

The Merciful Son of David

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[0:00] Open up your Bibles if you have them with you. Open up to Mark, to the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 10. We are going to finish Chapter 10 this morning before we move into Chapter 11 next week.

And we will then eventually be taking a couple of weeks off from our journey through the Gospel of Mark for Christmas. And then we'll get back into Mark and we will be in Mark and we will finish, hopefully, the plan is to finish this Gospel on Easter Sunday.

Which is appropriate as we look at Mark's account of the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday.

But this morning we're still here in Chapter 10. We're going to be reading verses 46 through 52.

And one of the things that we do, if you're new at Church of the Cross, one of the things that we do as we read God's Word is we stand together out of reverence. So I want to ask you all to stand as we read. Beginning in verse 46, Mark writes, And they came to Jericho.

And they stopped and said, Call him. And they called the blind man, saying to him, Take heart. Get up. He is calling you. And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

[1:32] And Jesus said to him, What do you want me to do for you? And the blind man said to him, Rabbi, let me recover my sight. And Jesus said to him, Go your way. Your faith has made you well.

And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him along the way. Father, take your Word by your Spirit. Open our minds to understand it and our hearts to receive it now. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Y'all take a seat. I don't know how many times I've read this story over the years. Numerous, numerous times I've read this story. And there are certain details in this story that have always struck me as a little strange.

A little bit odd. It seems to me to be a little bit strange that you have this blind beggar who's just sitting on the roadside and he's crying out to Jesus.

And yet Jesus initially does not appear to hear him at all. It's strange even that the followers of Jesus, the disciples and others who were traveling with him, would tell this man to be quiet and would urge him to just leave them alone.

[2:39] And then that Jesus would call the man to come to him, but he doesn't immediately respond. Jesus has to send people over to him. I mean, if he's sitting on the road and Jesus is walking on the road, why does Jesus have to send people over there and say, hey, by the way, he wants to talk to you?

All of those details initially seem kind of strange and maybe a little bit confusing. You don't quite understand why they're there until you begin to understand the actual historical circumstances involved and what was actually happening on this particular day.

We've already said as we've been walking through these last couple of chapters of Mark that Jesus and his disciples are on a journey. We know because Jesus has told his disciples and Mark has told us that Jesus is headed toward Jerusalem where he is going to lay down his life for his people.

He's going to give up his life, he said last week in our passage, as a ransom for many. So he's on a mission, he's on a journey, and he's headed toward Jerusalem.

But what we need to realize is that Jesus is not the only person headed toward Jerusalem. Jesus and his disciples are not the only people going to Jerusalem. Jerusalem.

[3:52] This particular story takes place in the spring, in the month of March, probably in the year 33 AD. And what's significant about that particular time of the year in March is that people would be flocking toward Jerusalem for the Passover that's to be held in a matter of weeks

now.

Perhaps even less than two weeks from when this story takes place. The Passover will be held in Jerusalem and thousands and thousands of pilgrims would have been flocking toward Jerusalem. The population, most scholars think that the population of Jerusalem in the first century was somewhere between 25 and 30, or at the most, 35,000 people on a regular basis.

But at Passover time, the population of Jerusalem would swell to over 100,000 people. So you've got anywhere from 65,000 to 75,000 pilgrims streaming into Jerusalem at this time.

And we're told by Mark here that Jesus comes to Jericho. Jericho is located about 18 miles northeast of Jerusalem on one of the major trade and travel routes in and out of Jerusalem.

[5:06] So that Jesus here would have been surrounded by, not his disciples and a handful of people, Jesus would have been surrounded by, at minimum, dozens of people and possibly a couple of hundred people as he was traveling down the road.

We know that Jesus himself had a kind of magnetism that drew the crowds to him. Mark tells us that over and over. In fact, here in this particular passage, the word crowd in verse 46 is used for the 28th time in the Gospel of Mark.

