

Mercy on Two Blind Men

Matthew 20:29-34

September 23rd, 2018

Big idea: Jesus demonstrates compassionate service on the way to the cross by healing two blind men.

Intro

Perhaps you've had this experience – you're in the middle of an important project – something at work, something around the house, a big class project – and it's consuming a lot of your mental energy even if not all of your time. You're focused and teetering on the border of crossing into the bad stress zone. And someone unrelated to the project comes to you with an unrelated request – a child needs help finding their left shoe, a coworker needs help using the copy machine again (although you suspect they have intentionally decided not to learn how to use it and instead will rely on you throughout eternity) – how do you respond to this person? Isn't that a moment that puts our compassion to the test?

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to face the cross. He knew it and had just reiterated it to His disciples.

Jesus has just told them that to be great is to be a servant of all. Now the crowd is about to encounter two men who need to be served.

In a situation where we might be tempted to be stressed out and unload on someone, Jesus responds differently.

In such a situation Jesus showed mercy to two insignificant men (from a human perspective).

This is a great example of Jesus living out what he had just told his disciples. When are you too busy to serve others? Who are the "others" that you are too busy or important to serve?

Mark and Luke also contain records of this miracle, so we can get some added information by weaving them in.

1. Their persistent **request** (20:29-31)
 - a. The setting – leaving Jericho
 - i. Jericho was about 15 miles east and a little north of Jerusalem.
 - ii. It was a bit of an oasis in the wilderness because of the freshwater located nearby, and the mild climate in the winter. It had beautiful trees and produced figs and other fruit. Herod, the king at the time of Jesus' birth, built a winter palace there and while there would be snow in Jerusalem it would be warm in Jericho.
 - iii. Pic 1 – modern Jericho
 - iv. Pic 2 - MAP
 - v. It was in Jericho that the wealthy tax collector Zaccheus climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus as he passed by in Luke 19 as part of the same journey. The story of the good Samaritan takes place on the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho.
 - b. This was on the route to Jerusalem for the Passover that many from the northern part of Israel would follow so it's not surprising that a crowd would be with Jesus and beggars would be by the side of the road.
 - c. The blind men
 - i. Mark and Luke only mention one beggar and Mark gives us his name – Bartimaeus the son of Timaeus.
 - ii. **Mark 10:46** a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road.

1. Not a contradiction between the accounts – there were two but apparently one was more prominent.
2. Why give his name and his father’s name? Two possible reasons I can think of –
 - a. To validate the historicity of the account – “go ask Bartimeaus, you know who he is!”
 - b. Bartimeaus continued with Christ and was part of the early church at the time the gospels were written – “And you know one of these beggars, our very own Bartimeaus!”
 - i. You can picture Bartimeaus giving a little wave as that portion of the gospel is read.
- iii. The blind men were begging, the only form of support available to them.
 1. Jeremiah 2:34 refers to the innocent poor, those who through no fault of their own had to rely on the mercy of others to live. We are to show particular compassion and care to them.
- d. Their request
 - i. They were persistent and shouted over the crowd, even after the crowd sternly told them to be quiet. There must have been a note of desperation in their voices. They couldn’t go to Jesus on their own when he was in the region healing people. But not he’s walking right in front of them!
 - ii. Lord – could be an expression of faith in Jesus as the Sovereign Lord of the universe, or more simply an expression of respect, like “sir” or “master.”
 - iii. Mercy – often the request of the hurting as they approach Jesus in Matthew’s gospel.
 1. **Matthew 9:27** As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"
 2. **Matthew 15:22** And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and *began* to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."
 3. **Matthew 17:15** "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.
 4. What is mercy?
 - a. Often defined as “not getting what you deserve” but that doesn’t capture the full range of meaning.
 - b. Mercy is the feeling of *pity* or sympathy for the misery of others, leading to *acts* of mercy to alleviate the suffering.
 - c. At least 3 senses or forms of mercy in scripture – displayed most fully in the Lord but mirrored by His image bearers. (adapted from Dan Doriani)
 - d. Feelings of mercy
 - i. Feelings of compassion, pity, and affection toward someone hurting. (Liddel-Scott Lexicon)
 - ii. We feel mercy when our heart hurts for a crying child or a friend who has received news of personal tragedy.
 - e. Acts of mercy

- i. **Romans 12:6-8** Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: ...he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.
- ii. **Luke 10:36-37** "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' *hands*?" ³⁷ And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."
- iii. **Jude 1:22-23** And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.
- iv. Favor shown to the needy, the strong help the weak, we take pity and do something to help someone in need when we have the capability of helping, knowing that in the future we may be on the receiving end of an act of mercy.

