

We knew Jesus' call was growing louder by the minute. My great-grandfather of 94 years sat up in his wheelchair. Ever since his twenties, he saw nothing but blackness. Macular degeneration had snatched away the vibrant colors of God's creation from his vision. As we celebrated what would be his last birthday on this earth, one of my relatives made the remark, "It sure will be great for you to see in heaven again!" My great-grandpa looked up and agreed, but he went on to say, "Seeing in heaven will be great, but you know what? Being blind wasn't half-bad. It took away all the distractions from listening to what's really important: What Jesus had to tell me." Whether you or I have physical vision problems or not, we all have experienced spiritual blindness. We've all felt like we are grasping in darkness, not knowing how to handle the challenges and struggles of our lives. Moments when we have no sense of direction or guidance. Moments when we can't see Jesus. Yet, our faith within us screams to our Father, "I want to see!"

Bartimaeus knew how this felt better than most...

The cross was sharpening in clarity after each step Jesus took. His long trek from Galilee to Jerusalem now was only 17 miles from completion. The very next chapter in Mark commences the beginning of Holy Week, when Jesus rode that donkey as our Messiah-king. Throughout this journey, Jesus fleshed out more and more the kind of Messiah he was. He was not a warrior-king who would destroy the Romans' hold on Israel. He is the suffering servant, who would embrace utter shame to break the hold of our greatest foes: Satan, sin, and death. Yet, his disciples just couldn't let that sink in, they couldn't stop imagining Jesus as this physical king who would bring physical prosperity and security.

But from someone you would least expect, we see who Jesus truly is...

As Jesus, his disciples, and a large crowd of Jesus' followers and Passover pilgrims pass by Jericho, a cry is heard above the noise of the crowd. A blind beggar began shouting with all his might. Bartimaeus had found out Jesus was somewhere in this crowd, and he couldn't let him just pass by. He yells and yells, "**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**" Probably for years, he had been sitting at this gate begging. Life kept on passing by and undoubtedly loneliness and hopelessness took their turns attacking him. Yet, notice his beautiful confession of faith! He calls Jesus by name, a name that means "the Lord saves." He calls Jesus, "the Son of David," a title used in the Old Testament to describe the coming Christ! You would expect the disciples and the crowd to rush this man to Jesus, or maybe even to begin a chant as they worshiped Jesus!

But as their eyes lock on the blind man, look at what they do next. They "**rebuked him and told him to be quiet.**" In other words, they look at Bartimaeus' face and say, "Be quiet, blind man!"

Has your heart of faith been told to be quiet?

When day in and day out, there is that one temptation Satan uses to lure you away from spiritual sight to spiritual blindness. The new person within you is crying out for you to focus on God's Word, yet a crowd of voices from your sinful nature drowns out that voice. *When I can't see Jesus* I can only see pain, frustration, and darkness. There is no more lonely feeling. We have all experienced loneliness, that feeling that the world is passing us by but no one seems to care about us and how we are doing. Like Bartimaeus, we sit in darkness, as the world keeps turning.

But we can't let those voices of the devil and our sinful nature stop us!

Bartimaeus was told again and again, "Stop talking! Jesus doesn't need this annoyance and neither do we!" Yet, look at what he does next, Bartimaeus "**shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"**" He doesn't get intimidated, he doesn't go silent, with all his limited strength, he screams to Jesus and doesn't care what the crowd thinks! His eyes of faith know they need to see Jesus! It cannot wait!

When we can't see Jesus, lowering our eyes to the ground in despair is the worst step to take. When our own minds, the people around us, the world around us scream, "Leave Jesus alone! You aren't worth his time. You need to figure this out on your own. The God of the universe has plenty more to do than care for you!" When these thoughts come barreling down on us, we must shout louder and louder, stronger and stronger to the One who breaks the darkness. Why?

Because Jesus listens.

As Bartimaeus continues his repeated prayer time after time, Jesus stops. He looks at his disciples and the crowd and says, "**Call him.**" Jesus tells the very people who wanted nothing to do with Bartimaeus, now to call him to approach Jesus! Jesus could have easily called him himself, but with a purpose, he orders the crowd to do so. Imagine their look of surprise! So with surprise and perhaps begrudgingly, they look at Bartimaeus and say, "**Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.**" Bartimaeus doesn't waste any time. He doesn't take anyone's hand to guide him, he doesn't crawl slowly over to Jesus. He **throws off his cloak** and he runs to Jesus! He didn't want anything hindering him, so he ditches the cloak, he doesn't care if he stumbles and falls, he could care less what he looked like as he sprinted. He **jumps up** and runs to the Son of David.

