DNA of the fruit itself and told you what variety of grape was the basis and even which fields that grape came from.

The creative power of God caused the simple water molecules to become exotic aged compounds of decayed grape juice. Full of fruity flavors and some alcohol content and microscopic particulates of the grapes themselves,

which, oh by the way, never grew.

For what purpose? Also in verse 11. Jesus was glorified by doing what only God can do. He causes things outside the physical realms of mathematical possibility in His created sphere to bystep those physical properties and just become something entirely different according to His will and intent. Only God can do that. The same voice that created the worlds and universes out of nothing by the power of His voice and His intellect and His Holy will, can turn ordinary water into fine wine.

Jesus was glorified in this act that only God can do, and another result in vs. 11; the disciples believed in Him. The disciples believed in Him.

Most of the folks just enjoyed the wine. The disciples watched the slaves pour the water in the jugs and they watched a slave draw the blood red clear liquid out of those same jugs and take it to the headwaiter who was amazed that the best wine was saved for last.

The disciples witnessed something only God can cause, and they believed in Jesus. Might I add one more miracle? The reliable witnesses, these same men who watched it happen, wrote it down, and 2000 years later we can read of this event in exactness, and also believe.

Why did I choose this miracle at Cana to consider along with this blind man who receives his sight this morning. Because these two miracles are like book ends at either end of the ministry of Jesus.

Our miracle that we will consider this morning is the final miracle that Jesus performed before His teaching at the temple during His final week of life, and then His execution.

The miracles are the evidence that will convict all who have had the opportunity to hear of Him and the things He did, and yet not believe.

On the night before His death, Jesus said these words; John 14:10,11

*10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I say to you, I do not speak on My own. Instead, it is the Father dwelling in Me, performing His works. 11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me— or at least believe on account of the works themselves.*

The evidence of the miracles will hold up the conviction of all who do not believe in the court of God. Even if you weren't there to see them first hand, God says in His word, two or three reliable witnesses will be enough to affirm the veracity of events. We have hundreds of witnesses and we have reliable accounts transmitted through 20 centuries.

On judgement day, that will be enough to convict those who ignored the available truth.

How interesting, to me at least, that the miracles began with all of the joy and hope and celebration of a union of two people in love, a man and a woman, who by a marriage to one another were looking forward to all of the hopefulness of life before them. Jesus ministry begins on that hopeful celebratory note.

His ministry is ending with a long discussion through these many chapters of Luke about who will be with Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb in His heavenly kingdom.

We've just witnessed several accounts surrounding this question. The righteous pharisee's who represent the religion of human achievement will not be in the kingdom. The wicked publican who beats his breast and cries out to God for mercy because of his sinfulness, will be in.

The proud rock star religious leaders and lawyers who openly mock His story about the prodigal son and the unrighteous steward who pays someone else's wealth forward, they won't be there. The babies and toddlers who the parents bring to Jesus for His blessing, they will be there.

The bright morally fine up-and-coming rich young ruler will not be there. But a blind beggar and a tax collector for Rome who we'll meet next week if the Lord tarries, the two lowest common denominators in their social strata, will be there.

This world's most highly regarded will be missing. This world's losers, if they believe, will be included. The first will be last and the last will be first. God's kingdom is totally upside down to this world and its cosmos, its kingdoms.

So then, let's consider this bookend at the end of Jesus ministry very near to the final week before His death. He's moving towards His own execution as He stops to receive this believer into His kingdom.

*Vs. 35 And it came about that as He was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the road, begging.*

There is much to consider just in the opening sentence. First off, we have an elephant in the room that it would be easy to just ignore, many of you would be none the wiser and could care less, but I'm going to tackle the elephant.

This event is mentioned at this exact juncture by all 3 synoptic gospel writers. But it's hard to synchronize the 3 accounts.

Matthew tells us that there were 2 blind men as Jesus was departing Jericho. Mark tells us that there was a blind man, and we know him, it's Bartimaeus son of Timaeus. And Mark tells us they were departing from Jericho. Luke tells us there was a blind beggar as they were entering Jericho. Oops.

How do you synchronize all of those variables. Let me give you some possibilities along with one impossibility.

The two vs one is easy enough. It doesn't matter or effect the story. There may have been two and later on, like the 10 lepers, one of them is familiar to us. We know Bartimaeus! We know his dad. He's still with us. He never left. He's an important guy in our group.