And in all those other occurrences, the crowds are those who were attracted to Jesus and came to him and surrounded him. So now you not only have the magnetism of Jesus with crowds surrounding him, but you also have the pilgrims who are traveling toward Jerusalem.

So this is a very packed, dense crowd that's moving along the road. And we were told at the very beginning that they came to Jericho.

They're in Jericho. And this is significant. Because the place where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, which is recorded for us in the Gospel of John, is not far from Jericho.

[6:16] It's just a few miles away. And it hasn't been that long since Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. So wouldn't you assume that word had spread to Jericho by now that Jesus is capable of raising the dead, that this miracle worker from Galilee is now in the region and he's not only in the region, but he's doing miracles that are beyond comprehension.

Of course, word had spread to Jericho. And so you've got people from the city of Jericho who were surrounding Jesus. You've got the normal crowds who Mark tells us earlier in this chapter had followed Jesus from Galilee down to Judea where he is now.

And then you've got all the pilgrims streaming toward Jerusalem. Through Jericho. There's a lot of people on the road that day. Which is exactly why this blind beggar who we're told is named Bartimaeus was sitting on the side of the road.

If you're a beggar and you're in desperate need and the only way to get the things that you need is for people to give them to you, then you've got to go to where the people are. I mean, have you ever noticed that you don't see a lot of people begging in small towns?

You ever just noticed that? There's not a lot of guys standing on the street corner in a small town of 4,000 or 5,000 people. Occasionally, you might see somebody but there's not a lot. But if you go to Houston, you'll see guys on almost every corner under the underpasses and all over the place are there begging for money because they know that if you want to get people to give you money, you've got to get the odds in your favor.

[7:44] If five people are going to pass by you, you're probably not going to get anything. But if 500 people are going to pass by you, you might get something. So Bartimaeus is no different than any other beggar in any other time period.

He goes to where the people are. And so he's sitting alongside the road as hundreds upon hundreds would have been streaming by every day. And he sits and he banks.

Right there. And not only that, but we see some other details that are here just in these verses.

Verse 46, they came to Jericho. And then my translation says that as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside as he was leaving Jericho, it says.

Literally what this word says, though, is as he was going out of Jericho, because I don't think that he was leaving the city just yet. I don't think that he was leaving the city just yet because in the Gospel of Luke, he performs this miracle just before he goes into the city and he meets a man named

Zacchaeus.

Do you remember Zacchaeus? He's the wee little man climbed up a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus. Do you remember why he climbed up a sycamore tree? Because the crowds were too big. [9:01] So Jesus is here in the vicinity of Jericho, probably going in and out of the city itself, just outside the city occasionally. We see that that's Jesus' frequent practice.

He did that when he was up in Galilee. He would go out of Capernaum, which was sort of his home base for operations in Galilee. He would go out into the wilderness to spend some time in prayer and oftentimes his disciples would go with him.

Sometimes the crowds would follow him so they'd have to go further out of the wilderness to actually have some alone time. So I think that's probably what's happening. Jesus is in the city. He's come into Jericho and now he's going out of Jericho, walking along the road, going out into the, maybe into the wilderness possibly to spend some time in prayer.

The city of Jericho was, after all, situated in the middle of a pretty dry, barren climate. It's very interesting because if you read through the Bible, you'll always hear that even though Jericho is northeast of Jerusalem, they always say that you go up to Jerusalem.

But why do you go up to Jerusalem if you're going southwest to get there? What sense does that make? Why would they say you're going up to Jerusalem even if you're coming all the way from Galilee in the north and you're headed toward Jerusalem?

[10:13] The Bible always says that they went up to Jerusalem. Well, the reason is pretty simple. Jerusalem is somewhere around 2,500 feet in elevation. Jericho is somewhere around 800 or 900 feet below sea level.

Jericho, so there's a, there's a 3,300 foot drop between where Jerusalem is and where Jericho is. And what's interesting about that is Jerusalem located in the hills and in the mountains had a, had a fairly nice climate.