f. Mercy of forgiveness

- i. **Titus 3:5-6** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
- ii. **1 Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- iii. **Matthew 18:33** 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?'

iv. Son of David

- 1. Messianic expectation, if Jesus really was the messiah then he could and would heal them in mercy
- 2. **Isaiah 35:5-6** Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah.
- 3. This title will be on the lips of those who welcome Him into Jerusalem in the next chapter (21:9). In chapter 22 Jesus will press the disciples with a question from Psalm 110 – how can David speak of his own son as Lord? (22:41-46)

2. His compassionate ***healing*** (20:32-34)

- a. He stopped and called to them
- b. He asked what would appear to be a question with an obvious answer
 - i. "What do you want Me to do for you?"
 - 1. Giving them an opportunity to demonstrate faith and make a clear request.
 - ii. "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened"
- c. Jesus touched their eyes in a gesture that wasn't necessary but was surely meaningful to the men.
 - i. He touched a leper (8:3), Peter's mother in law (8:15), the eyes of the blind men (9:29; 20:33), in each case with healing following.
- d. Jesus demonstrated the full range of mercy

- i. He felt mercy towards them (moved with compassion)
 - ii. He acted mercifully towards them (healing them)
 - iii. He is on the path that will purchase forgiveness as their substitute on the cross to mercifully forgive them.
- e. And the men follow Him. May just be a reference to them walking after him with the crowd but in Matthew it is often used of discipleship.
- f. Who is better off at the end of their stories – the formerly blind men or the rich young ruler from chapter 19?
 - i. These men now follow Jesus. They didn't suddenly become wealthy. They were on the side of the road to beg. But now they had sight (which the young man already had) and Jesus (which the young man declined).

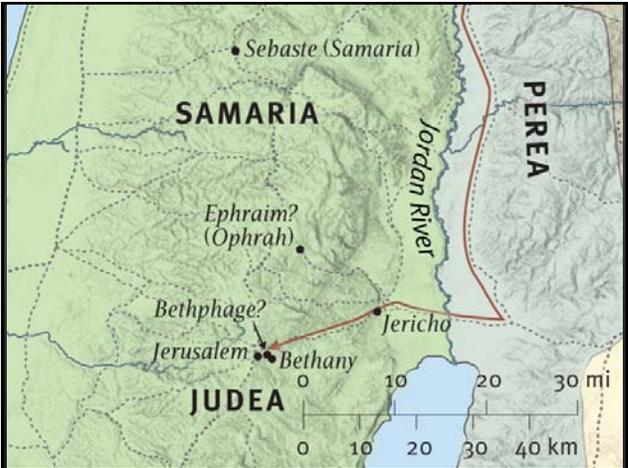
3. Key Truths

- a. We are recipients of God's mercy.
 - i. Matthew is written so we can see the person and work of King Jesus. What we learn about him in this passage is that He is merciful to the suffering.
 - ii. We can't merit that. Mercy doesn't work that way. Nothing fundamentally changes our identity as we go through life if we see ourselves as loved by God and objects of His mercy.
 - iii. **Ephesians 2:4-5** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
 - iv. God felt compassion, pity, and sympathy for you and acted in history to save you. He did a work in your heart to draw you, kindly helping you see your need for Him.
 - v. Steve Lawson - Nothing is too small that God that does not care. Nothing is too big that He cannot handle.
- b. We must show mercy to others.
 - i. Start with the small people in your own home if you have children. Consider the difficulty of being in middle school or high school and show mercy.
 - ii. Christians should care about the needs in our community, starting with the spiritual need of reconciliation with God but branching out to include other physical needs.
 - iii. The danger is mission drift, that we become caught up with merely meeting physical needs and ignore the spiritual needs.
 - 1. That was the trap that early 20th century progressive Christianity got caught in. The church became simply a relief agency for physical needs – soup kitchens, clothing drives, after school programs.
 - iv. Hurricane relief fund
 - 1. Many of our partner churches with the IFCA in North and South Carolina have been impacted by hurricane Florence. When a disaster like this happens within our family of churches, they set up a benevolence fund with a particular local church to oversee the distribution and accountability of funds. Although they don't yet know the details of the needs because they are still unfolding, they do know the financial need will be great on

the ground. If that is something you would like to give towards, you can mark "hurricane relief fund" on your check turned in to the offering at the end.



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