

## The Discipleship of the Blind Beggar Mark 10:46-52

Today, there are many people who confess they are religious and devout believers of Christ; yet, there are not many who are true Christians. There are many people in a given church; yet, there are not many good workers, or servants of Christ. True Christians and faithful servants of Christ are not born that way; rather, they become true Christians and faithful servants after a long period of training and education. Our ultimate goal must be to cultivate a "Disciple" of Christ through endless determination and education amid our 'stay home, stay safe' situation.

In order to become a Disciple of Christ, we must first know that the person we are following is Jesus Christ. We did not become Christians to follow a pastor or a lay leader. We became Christians to follow Jesus Christ, who delivered us from our sins and gave each and every one of us a life-long special task according to our abilities and gifts.

As Buddhists say when pointing at the moon, one must look at the moon and not the tip of the pointing finger. Accordingly, we must look at the centerpiece of our religion, Jesus Christ, and follow Him while keeping ourselves from looking at the tips of our pointing fingers. Therefore, in the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 2, it is stated, **"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith"**

The story regarding Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, is about becoming a true Disciple of Christ. The book of Mark, chapters 8 through 10 talks about the subject of "discipleship." In these three chapters, Jesus is portrayed as a teacher. Therefore, the stories of people who interacted with Jesus in these three chapters were answers to the question, "how to become a true Disciple of Christ?" The reason why the author of Mark put the story of Bartimaeus at the end of the book was to stress the fact that Bartimaeus truly knew who Jesus was, and that he was a true Disciple of Jesus.

In order to correctly understand today's scripture, we must first look at the book of Mark, chapters 8 and 9, and understand that the events in those two chapters took place right before Christ suffered at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem. The fate of Jesus, after he goes into Jerusalem, is not one of glory; rather, the fate of Christ was one of shame, disgrace, and crucifixion at the cross. In the midst of all these interrelated events, the story of a wealthy young man in Mark 10: 17-22 and story of James and John's sons of Zebedee who sought the glory of Jesus in Mark 10: 35-45 -contrast clearly with the story of the blind beggar Bartimaeus and the miracle of the restoration of his sight.

The wealthy young man and the blind beggar, from a financial standpoint, stood at opposite ends of the spectrum. He did not lack anything financially; however, due to his attachment to the materials around him, he could not become a true Disciple of Christ. This tells us that people who are overly secular and materialistic, will have a difficult time becoming a true Disciple of Christ.

James and John, whom Christ held a particular love for, spent three years living with Christ; yet, they did not truly understand who Jesus was, and why He had to go into Jerusalem. They mistakenly believed that the path of a Disciple was one of glory-rather than a path of suffering. Therefore, as if they were waiting for some compensation from Christ, they demanded things from Jesus. 'Teacher,' they requested in Mark 10: 35, **"we want You to do for us whatever we ask."** Christ asked James and John, in Mark 10: 36,

“What do you want Me to do for You?” They reply, in verse 37, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and other on Your left, in Your glory,” implying that they desired secular honor and authority. If materialistic greed kept the wealthy young man from becoming a true Disciple of Christ, James and John could not walk the path of true Disciples of Christ, despite being followers of Jesus, for they had greed for power and honor. Although they had good eyesight, they were blind spiritually. They looked and stared at Christ all day, but were spiritually blind in that they did not know who He was, or what He was about to accomplish.

In comparing these two groups of people to the blind beggar Bartimaeus, we can see what the path of a true Disciple of Christ looks like.

On the first Sunday of Easter, I would like to share with you ‘The discipleship of the Blind Beggar.’

### **1. Bartimaeus followed Jesus Christ with unwavering faith and consistency from the beginning to the end.**

Unlike other miracle stories in the book of Mark, the story of Bartimaeus centers on Bartimaeus, or the ‘son of Timaeus.’ To repeat, the story does not describe in detail how Christ cures this man’s blindness; rather, it explains in detail the physical state, the faith, and the persistence Bartimaeus, despite the restraint of those around him, to follow and request help from Jesus.

My opinion is that the writer of the gospel Mark wanted to embolden and highlight the fact that despite his physical handicap, Bartimaeus had perfect spiritual eyesight and was a true Disciple of Christ, unlike wealthy young men like John or James.