Perhaps he was one of the 120 in the house waiting when the Holy Spirit came upon us. He's one of us. There was another guy too. He didn't stay. We don't remember who he was. Maybe Bart remembers? That happens all the time.

There were two crazed men at Gedarra. Only one is later found in his right mind, demons departed into the pigs and over the cliff. What about the other guy? We really don't know. He wasn't with Jesus at the end of that story. In 50+ years of being a christian it's sad how many I've seen arrive and depart, and I can't even remember now who they were. But the folks who stay are solid.

That's the easy dissimilarity. The more difficult one is that Matthew and Mark remember this as the large crowd is departing, and Luke says they were arriving. Whadda we do with that?? Some possibilities and an impossibility;

One possibility is that in a city of 100,000 or so people there would be blind beggars sitting at both gates. It's possible these aren't speaking of the same event, but two very similar events. Maybe. That's a stretch.

Another colorful explanation is that there was at this time, old Jericho that Joshua entered with the children of Israel and the walls fell down, remember that Jericho. It's old Jericho and it's in rubble, and new Jericho that Jesus entered is a short distance away. Thus you could be leaving Jericho and arriving at Jericho at the same time depending on your perspective.

Both of those possibilities are a struggle for our intellectual honesty because in every case, there is at least one person shouting Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me. For the sake of intellectual honesty I'd say the old Jericho, New Jericho version is the least offensive of the two.

Now then I want to address what is NOT possible. People take these problem passages and they say, there it is, proof that the Bible while it may be infallible in questions of faith and salvation, it's authors made errors. It's

infallable in matters of salvation but it has human errors.

Let me warn you with some sternness. IF you fall into that hole, you'll never get out. Because if God's book is subject to human error, who decides what's an error and what isn't? It's a bottomless pit. If you try to combine science and human reason to over-rule what God's book plainly says, because there seems to be an error in the book as opposed to the science or the reason, the whole thing fails. It collapses in on itself. Pull on that thread and the whole thing comes unraveled. Quickly.

The religious community was ready to string Galileo up for saying the world was a sphere. Religious fervor to protect the book. But then we found out it really is a sphere, and we even found some allusions to that in Biblical passages, especially in Job.

Intellectual honesty has another name. Pride. Pride. One guy says they were entering. Two guys say they were leaving. One guy says there were two guys. Two guys say there was one guy. Here's the best way to synchronize all of those seeming discrepancy's.

We know that the words of scripture are flawlessly true. There is no error. So something like this that doesn't really change the story or the meaning, write it down on a spiral notebook if you want in order to remind you to ask Jesus later on, what was that all about, and He will tell you how it really happened.

That it *is* an error is impossible. That you don't have all of the facts to make it all fit perfectly in your proud intellect is highly possible. Get over yourself. Ask Jesus later if you like. But approach every difficulty as just exactly that. I don't have all the facts. But error is impossible.

Later on Jesus will tell you. Yes we were leaving Jericho but I saw this little man in a tree and we turned around and entered Jericho so I could go talk to him up in the tree. Two guys saw it as leaving, one guy saw it as coming.

What we do know for now, error in these pages, is not an option. If your pride

says you can't allow for these types of problems because you're just too smart to believe there's a logical answer, you need to get beyond the sin of your own pride. We believe the scriptures are God breathed and He is in full control of the authors abilities to write down what He desired for us to know . . without any error at all!

So that's our first lesson from this passage. If you think there's an error, check your pride in your fantastic intellect, repent if you need to, and let's move on to wonderful truths here for us.

*35 And it came about that as He was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the road, begging.*

What happens when you can no longer produce anything of value to other humans in order to sustain your own living, your own life's basic necessities? Pretty simple to answer this. One possibility is that you cease eating and drinking and in a few days, death overcomes you.

The other more realistic option is that you become dependent on other people who are able to produce enough necessary basic life sustaining things that they can sustain not only themselves, but others.

The family unit is the first safety net. Families work to produce necessities of life in an amount that all in the family can sustain life and comfort. A family unit can care for both very young members who are non-producers, but also older members who can no longer produce sustenance.

In that culture there wasn't much extra. With hard work you could produce enough to sustain a family sized group that had both producers and dependents. But there wasn't much extra above basic necessity. Folks within the normal working years who were dis-abled, if they had no family to help sustain them, had only one final option. Beg.

Problematically, in this society, was the error that if you were blind and starving, it was God who cursed you because of some heinous hidden sin.