Jesus has compassion on him and he listens...

Jesus answers Bartimaeus' many cries for mercy. With a tone of voice that can only come from the Son of Man who came to serve and not be served, he asks, "**What can I do for you?**" He doesn't say, "Okay, yeller what do you want?!" In humility, Jesus places himself at the service of this blind man.

Jesus does the same for you.

We say in church every Sunday, “**Lord, have mercy.**” Sometimes many, many times! These aren’t idle words, our God hears our cries for mercy, and he *listens*. Jesus knew full well what Bartimaeus was going to pray for, just as he our prayers before they escape our lips. He has known our prayers since before creation and took them into account as he orchestrated his plan of salvation. Yet, he stops and listens to us. He longs for you and me to approach him with our challenges, disabilities, and setbacks. *When we can’t see Jesus*, he stops, approaches us in his Word, invites us to partake in the Lord’s Supper and invites us to ask of his service.

Bartimaeus had one request...

After Jesus asks him what he wants, he immediately answers, “**Rabbi, I want to see.**” Jesus was first and foremost his Savior and teacher. He wasn’t just a miracle-worker. For Bartimaeus, Jesus was the one who taught the only path to heaven, the only healer of the soul. Jesus was *his* teacher.

Look at Bartimaeus’ request, it is simple and to the point, he wants to see. The Greek word literally means “to see *again*.” Bartimaeus knew what it was like to see. As he sat in the dust of Jericho, day after day, he must have poured over the images he once saw, images that faded as time went on.

I think you and I can relate to how Bartimaeus felt...

Not all of us have been blinded after being able to see, but we all have had spiritual blindness. We know what it is like to see God working in our lives clearly. We know what it’s like to see our Savior’s victory from the empty tomb. Yet, we also know what the blindness of despair looks like. When we can no longer see the light of the Lord, but only the darkness of tragedy. We know how dark our lives are when we allow Satan to throw the onus of our guilt on our shoulders, bringing us prostrate to the ground with no Savior in sight. Our spiritual vision begins to dim and fade, and we cry out, “*I want to see!*”

Jesus will open our eyes...

Moments after Bartimaeus makes his request, Jesus looks at this man of spiritual sight and says, “**Go, your faith has healed you.**” He restores his physical sight! But there’s even more to this life-changing pronouncement by Jesus. The word translated “healed” is the same word that is used time and time again in Scripture for “saved.” His faith *saved* him, his faith in the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world took him from *I want to see* to *All I can see is Jesus!*

So it is with you and me.

In our lives, when we find ourselves wandering in spiritual darkness, our faith-filled hearts cry out, *Father, I want to see!* It is that faith within us that will always save us, always heals,

because our eyes of faith can *only see Jesus!* The credit for this does not lie with us, the credit for this lies with the object of our faith. The God-man who walks before us, who captures our faith-focused eyes. Faith always saves! *All we see is Jesus* because he has healed us from the blindness of sin and has led us into his everlasting light!

So after this eye-opening moment, what did Bartimaeus do next?

“He followed Jesus on the road.” He doesn’t go back to pack up his things, he doesn’t travel the world with his regained vision, he has only one thing, one person, he needs to see...Jesus. The fact that Mark wrote his name in the gospel shows that Bartimaeus was known by the original audience the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to write to. It is not a stretch to believe that Bartimaeus kept on following his Teacher, as he witnessed Jesus teaching the greatest life-saving and sacrificial lesson of love on the cross! What a sight it must have been to behold the crucified and risen Jesus!

So with our renewed spiritual sight, where will our eyes look to?

They don’t just look, but they *seek* Jesus. *I want to see!* When life’s troubles debilitate me, *I want to see Jesus!* When we don’t know which life direction to take *all we want to see is Jesus!* When we don’t know how to handle family difficulties, *I want to see Jesus!* We keep on following Jesus because our faith in him has saved us! Our faith has healed us! Who else would we rather look to for guidance? Who else would we rather seek with eyes of faith? We can either sit in despair as images of regret pass through our minds, or we can jump to our feet and with spiritual sight follow Jesus as he leads us to see him in everything we do.

When the distractions and loud voices of your mind and your life scream and shout, do not be silent, and do not sit idly by. Your eyes of faith know where to run, your heart knows who it needs. *All we want to see is Jesus.* Your teacher, your Healer, your Savior who calls you to see, whom we follow blindly. *I want to see!* I cannot wait to see Jesus’ face in eternity. Amen.