It rained a lot there in Jerusalem. That's why they were, had the Garden of Gethsemane and other gardens that surrounded the city. But by the time you get all, you get, you go, you travel all the way down to Jericho, they get on average about eight inches of rain a year.

It's in the middle of this sort of desolate, dry area. And the only reason that Jericho was such a, a large, prospering city was because King Herod had built aqueducts and had brought them into the city of Jericho so that in Jericho itself, you could find flourishing gardens.

You could find all sorts of things that just outside the walls of Jericho you wouldn't find. It's dry on the outside and flourishing on the inside because of the things that Herod had built. And so Jericho was a thriving city that people would love to stop in on their way to Jerusalem in the midst of their pilgrimage.

[11:32] And Jesus is there. He's in Jericho. He goes out of the city, not permanently leaving the city. He goes out perhaps to have some time alone for prayer. But the crowds are large because of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

The crowds are large because of his reputation. And so he's on the road just outside the city and the blind beggar named Bartimaeus hears. But Jesus who is able to raise the dead, Jesus who has done all of these great miracles in the northern region of Galilee, Jesus is about to come by.

And much like Zacchaeus, Bartimaeus knows that he needs to get in touch with this man, Jesus. And so I want you to take a look closely at what Bartimaeus says because I think there are two essential things that we learn about the character of Jesus and the person of Jesus just in what Bartimaeus says.

Verse 47 says that when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and to say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And then again in the middle of verse 48, Son of David, have mercy on me.

[12:49] There are two things that he says here. First, he addresses Jesus as the Son of David. That's immeasurably significant for understanding who Jesus is.

You see, when God originally chose David to be his king and then later God made a covenant with David, the covenant that God made with David in the Old Testament was that David would never lack a descendant of his to sit upon the throne in Jerusalem.

That there would be a descendant of David who would rule forever over God's people. And yet at this point in time, there's no descendant of David and there's no throne upon which a descendant can sit.

The Romans have absolute rule there in Jerusalem and in Judea and in all of Palestine. There's no king on the throne, but there are those who can still trace their lineage all the way back to David. In fact, at this point in time, they had fairly good records of a person's genealogy. That wouldn't be the case. A hundred years removed from these events, that wouldn't be the case because the Romans came in and they destroyed the city of Jerusalem, they destroyed the temple, they destroyed many of the genealogical records.

[14:08] But here, at this point in time, there are good genealogical records and there are a number of people who can trace their lineage all the way back to King David. And Jesus is among those who is able to do that through Joseph, his adopted father.

In fact, the Gospel of Matthew, the New Testament itself, begins by affirming the descent of Jesus from David. This is significant. This is essential for understanding who Christ is.

It was promised to David that he would have a descendant on the throne forever. And then, it was predicted in the prophets. If you'll turn, if you want to hold your place there in the Gospel of Mark, I just want to show you, we're going to spend more time talking about this issue of Jesus' descent from David next week, but I do want to show you a couple of passages.

Turn to Isaiah chapter 11 if you can. In Isaiah chapter 11, the prophet Isaiah predicts a time when a descendant of David will rise again. He says in Isaiah 11 verse 1, he says, that there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse.

Jesse is David's father. So for a shoot to come from the stump of Jesse means a descendant of David. There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.

[15:27] The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge into the fear of the Lord and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

There's coming a day, Isaiah says, when a descendant of David will rise and the spirit of God will rest upon him in a way that the spirit is not rested upon anyone else.

What happened to Jesus at his baptism at the very beginning of the gospel of Mark? The spirit of God came and rested upon him and empowered him and gave him a wisdom that was beyond anyone else who had ever lived.

not only the prophet Isaiah, the prophet Jeremiah. You can turn over to Jeremiah chapter 23 and Jeremiah looks toward the future and he sees the day in verse 7 of chapter 23 when a descendant of David will come.