You'll recall in John 9 the disciples question Jesus about just such a person; *"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*

That was the common belief. So if you do help him, you may be interfering with God's sovereign punishment. God cursed him, why help him. That compounded the problem in a society with almost zero safety net for the destitute among them.

Jesus continually calls us to support the helpless and dependent in His teaching. Also, if pride is what keeps people out of the kingdom of God, no one is closer to the kingdom than helpless dependent beggars. Their pride is broken. The already have to depend on others for daily sustainment of life. Depending on God for forgiveness is a short step for them.

*36 Now hearing a multitude going by, he began to inquire what this might be.  
37 And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.*

He's sitting close to the traffic on this well traveled road. Suddenly it's obvious that there's something significant happening. A commotion. Lots of people, lots of dust, lots of noise. Why is there a multitude passing by. Who are they, and where are they going?

It's Jesus of Nazareth who is passing by, with thousands who are following along. Passover is approaching. Hundreds of people would be pouring into Jerusalem, going up this road. That's why he's staked out this spot to do the one thing he can do. Beg.

But this multitude is significant. This is above and beyond normal heavy traffic going up to celebrate the passover. It's Jesus of Nazareth who is moving at the center of this multitude of people.

*38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

How often in our discussions concerning the Kingdom have we noted that in God's economy, His authority to reign, everything is upside down as opposed

to the cosmos of this world ruled by Satan. So many dead opposites, and Jesus seems to thrive on continually pointing that out. The first will be last and the last will be first. The rock stars here will be missing there. The have's here will be the have nots there. The bankrupt here will be rich there. The scum here will be the rulers there.

It should be of no surprise at all that the 20,000 people traveling along with Jesus cannot really see Him for who He truly IS, but a blind man knows exactly who He IS. It's in perfect cadence with everything He's taught. 38 *And he called out, saying, "Jesus, **Son of David**, have mercy on me!"*

Instantly when he learns that Jesus is near, he shouts out three things; His name. Jesus. His belief in who he believes Jesus is; Son of David. This was the familiar messianic title of the coming messiah. Son of David! Jesus, you son of David, Messiah, and third, his need; Have mercy on me.

He shouts, Jesus, You are the Messiah, Have mercy on me.

*39 And those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet;*

Why? We aren't told. Why did the disciples rebuke the parents who brought the babies? Babies and beggars and tax collectors. Sounds like a line out of a country western song. Babies and beggars and tax collectors fill out the bottom rung in their societal order.

Important people are discussing important things with Jesus who is an important Rabbi on His way to shake up the important status quo at Jerusalem. You babies and beggars and tax collectors can buzz off. All of us important people have no time for the likes of you. Hush!

I won't say much this morning but just to note that we are embarking on a time in our societal order where christians are going to be shoved to the bottom rung of society and no longer relevant to any important conversations our culture may be having. You christians; Shut Up!

Just like this blind beggar. Be quiet. Nobody wants to here from you. You've overstepped your boundaries. You have no purchase on anything of any importance that the important folks are talking abut. Be quiet. Shut up.

*but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

They told him to stand down. He takes it up a notch. The first word; *And he called out* was for shouting out. This word *he kept crying out* is rightly translated shieking. It's the word to describe a woman during child birth. Screaming! He went from loud to shriek. Same message. Jesus! Messiah! Have mercy on me. That's the right combination. Desperate need crying out for mercy from the right source. He begins with a loud voice and when they hush him, he shrieks!

Note here that to the crowd who tell the blind man in answer to his query what the multitude is about, Jesus is not Jesus, Son of David, He is simply Jesus from Nazareth. That Jesus. The one who grew up in Nazareth. Not a special title at all. It's like Jim from Tonopah. About that important. To the seeing He's just Jesus from Nazareth. To the blind man He is Jesus, Messiah.

*40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him;*

Mark adds a bit of colorful detail here; *49 And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, arise! He is calling for you." 50 And casting aside his cloak, he jumped up, and came to Jesus.*

Jesus is running this parade. He stops and tells all of the important folks to stand down, and instead, bring to Him this man who is shouting. So they tell the man, it's not necessary to shout any longer, take courage, you have an audience with Jesus. He's calling for you. You were calling for Him, take courage, because you got your wish; He's calling for you.

And the blind man leaps up, leaves his cloak behind and gets to Jesus with all dispatch. He moves smartly. His cloak is an important possession against the

elements. But getting to Jesus is more important. Worry about the cloak later.

