

Glorifying God

That looks like Monica," LaWanda said, pointing. "That woman in the red top, jumping up and down."

"You're right. That is Monica," said Necie.

LaWanda and Necie, who were seated in the balcony, were part of a few thousand people who had come to the massive Abundant Life Community Church for its day-long women's seminar on "The Abundance of Righteous Living." The sessions had concluded with a guest speaker, and she had ended her talk with an altar call.

"If you have a need, Christ can fill it," Paula Robertson said. "Regardless how desperate your situation may seem, nothing is too hard for God. Call out to Him!"

LaWanda and Necie then heard Monica raise her voice.

"Isn't she already a Christian?" asked Necie.

"Yes," said LaWanda. "But I think she is unemployed."

As people were leaving later, LaWanda caught sight of Monica, called her name, and waved. Monica moved from the group of women she was speaking to and approached LaWanda and Necie. The three exchanged hugs.

"So, girl, I see you were getting your aerobics in today," said Necie.

"Huhh?" Monica said.

"At the altar," Necie continued.

"Oh, right," Monica replied. "I wasn't paying attention to anyone else. I'm in need of job, and I was calling out to my Savior about it!"

1. *Why is it important to believe that Jesus can fulfill any request that is honoring to God and others?*

2. *Is there a difference between making significant and trivial requests of God? Explain your answer.*

3. *Why would you not cry out to God when you're in need?*

The Plea of Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46-48, KJV

46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

Mark 10:46-48, NIV

⁴⁶Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁸Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

As Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the last time during His earthly ministry, the Twelve were amazed and perhaps somewhat confused, while others who followed were gripped by fear (Matt. 20:17; Mark 10:32). The group heading to Jerusalem for the Passover festival may have sensed a crisis was looming and this fueled their anxiety.

One of the towns along the way was Jericho. At this point, Jesus was with His disciples, along with a "large crowd" (Mark 10:46). Squatting along the roadside was a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. His name literally means "son of Timaeus." He is the only person singled out by name in the Gospel of Mark among all those Mark recounted being healed by Jesus. One possible reason for this is that Bartimaeus may have eventually become a widely known disciple in the early Christian community.

In his otherwise almost identical account, Matthew notes that Jesus encountered two blind men, not one

(Matt. 20:30). One way to possibly resolve the discrepancy is to recognize that there were two sight-impaired beggars near Jericho. Yet Bartimaeus was louder than the other person and drew the majority of the Messiah's attention.

During the first century A.D., "begging" (Mark 10:46) was the only means of support for those with a severe physical disability such as blindness. It is not hard to imagine Bartimaeus sitting on a straw mat and holding up a saucer into which sympathetic passersby could drop their coins. When he heard a throng of people heading toward him, he inquired about the cause of the commotion. The blind beggar learned that an itinerant rabbi from Nazareth named Jesus was passing by.

Evidently, Jesus' reputation as a miraculous healer was familiar to Bartimaeus, for he did not hesitate to cry out to Jesus for "mercy" (vs. 47). The underlying Greek verb means to show compassion or have pity on someone in dire need. Even more remarkable is that the blind beggar referred to Jesus as the "Son of David," which points to His royal, messianic heritage. Despite other instances in Mark when Jesus silenced those who attempted to identify Him as the Messiah (1:43-45; 3:12; 5:43; 8:29-30), Jesus did not silence the public proclamation made by Bartimaeus.

Bartimaeus did not just "shout" (vs. 47) to Jesus once or twice, but repeatedly. The blind beggar created such a disturbance that it interrupted what must have seemed like a festive mood up to that point. This explains why many people "rebuked" Bartimaeus (vs. 48). So, in a reprimanding tone, many in the crowd demanded that the blind beggar should "be quiet" (vs. 48).

Bartimaeus, however, refused to be silenced. He pleaded for Jesus to show him "mercy."

- 4.** *Who accompanied Jesus as He came to Jericho?*
- 5.** *What kind of plea did Bartimaeus make to Jesus?*
- 6.** *How did the crowd respond to Bartimaeus?*

The Healing by Jesus

Mark 10:49-52, KJV

49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Mark 10:49-52, NIV

⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you."

⁵⁰Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

⁵²"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you."

Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

When Jesus heard the persistent outcry of the blind beggar, He stopped and directed that Bartimaeus be brought to Him. The crowd, who moments earlier had reprimanded the blind beggar for calling out to Jesus, now urged Bartimaeus to "cheer up" (vs. 49), or take comfort in his heart. He was also told to stand up, for Jesus was summoning him. The blind beggar quickly responded by removing and tossing aside his "cloak" (vs. 50), or outer "garment" (KJV), which he used to keep himself warm and had folded on his lap to receive donations from those who passed by. Then, after jumping up, he eagerly went to meet Jesus.

At first, it might seem peculiar to contemporary readers that Jesus would ask a blind man what he wanted. Yet, the Savior did so for a good reason. Throughout his entire adult life, Bartimaeus had been soliciting others

for handouts. In this case, he could have avoided the risk of being denied his request for sight, especially if it was regarded as being too much to ask from Jesus. But Bartimaeus entreated the rabbi from Nazareth to enable him to see.

As a title of respect, the Greek noun translated “Rabbi” (vs. 51) could also be rendered as “teacher,” “master,” or “Lord” (KJV). By addressing Jesus in this way (along with the earlier reference to Him as the “son of David” (vss. 47, 48), Bartimaeus displayed an amazing amount of faith. Specifically, when the blind beggar asked for his sight, it was clear that he truly believed Jesus could perform such a miracle.

Jesus had only to say the eyes of Bartimaeus were healed, and they were by the man’s “faith” (vs. 52). By trusting in Jesus, the beggar had instantly been healed. The Greek text can also mean his faith “saved” (*sozo*) him. On one level, Bartimaeus had been delivered from his

blindness. Yet, on another level, his “faith” in Jesus had rescued Bartimaeus from his sin.

The healed man was so thankful that he followed the Savior along the road. Luke adds that Bartimaeus also began “praising God” (Luke 18:43) for his miracle of sight.

7. *How did Jesus respond to Bartimaeus?*

8. *What was at the heart of the Bartimaeus’s request?*

9. *What word of encouragement did Jesus offer to Bartimaeus?*



Jesus heals Bartimaeus in this painting by English artist Harold Copping (1863–1932).

Do Not Be Silent

Bartimaeus, the blind man, would not be hindered by those who would keep him from Jesus. Sometimes well-meaning people will tell those in crisis not to expect anything miraculous from God. They say, “We don’t want you to be disappointed, you know.” They might also say things like, “If you only expect little things from God, then you won’t be as disappointed when nothing happens”—or so the popular thinking goes.

Bartimaeus wanted nothing less than to have his sight restored—an impossible feat by ancient or modern standards. Bartimaeus ignored the crowd who told him to “calm down,” be quiet, and simply resign himself to his fate.

The Jesus of the first century is no different than the Jesus of today, and He is ready to intervene for those who cry out to Him.

Jesus addressed all areas of life in His miraculous earthly ministry: healing from disease, the provision of necessary funds, reaching out to the disenfranchised, and giving hope to those in crisis.

Do not be silent or timid in your requests to Jesus. The Lord has not changed, either in His ability and or His willingness (in His way and time) to do the miraculous. When He does the miraculous, it is an expression of deep love and compassion for those who cry out to Him.

10. *What circumstances might lead someone to believe that God no longer performs miracles in people’s lives?*

11. *Why do some well-meaning people discourage the hopeful from asking God to do the impossible?*

12. *In what area of life (health, finances, vocation, relationships) do you need to cry out to Jesus for miraculous intervention?*

13. *If Jesus were to fulfill your request, how would you use His miraculous provision to advance His Kingdom?*

Cry Out!

After Jesus healed Bartimaeus, he immediately began to follow the Lord. Of course, after we cry out to Jesus, and He answers our prayers, the expectation is that we will use the gifts He has given to us to advance His kingdom.

► *How has Jesus miraculously intervened in your life? How will you use the gifts He has given to you to build up and encourage others in His Kingdom? End the lesson in prayer, asking Jesus for the courage to ignore the pushback of the critics in our lives and to cry out to Him when we need Him to do the impossible.*

KEY VERSE

And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. —Mark 10:51, KJV

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.” —Mark 10:51, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of September 20 through September 26

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Exodus 19:1-8—A Priestly Kingdom, a Holy Nation.
- Tues.** Exodus 20:1-6—Worship God Alone.
- Wed.** Psalms 133; 134—When Kindred Live in Unity.
- Thurs.** Revelation 4—Praise in the Heavenly Community.
- Fri.** Acts 2:1-12—The Day of Pentecost.
- Sat.** Acts 2:22-36—Jesus Is Lord and Messiah.
- Sun.** Acts 2:37-47—A Community Praise.