

What Do You Want Me To Do for You
Mark 10:46-52

This last week, US President Joe Biden issues an executive order requiring all federal employees, and employees of all major federal contractors to be vaccinated against the COVID virus. The order, of course, excludes members of Congress and their staffs, but directly affects the lives of 100 million other less elite Americans. As you are probably aware, the president's announcement has kicked off a renewed firestorm of comments, opinions, and legal threats relative to totalitarian governmental overreach.

And so, the debate about COVID, its effects, and what to do about the virus rages. I do not want to stand here this morning and imply that I have an answer, because I do not. I do think we ought to be careful not to relinquish certain rights and freedoms that we will not regain in the aftermath of this historical moment. And I think we should be careful to not abandon faith in favor of science or science in favor of faith as if the sovereign God created a world where faith and science are enemies rather than allies. Faith and science both serve the glory of God by leading us to the knowledge of God which is the entire purpose of God in creation. I think we ought not forget that God created the natural world as a stage for humanity to come to understand Him, His character and His ways, through exploration and discovery, which is what I think Paul alludes to in Romans 1:19-20:

¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

But that is not my point for you this morning. Rather, as we consider the encounter of Jesus and the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, on the road up from Jericho to Jerusalem, **I want us to think about the debates that are raging in our culture and society, and ask, "What's missing?"**

As I scan the debates and discussions in the media, in personal dialogues, on Facebook **what I believe is consistently missing from our experience in these days is the real presence of Jesus.** Now, Jesus isn't missing from the discussion altogether. There is debate about whether Jesus would get the shot or urge others to get the shot. There is disgust about Jesus in the way that He is being brought into the discussion at all by various parties. There is dismissal of Jesus for even being brought into the discussion. The dismissals of Jesus are usually preceded by an expletive followed by His name followed by a statement like, "Trust the science" or "get the blankety-blank shot."

The one crucial element most often missing from these occasions is Jesus Himself. His glory is not considered. His patience is not applied. His wisdom is neither sought nor appreciated. His mercy is neither requested nor offered. His love is misunderstood and misquoted. His power gains no attention. His sovereignty is ignored. His presence is rejected. The motto of the day is, "Let's talk about social evils and cultural crises, but let's not talk about Jesus." And that is just within the confines of the church, among Christians who claim to bear His name, His likeness, and His mission in the world.

What might happen if Jesus were present in the church, in the lives of His disciples, in the social dialogues of our day? What might happen if Jesus were as truly and really present among us as He was present that day on the road that leads from Jericho to Jerusalem?

What might happen? Crowds would gather. Prayer would erupt. Humility, faith, and courage would

emerge. Lives would be changed. God would be glorified. And a whole lot of outcasts would leave their exile on the side of the road and follow Jesus in the way.

This is what happened when Jesus made His appearance on the Jericho - Jerusalem Road a week before His crucifixion. In the providence of God a great crowd surrounded Him. A blind man heard about him and burst into prayer. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Is that not the very essence of prayer, a desperate plea of a needy soul to the sovereign God for mercy?

In faith, the blind man made his request known. In love and in response to faith, Christ granted the man's request, restored his sight, restored his life, restored his gratitude and built his faith, and the man, given the opportunity to go his own way, to go back to his old life, sets out to follow Jesus in the way.

Now, the divine providence of this day, today, is no different than the providence of that day two millennia ago when Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, met Jesus on the road. This moment in time is no different than any other moment of providence in the history of creation. Ours is a moment in time when God has worked together the conditions of our existence so that we have a brazen opportunity to encounter Jesus.

Jesus is here, right now, and we are here, in this moment, and the question is, "Will you cry out to Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, and gain from Him what He will do for you, or will you sit silently on the side of the life's road embracing your blindness, choosing darkness rather than light, death rather than life, pride rather than grace, culture rather than commitment?"

Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was present so he cried out. He jumped up. He moved forward. With humility he boldly made his request. He received his sight. And my friends, given the choice, he followed Jesus. He did not let the moment provided by God slip through his hands. He let neither the moment nor the Savior pass but fully engaged the purpose of God's providence and the presence of Jesus. God made a way for a poor blind beggar to meet grace face to face and he made the most of the moment!

What will you do with this moment, this time of pandemic and social crisis? How will you respond to the providence of God, to the sovereign will of God enacted in history? Will you, like Bartimaeus make the most of this moment, or will you choose to shy away and let the opportunity to encounter grace and truth in Jesus pass by unsought and unacquired?