He says, I'm sorry, verse 5, he says, behold, the days are coming declares the Lord when I will raise up for David a righteous branch and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

[16:38] In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely and this is the name by which he will be called the Lord is our righteousness. He's coming.

A descendant of David, a righteous branch, one who fully obeys the law of God and not only is he coming, not only will he be filled with the spirit and will he be called righteous because of obedience to the law of God but he will be called the Lord is our righteousness.

His righteousness will be our righteousness. His righteousness will count as the righteousness of his people. He is coming, a descendant of David.

This is such an essential part of understanding who Christ is, such an essential part of the basic message of Christianity that in the book of Romans, when the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 1 is introducing himself to the believers in Rome who he has never met when he writes that letter.

He's never met them and he needs to help them to understand a little bit about who he is and what it is that he teaches and when Paul is giving them at the beginning of that letter a basic summary of what he teaches, he describes Christ as one who is a descendant of David according to the flesh.

[18:01] It was essential. In order for the Apostle Paul to identify with believers in a far-off city whom he had never met, in order for him to identify with them and be acceptable to them, he needed to begin his

gospel by saying, I believe Jesus is a descendant of David according to the flesh.

This is not extra. This is not something that you may believe believe or not believe, you can take it or leave it. It is essential to the basic message of the Bible that Jesus is the long-awaited, long-expected descendant of David who would come and rule in righteousness and be filled with God's Spirit.

This is who he is. He is the fulfillment of all the prophecies of the Old Covenant. which means that if Jesus is who the writers of the New Testament claim him to be, and if Jesus is who he himself claims to be, that we cannot have a casual attitude toward Jesus.

You cannot. Because a casual attitude toward Jesus will damn you. You either believe it and you respond in the way that the blind beggar responds, we'll see in a minute.

Or you casually walk away and you receive the penalty of your sins. This is essential Christian doctrine.

[19:37] You cannot say, I believe those things that you say about Jesus and then walk away and have it have no impact upon your life whatsoever. You cannot casually say, sure, he's the fulfillment of the prophecies.

Sure, he's the son of David. Sure, he's all of those things. He is our righteousness. And then walk away unaffected. Can't be done. Because not only is he the long expected descendant of David, but this blind man teaches us something else about Jesus because he cries out to him when he says to him, son of David, have mercy on me.

Two times he says, have mercy on me. And there's a real reason for that. A reason that goes beyond the fact that Jesus has healed many other people.

This is in fact the last healing of Jesus that is recorded in the gospel of Mark for us. This is the last man that Jesus actually heals.

He has, we have seen the accounts of numerous people. He has, he's restored sight to the blind. He's caused the deaf to hear. He's helped those who were mute to be able to speak.

[20:51] He's caused those who couldn't even stand to walk and run and jump. He has, he has done numerous miracles throughout this book. This is the last one, but it's not, it's not simply the miracles that Jesus has done in the past, I believe, that caused this man to cry out with a kind of confidence, Jesus, son of David, have mercy upon me.

And I say that because he seems to understand who Jesus is by calling him the son of David. And if you understand that Jesus is the son of David that Isaiah predicted, it's not a far step to say that he's also the servant of the Lord that Isaiah also predicted.

Turn back to Isaiah, this is the last time I make you turn to Isaiah this morning, but I want you to turn back to Isaiah, but this time I want you to turn to chapter 42 in the book of Isaiah. This time Isaiah is not predicting the rise of a Davidic king, this time he's predicting the rise of a servant of the Lord, but they are one and the same.

Isaiah 42 verse 1, God says, Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon him.

You see the connection between the servant and the descendant of David? Spirit of God dwells on both them. I put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations.

[22:14] He says several more things about him, but I want you to move down to verse 6. Verse 6 says, I am the Lord, and he's speaking to the servant. I have called you into righteousness.

I will take you by the hand and keep you. I will give you as a covenant for the people. A life to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison, those who sit in darkness.

