

“Jericho’s Dust in Our Eyes” Luke 18:31-43

Context: The account of Blind Bartimaeus is subtly woven into Luke’s accounts on spiritual disillusionment. Its weave includes the errant self-righteous attitudes of the Pharisees, the demeaning assumptions about children by the disciples, and the misguided conjectures on salvation of the rich young ruler. All of these provide the rationale as to why would-be disciples are blind to Jesus’ work of redemption and resurrection. The theme of God’s miraculous work within human impossibility recurs in today’s teaching. It fulfills Luke’s purpose for this Gospel by dispelling the illusion that our spiritual blindness is without remedy and by revealing that the Kingdom of God is possible to see when God removes that which blinds us to its presence.

Life Principle: Defy the crowds of the spiritually blind and cry out to the God who has made your spiritual eyes see.

1. Calling for God’s mercy - Luke 18:35-39

Vincent recalls that “the dust, the glare of the sun, the unsanitary habits filled the streets with the blind.” This time, however, Bartimaeus took his place, sensing the nearness of the Messiah. He defied the blind guides’ illusion and rebuke that Jesus was too busy for him. He shouted for Jesus’ help on the basis of His merciful nature.

2. Acting on God’s mercy - Luke 18:40-41

While other beggars sought gifts that were humanly possible, Bartimaeus faced Jesus’ question with a request that broke the illusion of human impossibility. He asked Jesus for a work of God, the ability to look up with eyes that could see.

3. Responding to God’s mercy - Luke 18:42-43

Not only did Bartimaeus receive his sight, but Jesus declared him saved forever. Bartimaeus received the ability to lift up His eyes and see His Messiah. He responded by choosing the way of Jesus as his life path, weighting Christ’s name as his journey with Him began. The rebuke of the crowd changed into praise as what was impossible was seen even by them.

For Further Study:

- Studying parallel accounts of the synoptic Gospels can deepen the hues of the colors of truth being painted. Using your Bible cross reference, find and compare Mark’s account of the Jericho story. What is the theological significance of the name Bartimaeus in Aramaic (using Thayer’s - cf. #2931 in <http://www.biblestudytools.com/Lexicons/Greek/>)? Culturally, how would blindness amplify this significance (cp. John 9:2ff)? What similarities does the blindness of Bartimaeus have with that of the rich young ruler (cp. Luke 18:19)? What does this have to do with the disciples’ understanding of Christ’s redemption in Luke 18:34 (cp. John 7:39; 12:16; 16:13-14)?
- Our doctrinal statement attributes our inability to truly see to humanity’s radically wounded sinful nature (see our **doctrinal statement ‘On Mankind’** under **what we believe**, footnote 8 at <http://www.gracepointfellowship.org/files/DocStmnt.pdf> and also Romans 7:18; 3:10; Ephesians 2:3). How does the name Bartimaeus ingeniously depict humanity’s state? How does the healing of Bartimaeus reinforce the teaching to the crowd about our inability to earn salvation (cf. Luke 18: 26-27)? What is one action that God does to make spiritual illumination possible (cf. Luke 18:27; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 1:17-20; 1 Corinthians 2:12-16)? What evidence do you have of that reality?
- In Luke 18:42, Jesus declares that the blind man’s faith has “saved him” (perfect tense). What evidence reveals that this man was saved? Giving concrete examples, how would you apply that evidence to you?

Transformation exercise:

Meditate on Luke 18:41a. Give at least 5-10 minutes of silent time before God in prayer and answer Christ’s question, “What do you want me to do for you?” Go ahead and pray boldly, but give heed to your request!