Dear ones, engaging Jesus in these days will take some humility, some courage, and some determination. He is ready to glorify the Father in your life. Are you ready to indulge your responsibility to come to Him in faith and obedience? Bartimaeus had to resist the crowd that tried to cancel him. Perhaps they, like many in our day, were afraid that if Bartimaeus kept calling Jesus by the messianic title, Son of David, the government would hear and get mad and come after them. Perhaps they, like so many on our day, dismissed the poor, the blind, the lame, the aged, the sick, the weak as unworthy of any real attention. Perhaps the crowd, as so many in the culture of our day, simply misunderstood Jesus and thought he would have no time for such an interruption as a blind man.

We don't know why the cancel culture of his day wanted to silence Bartimaeus, we just know that that is what they tried to do and he had to call out for Jesus all the more undaunted by their efforts. He had to raise his voice to be heard over their objections. He had to shout over the silencing effect of the merciless crowd. He had to persist in his desire to experience Jesus, but persist he did. Somehow he

knew in the depth of his heart, Jesus was worth the effort. **He did not allow his moment of divine providence, this moment of grace to slip away. Will you?**

There is no indication in the text that anyone in the crowd actually helped Bartimaeus reach Jesus. Didn't matter. Hearing that Jesus wanted him to come, Bartimaeus threw off his cloak, sprang to his feet, and came to Jesus. **He got rid of any encumbrance that would hold him back or trip him up and he made his way to Jesus.**

Friends, you may not find help from the crowd when you come to Jesus. You may find the people around you resistant, dismissive, and unhelpful. Even the disciples of Jesus may not seem to come to your aid. No matter! This is not about you and the crowd, you and the culture, or even you and the church. **This is about you and Jesus!** God has graciously given you a moment in time to find real joy, lasting peace, true forgiveness, certain hope, and eternal life in Jesus Christ. Let no lesser thing stand in your way. Let nothing keep you from Jesus as He passes by.

This is the moment for humility to rise and pride to fall. Hear the cry of Bartimaeus, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" It is the supplication of the lesser to the greater. It is the plea of the needy to the supplier. It is cry of the sinner to the Savior. **Such a prayer cry for mercy is the public acknowledgment that you cannot save yourself from the peril that you are in.** It is the admission of the heart self-reliance ultimately fails us and our only true hope for deliverance is Jesus Christ and the mercy He offers.

What would you have Jesus do for you as He passes by this morning? How would you have Him glorify God in your life? Would you have Him ignore you, pass by without a glance, abandon you to your own pride and sin and guilt and shame and condemnation? Would you have Him pass by and you remain unnoticed, sitting incapacitated in dust on the side of the road begging handouts from a world that doesn't let you enough to even help you be heard by Jesus? Or would you humbly seek His mercy and the goodness and glory of God He has to offer you today?

Bartimaeus set aside everything to come to Jesus. He made his request known to God, then, having received what his heart hoped for, **he left everything behind and followed Jesus in the way.**

We don't know all that happened to Bartimaeus after he met Jesus. In fact, we know nothing of Bartimaeus outside Mark's notation that given the opportunity by Jesus to go his own way he instead "followed him on the way." Blind Bartimaeus is nowhere else mentioned the New Testament. But take careful note of this detail here in Mark 10:46. Mark gives us both the name of the blind beggar of Jericho, AND his father's name, Timeaus.

Why? Why include such an otherwise unnecessary detail? The focus of this entire passage, in fact, the focus of the entire gospel is Jesus. Here the focus is on Jesus heading for Jerusalem and the cross. He is teaching his disciples about the kingdom as he makes his way to the capital city. So why actually provide the name of the blind man? Any blind man by any name would function just as meaningfully in the account, and besides, no one else who has been healed by Jesus has been named by Mark. So, why name Bartimaeus AND his father? Why would the Christian audience in Rome, to whom Mark is writing, have interest in the name of this blind beggar and his father?

Perhaps this is a clue to what happened to Bartimaeus after he met Jesus, recovered his sight, and followed him on the way. Perhaps, by the time Mark writes his gospel, Bartimaeus and his father,

Timaeus have become followers of Jesus known to the Christians at Rome, either personally or by reputation. Perhaps, knowing Bartimaeus and Timaeus, the audience would have expected Mark to include their story in the narrative.

The point here is the evidence that Bartimaeus, having his life changed by Jesus, followed Jesus not only up the road to Jerusalem but as a disciple of Jesus for the rest of his life. He followed Jesus in the way.