The servant of God that Isaiah predicted centuries before, God says he will give sight to the blind. The coming Davidic king upon whom the spirit of God would rest, who would be the servant of God, would give sight to the blind.

He would be a merciful savior. And here, blind Bartimaeus sits on the side of the road, begging for the scraps that others have.

But when he hears that Jesus of Nazareth is coming, he calls out to him and says, have mercy on me, because he knows that this is the one who has the power to give sight to the blind.

[23:29] He knows that this is the one who has come so that he might give sight to the blind. He knows that this one is a merciful son of David.

In fact, that idea of God's mercy permeates the scriptures. Yes, Jesus is a king in the mind of David. Yes, Jesus is the creator of all that you see in the universe. He is the sovereign king of everything. And yet, he is a sovereign, merciful king.

In the book of Exodus, when God revealed himself to Moses, he said to Moses, in defining who he is, in helping Moses to see exactly what God is like, this is what God says he passed before Moses. He describes himself as the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.

[24:43] He is a God who by in his very nature is merciful and gracious and compassionate and willing to forgive sins. That's who he is.

That's in his very nature. Who he is compels him to be merciful, to give grace. In fact, the word that's used here in Mark for mercy is the same word that's used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament that Mark would have been familiar with in Exodus chapter 34 to describe God.

He is merciful, God merciful and gracious. It's just who he is. You must believe both that Jesus is the divine king from the line of David and that he is a God of infinite mercy.

It does no good to believe that Jesus is a great and powerful king who will accomplish his will upon the earth if he doesn't care about saving people. And it does no good to believe that Jesus desperately wants to save people if he doesn't have the power and the authority to actually do it. You must believe that he is both of these things because only a sovereign, powerful, merciful, loving king can save his people.

[26:07] No one else can do it. So we learn that Jesus is a king from the line of David. We learn that he is by his very nature given to showing mercy to people.

And then we learn one more thing I think here from blind Bartimaeus. We learn how you respond to seeing that kind of Jesus. notice what he does. First of all, he cries out to Christ, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

But then in verse 48, we're told that many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. That happens all the time in this gospel. That the disciples are constantly telling people, leave Jesus alone.

The woman with the flow of blood, just keep her away, keep her away. The children who came to Christ.

Would you get your kids away, the disciples say to those bringing the children before Jesus. Keep them away, keep them at a distance. Constantly, the disciples and others who surround Jesus are trying to keep people away from him.

[27:10] Maybe they're trying to do it out of a sense of wanting Jesus to have that time alone in the wilderness in prayer. Maybe they have good motives. Maybe it's out of a sense of selfishness, of keeping Jesus all to themselves.

Mark doesn't tell us what the motive here is. We simply know that they discourage Bartimaeus. Stay in your place. Stay where you are. Leave him alone.

Go away. Be quiet. And he responds by crying out all the more loudly. It says, but he cried out all the more. Son of David, have mercy upon me. And at that, Jesus stops.

Remember, it's a large crowd surrounding Jesus. But as this man begins to call out even more loudly, Jesus hears him. Jesus stops and says, call him.

Bring him to me. I want to see who this is calling out my name. And it says that they called the blind man, saying to him, take heart, get up. He is calling you.

[28:12] He's calling you to come to him. And then notice what he does. It says, and throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And then Jesus said to him, what do you want me to do for you?

That is the second time in this chapter that Jesus has asked someone that question. What do you want me to do? The first time we saw last week was when James and John came to Jesus.

And they say, Jesus, we want you to give you whatever we ask. And he says, well, what do you want me to do for you? And James and John want Jesus to give them the preeminent positions in his kingdom.

Let one of us sit on your right hand and one on your left hand. And Jesus says, no, that's not mine to give. That's already been determined. I can't give that to you. Here Jesus asks the same question, what do you want me to do for you?

And he doesn't say, the blind man does not say, I want to sit at your right hand. He doesn't say, I want you to give me great wealth. He doesn't say that I want you to make me somebody.

