

As I reflected on our New Testament reading today I was reminded of my various trips over 10 years ago to work in the slums in Thailand. The welfare system is such that if you don't have a home, you are not entitled to any state benefit or services. And so people find themselves in a trap. There appears to be no way out, and so as they become more dependent they move into the city and sit all day on street corners begging. And although we may complain about the welfare systems at present within our own society, we don't allow people to suffer to this extent.

In our text today, we read of an individual who, by our standards, was encumbered with serious limitations. Bartimaeus was blind and financially strapped, very likely to have been ostracised by his community. And yet he did not allow his limitations to conquer his ambition. Let's have a look at how he responded when Jesus was closeby.

### **I. He Took Personal Initiative (v. 46-47)**

Bartimaeus took it upon himself to call upon Jesus. Our reading says, "And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout..." He possibly could have waited for a more convenient opportunity. He could have waited for a more appropriate time. The problem, however, was that his sight wasn't getting any better.

None of us suffer from physical blindness, but some people we know may suffer from spiritual blindness. And the facts are that spiritual blindness will never improve until people have had an encounter with Jesus. Bartimaeus had heard that Jesus was near. Undoubtedly, he had heard previously of the miracles and abilities of Jesus. However, only hearing about Jesus is not enough. If all people do in their life is keep coming to church and hear about Jesus but don't make the effort to build a relationship with him then it's not enough.

So what did Bartimaeus do? He did the only thing that he could do. He called upon Jesus. And that's the difference that's needed in every person with spiritual blindness. Romans 10:13 states, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Have you noticed who's responsibility it is to call. Jesus was near, but He didn't come until Bartimaeus called. Likewise, only those who call upon God will be saved. We must realize our own helpless state. We must recognize our only remedy. We must respond to our responsibility and take the initiative to call upon God.

### **II. He Persisted Over Obstacles (v. 48)**

The Bible says that, "Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet." Can you imagine if he would have listened to them. It was by all human means an incurable problem. Yet Jesus had the only cure, and He was passing by at that moment. Bartimaeus wasn't going to be denied. And so our passage says that, "he cried out even more loudly"

How persistent would you be to overcome your obstacles? The Bible gives us numerous instances where God has blessed lives because of the persistence of an individual. In Genesis 32, Jacob received the blessing of God because he wouldn't let go. In Matthew 15, a daughter was delivered from Satanic bondage because of a mother's persistence. Folks when it comes today to how much you are willing to pursue God, are you going to keep persisting for an encounter like Bartimaeus did?

### **III. He Responded Promptly (v. 49-50)**

In verse 49, our reading says that Jesus heard Bartimaeus' cry and "stopped." What a wonderful expression of concern – that when Jesus hears us calling he stops what he's doing. The great God of the universe, as busy as He was with the multitude, with the task of returning to Jerusalem where He would be crucified, and with the knowledge that He would soon bear the sins of the world, still took time to stop and show compassion on one helpless soul. That's what he is doing even today.

It gives us great encouragement to know that we are never ignored by God – he loves us too much. When others let us down, when we receive no recognition from those who say they care but don't, Jesus stops and hears our cries for help.

### **IV. He Exercised Powerful Faith (v. 51-52)**

Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted him to do. Bartimaeus' request was to receive his sight. What an act of boldness and faith to call on Jesus when no one wanted to hear his lament and then to ask for his sight when he had nothing to offer in return.

Nevertheless, because of the faith of Bartimaeus, Jesus extended mercy and immediately he received his sight. The faith of Bartimaeus so moved the living God that, with affirmation of his faith, he was made whole.

Folks, you don't have to be a spiritual giant for God to move on your behalf. You just simply need faith and know that he heals. Jesus stated in Matthew 17:20, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." So come to him humbly, not for selfish gain, and tell him what you need for him to do.

### **Finally, (V) He Followed the path of Jesus (v. 52)**

You see Bartimaeus' next course of action honoured God greater than all the others. Once he received his healing, he chose to follow Jesus. Verse 52 says 'Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road'.

Sadly, it seems that when circumstances are the most favorable, it is the easiest time to forget who is blessing us. We briefly thank God and move on with our lives forgetting what he has done for us.

**In Luke 17**, Jesus met up with ten lepers who desired mercy from Him. He commanded that they go and show themselves to the priest, which was the proper course of action according to the law. The Bible states that as they went, they were cleansed from their leprosy. But realizing their healing, one of the ten who was a Samaritan (the one who you would not have expected to return to a Jew such as Jesus), turned and came back to Jesus. He fell on his face and with a loud voice glorified God. But remember the question that Jesus asked? And Jesus answering said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

The reality of Jesus' life was that as he travelled through a town, many realized the power of his healing. But how many would have then given up everything to follow him? Whereas Bartimaeus, in thanksgiving for his healing, surrendered his life to Jesus and followed Him the rest of his days. In your own life recall the ways in which Jesus has healed you, answered your cries, and instead of moving on, take the time now to thank him, but then commit to follow him as Bartimaeus did recognizing what his saviour had done for him.

Folks, Bartimaeus shows us the hope that comes when we recognise we've been spiritually blind and our need to find Jesus. If we are willing to realize our helpless condition, call upon Jesus, cast off our garments of self-righteousness, place our faith entirely in his work on the cross, and commit ourselves to follow Him to the end, we will receive that abundant, eternal life that Jesus came to give you.

Let us pray.

Father in heaven, may we be humble enough today to recognise our need for you in every aspect of our lives. Forgive us in our blindness for fumbling around trying to make our way through the hopelessness of life without you. May we, like Bartimaeus, make it our priority to go searching after you, to persist whatever the cost, to respond when we hear your call, to trust in you by faith, and to commit ourselves to following you daily. In Jesus' name we ask this. Amen.