Let's take a moment and ask an important question: "What does it mean to encounter Jesus personally and follow Him in the way?" What is the way? It means, at the very least, to join Jesus in faith on His life journey, to join in with Jesus in His mission, His methods, His motive, His life.

As we close this morning, let me set before you three aspects of Jesus life, of the way, that everyone who follows Jesus must face.

1. Please know that if you, like Bartimaeus, follow Jesus in the way, you, like Jesus, will follow the way of the cross.

- a. Jesus went to the cross as an act of love and obedience to glorify God the Father and take away the sin of the world.
- b. You too will face a cross of your own.
 - i. **Mark 8:34** *"And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*
 - ii. As Jesus surrendered His self-will on the cross, so we must surrender self-will on our cross.
 - iii. As Jesus faced the hostility and hatred of the world on His cross, so we will have the hostility and hatred of the world on account of our commitment to His cross.
 - (1) **Mark 13:13** *"And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."*
 - (2) **John 15:19** *"If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."*
 - iv. As Jesus endured the cross and despised its shame on account of the joy that awaited Him, so we too will bear faithfully the cross while in this world that hates us knowing an eternal joy will follow our faithful obedience.
 - (1) **Hebrews 12:1-3** *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted."*
 - (2) Consider Jesus' quest for joy and make His commitment to joy through the cross your commitment to joy through your cross!

2. Please know that if you, like Bartimaeus, put your faith in Jesus, receive His mercy, and follow Him in the way, then you, like Jesus, will follow the way of holiness.

- a. Holiness means being uniquely set apart from sin and live for the world to a life lived for

God that radiates the moral character of Jesus in every thought, word, deed, motive, desire, direction, choice, intention, and action.

- i. Holiness is a process worked in us by the Holy Spirit from the deepest depth of our private heart to our most public action whereby in all that we are we become increasingly more like Jesus.
 - ii. Holiness means your life is given over, from the inside out, to living the restored image of God.
 - iii. Paul, describing his calling and mission in Romans 1 calls this life/heart/soul condition, “the obedience that comes from faith.”
- b. Holiness is a life transformed by the grace of God and the power of the Spirit through the gospel into the moral, spiritual character of God Himself.
- i. **John 12:49-50** *“For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”*
 - ii. That is holiness: a life lived according to the word and will of the God the Father.
- c. Holiness is a life lived in the power of the Spirit with purpose and intention to accurately and adequately reflect Who God is and how God is.
- d. The way of holiness sounds like a tall order, almost impossible, but there is a promise for those who rise up and follow Jesus on this way:
- i. **Isaiah 35:8-10** *“And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”*
 - ii. The way of holiness is uniquely prepared for those who belong there
 - iii. The way of holiness comes with a guarantee of success
 - iv. The way of holiness may be risky, but victory is certain
 - v. The way of holiness leads to everlasting joy

3. **Finally, please know that if you, Like Bartimaeus, follow Jesus in the way, then you, like Jesus, will follow the way of obedience.**

- a. Some of you have been misled.
 - i. You heard how Jesus would save you and set you free
 - ii. You accepted the offer of freedom from sin and guilt
 - iii. But someone either forgot or neglected to tell you that the redeemed life is a life of obedience
- b. **Hebrews 5:7-8** *“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”*
 - i. The man, Jesus, who is the Christ, while He lived on earth as the representative of all humanity, learned obedience through what He suffered.
 - ii. The way of obedience is not the way of independence from God but of utter obedience to the sovereign will and purpose of God.
- c. Too many have thought that saving grace has set them free to go their own way, do their

own thing, be their own god.

- d. The truth is, Jesus sets us free to follow Him in obedience to God!
 - i. We have been slaves of sin, unable and unwilling to please God.
 - ii. But, when our lives, hearts, and wills are surrendered to God through faith in Christ, and we rise to follow Jesus in the way, the apostle Paul points out we become “slaves of righteousness.”
 - (1) We are free, certainly.
 - (2) Free from sin and slavery to the fear of death
 - (3) Free to fully love and serve Christ, a freedom we do not have prior to faith and regeneration!
 - iii. The way of Jesus is the way of obedience.

Jesus passes by with life changing love and power. In His mercy He offers you a new way, a better way, an eternal way. What will you do? Will you rise and come to Jesus? Will you put your faith in Him and follow Him in the way? Or will you remain parked on the wayside, a blind beggar on the side of the road, dismissed and desperate, silenced by the crowd, cancelled by the culture, stuck in the darkness of sin, imprisoned by your own pride?

Jesus of Nazareth is this moment, in the providence of God, passing by. This is your moment. What will you do?