[29:12] He doesn't say that at all. He says, let me recover my sight. I need one thing from you, Jesus.

I need to see. Help me to see. And Jesus says to him, go your way. Your faith has made you well. Literally what the text says is that your faith has saved you.

Now, I think the word saved here has a double meaning. It does mean that he has received physical healing. Go your way. You're healed. You are made well. But I think Mark intends for us to see more than that.

I think Mark intends for us to see that more is happening here than a blind man receiving his sight. What's happening here is a man is being transformed from a poor, pitiful, blind beggar on the side of the road to a follower of Christ.

Go your way. Your faith has saved you. And immediately he recovered his sight. That's part one. And follow him on the way. Follow him down the road. He became a follower of Jesus.

[30:15] He became a disciple of Jesus at this particular point. And what we learn from Bartimaeus here is that we cannot simply sit by and acknowledge who Jesus is and then let him pass by us.

We cannot simply acknowledge that he's a divine king. We cannot simply acknowledge that he's a merciful God and then not cry out to him so that we might receive mercy from him.

He will not be silenced. He cries out all the more when they rebuke him. And then when Jesus calls him to come to him, what does he do? It says that he threw off his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.

They need a bit of a mental image here. Here's Bartimaeus sitting along the side of the road and he would have had his cloak wrapped around him, that's sort of the outer garment, wrapped around him, folded across his lap.

And that little sort of pocket there that that cloak would have created as he sat there on the ground, folded across his lap, that's where he would have collected all the coins as people would have dropped them when they were giving them to him as they passed by.

[31:22] So he's got his collection there in his cloak, in his lap, he's sitting on the side of the road, pilgrims are flipping their coins, giving them something, you know they want to help, the best people to ask to help are religious people on their way to church, okay, because they feel bad, they don't get it to you, so that's what he's doing and they're probably tossing some coins on their way to Jerusalem and he's got his coins there in his cloak, in his lap and when he hears Jesus call, he immediately just throws his cloak off.

What about all your money? What are you going to do now? He doesn't care. Nothing else matters but Christ to him in this moment. Jesus calls, he responds by abandoning everything that he has and going to Christ.

How different that is from the rich young ruler earlier in this chapter, who had great wealth and could not give it up to become a follower of Jesus. And here's a man who has very little and throws aside everything that he has in order to answer the call of Christ.

He's calling you and he throws it all aside to come to him. And when Jesus says, what do you want me to do for you, the blind man? He does not, he doesn't mince words, he says just plainly, I need sight.

You see, what we learned from Bartimaeus is two fold. Number one, that if you want to receive mercy from Jesus, you must cry out to him for mercy. Yes, he is, he is a sovereign savior.

[32:51] That is true. Yes, he chooses and calls those who are his own. But what does the apostle Paul say in Romans chapter 10? Those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

You cannot sit and acknowledge him without calling upon him if you want to be saved. You will not receive mercy from the merciful king if you don't ask for mercy.

You have to cry out to him. You have to ask. You have to come to him. And then when he calls, you come and you throw everything else aside. You lay it all down. Don't be like the rich young ruler who thinks that he can come to Jesus with answers to his questions while hanging on to everything that he values.

You must be like Bartimaeus and throw everything aside and come to him with nothing but trust in him. Jesus does not say, your hours spent on the side of the road suffering have saved you. He doesn't say that. Jesus does not say, your ability to raise your voice above the crowd has saved you. One thing has saved him.

[34:01] His faith. And faith is not saving faith if it doesn't abandon everything else for the sake of Christ. He is.

He is a sovereign, all-powerful king. He is that. He is the descendant of David predicted by the prophets and promised to David. And he will sit on his throne forever.

And he will rule the nations forever. That is true. And he is a merciful king. But only those who call out to him.

Only those who come to him in simple faith and by faith alone will be saved. And he will be saved. And he will pray.