*and when he had come near, He questioned him, 41 “What do you want Me to do for you?” And he said, “Lord, I want to regain my sight!”*

*“What do you want Me to do for you?”* Nothing here similar to how Jesus answered the rich young ruler. Jesus questioned the honesty of the rich young ruler saying to Him, Good teacher. Do you really believe I'm good? Only God is good. Is that who you think I Am? He challenges the rich young ruler.

Here there is no such challenge. You've addressed me as Messiah, and I Am. What is it that you want Messiah to do for you. Dis-belief from the rich young ruler gets a challenge concerning real faith. No such challenge here, because this man believes exactly what he has called out. Jesus, Son of David! *“What do you want Me to do for you?”* What is it you want from Messiah? Jesus could look inside of men's hearts and He knew exactly what was inside this man's heart. No challenge. What do you want Messiah to do for you?

*And he said, “Lord, I want to regain my sight!”*

This may be a subtle clue. *Regain* sight. He may have not always been blind. In that culture, syphilis was a common cause of blindness. He cried out for pity. Perhaps he doesn't deny that there is a link between sin and his condition. That's speculative, but he has asked to be able to regain sight.

*42 And Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.”*

Can modern science with all of our learning reverse a degenerative disease that has caused the function of seeing to cease. We might ask Carl. We know the answer. Seeing is a miracle in the first place. Billions of cells that create a conductor that connects the brain with the lenses of the eye. The whole thing is just incredibly complex. A miracle in motion.

How someone can understand even just the bare basics around how human's

see and then say that all happened by accident over trillions of year is the perfect definition of suppressing the truth in unrighteousness.

Jesus spoke three words. REceive your sight. Actually, in the greek, it's a single word; Anablepson It can be translated; look up. Us photographers might understand it in a single word; focus. My dad used to snap his fingers and say, "look here." That's it. That's the word.

When that word proceeded from the mouth of God, billions of useless degenerated hopelessly dead cells were re-created as normal healthy networks of nerves and electrical pulses from transmitters to receivers, and the lights came on, so to speak. God speaks, and it happens.

It is sin to deny that God formed sight in us at creation approximately 7000 years ago. *The wicked fool has said in his heart, There is no God.* Psalm 14 It's an even greater sin to have hundreds of reliable witnesses who saw this event, wrote it down in 3 different gospels, along with many other equal and greater miracles, and not fall down in worship of Jesus, who is God incarnate.

One word from His mouth and the lights in this man's eyes came back on. But there is more to this story; *42 And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."*

When we study the miracles I don't think faith was a requirement. I think Jesus healed people physically that we won't enjoy the company of in heaven. 10 lepers but only one came back to glorify God and thank Jesus. I suppose that lots of people got the cure, but that was as far as that went.

Thanks for fixing my problem Jesus. See ya. That isn't the case with this man, which we will hear from Jesus and see evidentiary proof. His faith made him well. A wellness that included forgiveness of sin and a relationship with God.

*43 And immediately he regained his sight, and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.*

Following Jesus and worshipping Jesus is the evidence of a deeper change than just receiving sight in blind eyes. We'll not know the full story until Bartimeus retells it in heaven. How it came about in the course of time that he heard the information about Jesus and how he believed that Jesus was indeed the son of David, the Messiah. How did that come about before Jesus walked past that day?

Some day, perhaps we'll know. A blind man understood clearly who Jesus was, while many of the 20,000 or so in the multitude that day would become dis-illusioned with Jesus after He gets to Jerusalem and be the same people who cry out for His blood.

How is it possible that the blind see's while he's still blind and the seeing are in fact blind, and become the mob convinced by the rulers that Jesus is a blasphemer who is getting His powers from Satan, and then cry out for His murder.

The sovereignty of God is on full display as we march along with Jesus. *and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.*

Let me caution you here. This mob is praising God but we will find out later that there is no depth in that praise. They will lay palm fronds in the road as He enters Jerusalem for the last time. But after a week of His teaching in the temple they will be dis-illusioned. He isn't who we wanted Him to be. He isn't going to crush Rome and be King in Israel. And these same folks who praise God on this hopeful day will cry out; Crucify Him, Crucify Him.

Thousands of people were praising God that day. The Mega Churches are all praising God. The Mormons are praising god. We only know one name out of those thousands. Bartimaus. We want to be the people of faith with the blind man who dropped everything and followed Jesus and never stopped. We know him. It's Bartimaus.