When Bartimaeus was sitting beside the road and heard that Jesus was passing through, he yelled out in Mark 10:47. “**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**” When people around him scolded him and told him to shut his mouth, Bartimaeus cried out more desperately and earnestly. Based on this, we can see that Bartimaeus, despite being blind and without physical seeing Jesus, held a deep conviction that Jesus, as the Descendant of David and as the Messiah, had the power to save him and cure him of his sickness. People around him could not extinguish the burning faith of Bartimaeus no matter how hard they tried.

A man named H.L. Melken once stated that “**true religion is 99% trust and 1% knowledge.**” In order to become a true Disciple of Christ, one needs, as a crucial ingredient, not knowledge concerning Christ, but the trust and faith that Jesus is our Messiah and our path to salvation.

### **2. Bartimaeus was a man of obedience.**

Nothing is more important than obedience in becoming a true Disciple of Christ. The wealthy young man upon hearing Jesus’ command him to sell his wealth, distribute it among the poor, and followed Him could not hide his saddened face and left Jesus. However, Bartimaeus, as recorded in verse 50, threw down his cloak and garment, and approached Christ. Outer garment for beggars probably held the same value as a boat for a fisherman, a very valuable item. However, so great was his joy in meeting his Savior, Bartimaeus casted aside the most valuable possession he owned and followed Jesus. The fact that Bartimaeus casted aside his garment also implies that Bartimaeus,

in approaching Christ, casted away all things that might hinder him in approaching his Savior. Like the outer garment of Bartimaeus, there are things that we possess, which we consider as invaluable, that may stand in our way of becoming a true Disciple of Christ. However, in order to become a true Disciple of Christ, we must have the courage to boldly cast away all things that stand in our way of true faith.

In many instances, we cannot obey both our Lord and the requirements of the secular society in which all of us live. Becoming a true Disciple of Christ requires us to throw away all those things which we hold dear and valuable. Therefore, in order to obey Jesus, we must be prepared to cast away all things which we may hold dear to our hearts. It is a great opportunity to think about what it means to be a Disciple of Jesus once again, especially for those of us who have to stay at home because of coronavirus.

### **3. True Disciples of Christ must be able to answer the question, “What do you want Me to do for you?”**

The interesting fact is, that just as Christ, in verse 36 of Mark 10, replied to James and John when they requested something from Him by saying “**What do you want Me to do for you,**” Christ offers the same response, in verse 51, to Bartimaeus. However, there was a great difference in the answer that Bartimaeus gave. Whereas James and John requested guaranteed status and glory once Christ assumed the power of this world, Bartimaeus merely requested the Lord’s mercy, that he be restored with the ability to see with his own eyes.

False Disciples follow our Lord to gain secular honor and compensation; true Disciples, on the other hand, request from the depths of their heart, the generosity and mercy of Jesus. Perhaps Christ already saw the unending faith and hope of Bartimaeus, which sprang forth like a fountain from deep within his heart, when Jesus said, “**Go away, for your faith has made you well.**” Once his physical eyes opened, Bartimaeus, whose spiritual eyes were already open, was able to follow Jesus Christ.

Reverend Sam Williams of Van Ness Community Church in California stated, “**God doesn’t solve problems for us. God solves problems with us.**” True miracles are not one-sided supernatural efforts by God; rather, it occurs in us internally as we have the faith and hope that we will accomplish something in this world. Bartimaeus was able to experience the miracle because his heart was overflowing with hope and faith.

Our Lord, our God, is still alive today and He is calling for true Disciples. I hope our church families carry on His work as he calls for His Disciples, who understand that although the true path to God is often adorned with thorns, to be willing to walk the path through their faith in obedience to God.

At this time, when all our lives have changed by the coronavirus, we must reconsider what it means to be a true Disciple of Jesus. May our spiritual eyes be open, looking

only to God, and the risen Christ always be with us, and be the true Disciples of Jesus Christ looking at the hopes of heaven.

Amen.

Let us pray!

Loving God, thank you for having us as your children even though we do not deserve it. Help us to open our spiritual eyes to recognize God's will and word in this troubled world due to coronavirus. Unlike the wealthy young men, James and John, had good eyesight but were blinded spiritually because they desired secular honor, authority, and materialistic greed, Lord, give us strong faith like Bartimaeus to overcome worldly desires and secular honor. Help us fix our eyes and perspective to you, Lord, and to look and stare to only Jesus Christ who is the center of our lives. Help us to keep our faith and be true Disciples of Christ so we may throw away all things which we hold dearly and materialistic value and obey and follow God's word and direction which opens our spiritual eyes.

We pray in Jesus' name! Amen.