

The healing of blind beggars

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[0 : 01] Please open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 20. Today we're looking at the very end of the chapter, so Matthew chapter 20. We'll begin reading in verse 29 in just a moment, so look there, Matthew 20.

Matthew 20 beginning in verse 29. And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside.

And when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, Lord, have mercy on us, son of David. The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent.

But they cried out all the more, Lord, have mercy on us, son of David. And stopping, Jesus called them and said, what do you want me to do for you?

They said to him, Lord, let our eyes be opened. And Jesus in pity touched their eyes. And immediately they recovered their sight and followed him. Let's pray together.

[1 : 15] Lord, we're so thankful for your word. And we pray that you would, by your spirit, bless the word today. Open it to us. Make it clear to us. Lord, even give us eyes to see the truth of your word.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So you may remember where we were before, but we're continuing on now with Jesus. And he had just shared with his disciples they were on their way to Jerusalem.

He had mentioned that to them, and they were walking that way. And now here we see that they're leaving Jericho. And as they leave Jericho, a great crowd is following them. And it's probably pretty evident to the crowd, maybe by what they've said, but maybe simply by the direction they're headed, that they're headed to Jerusalem.

And so a great crowd come to follow them. Jericho is roughly 16 miles away. It could be as much as 20 miles, depending on where they are on the road.

But 16 to 20 miles walking from Jericho to Jerusalem. There's a 3,200-foot elevation gain. For those of you who hike, that's quite an uphill gain.

[2 : 21] And over that amount of time, maybe it's not overly steep for that period of time, but they're ascending up to Jerusalem. They're leaving Jericho. And as they leave Jericho, it's evident to the people, they're headed to Jerusalem.

So now a crowd's followed. Why is there a crowd following? Well, without question, we have the 12 disciples, probably the 70 disciples that were regularly spoken of in the Gospels, and then there's probably other people who are wondering what's going to happen.

People are, I think, understanding that we're reaching the climax of the story here, just as we ought to be as we read through it. Because here's Jesus, and you may remember along the way, Jesus has performed miracles, and he said, don't tell anyone.

And we've talked about why is Jesus saying this. He says, my time has not yet come. And we talked about how if people know what Jesus is doing, it's going to speed up the persecution and even the death of Jesus.

And everything's been waiting for this moment in time. We're about to have the triumphal entry. We're going to see the week of the Passover. Jesus enters to be the Passover lamb.

[3 : 27] And so there's this timetable that God has worked out. And now with Jesus headed to Jerusalem, and remember before, he's fled, and somewhat have fled.

He's done a somewhat remote ministry for a while now because of the persecution of the religious leaders. Now he's walking into where the religious leaders are. And so there's, without question, some people who are probably hanging around just curious, what's going to happen to this teacher who's so opposed?

Now while they're leaving Jericho, and there's some discussion with this with the parallel accounts because there's an old Jericho and a new Jericho. So it looks like they're leaving old Jericho, headed into new Jericho.

But as they're leaving, they encounter two blind beggars. And the parallel account in Mark tells us only of one who's named Bartimaeus.

So you guys probably have heard of blind Bartimaeus. And remember that account. This is the same story. Matthew tells us that there were two who were very similar in that they're blind beggars and they cry out together.

[4 : 32] And I think what we see here is that Jesus is again modeling what we saw last week in verse 28, if you look back there. We'll start in verse 27. He says, Whoever would be first among you must be your slave.

And then he says, Even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. And so Jesus has said that the Son of Man has come to serve, not to be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

And I think we're seeing that played out for us here in this passage. And along with that, he's still teaching the disciples everything we've seen since chapter 13 at least, in particular, verse chapter 18 and on, about greatness in the kingdom.

What does it look like to be great in the kingdom? How do we determine what greatness is? Maybe I could even ask you, if we were to assess even in our day and age, imagine, if you will, blind men out on the side of the road, maybe over here by 80 or 81 up here, standing out by the highway or by the own ramp, begging people to stop and give them money.

How might we assess greatness in the kingdom of the United States? That's probably not who we esteem as the great people in our country. We're prone to look down on such people in various ways.

[5 : 53] And so Jesus is still teaching them, what does greatness look like? And how do we assess what greatness is? And remember what we saw last week, and what we just saw with what Jesus said, he came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom.

And just before that, I read verse 27. But he told them about how the Gentiles lorded over those whom they have authority over.

But he says, it won't be so among you, but the great among you must be your servant, and whoever will be first among you must be your slave. And so I think he's modeling for them, what does it look like to serve others? And what does true greatness look like in the kingdom?

But why include this just before the triumphal entry? Why this miracle? Why now? But even why does Matthew include this before the triumphal entry?

What was Jesus teaching his disciples in this miracle, and what can we learn from this? Well, the first major concept I want to focus on is just the idea of blindness. Remember the request of the disciples back in 18.1, and we've seen it now repeated again with the sons of Zebedee and their mother coming and asking that they might be what?

[7 : 03] Great in the kingdom. That they might sit on Jesus' right hand. And I would argue that this request that they have to sit at Jesus' right hand reflects some spiritual blindness on their part.

Now this is tricky because I think with most of the disciples, God's worked in them, he saved them, but they're still exhibiting a great deal of spiritual blindness. They're not getting it yet. They're missing some important concepts.

And so I think this whole account, in some ways, is an illustration of spiritual blindness. As we've seen as we've looked at the Gospels, we've talked about Jesus' physical miracles are meant to point us not to the fact that Jesus is here to make us all feel better, to heal all our physical illnesses.

Jesus isn't doing this to say, if you just believe in Jesus, you won't ever be sick. You're immune from the coronavirus if you just believe in Jesus. That's not what's being taught. Not that you won't ever face blindness or lose your sight.

What Jesus is teaching is that the physical power demonstrates for us the spiritual realities that Jesus has the power to bring new life, to remove spiritual blindness, to take the heart of stone and make it into a heart of flesh.

[8 : 14] And so I don't want us to miss that as we're coming into the story, that without question, that this isn't primarily or solely about physical blindness, is it? There's a spiritual dynamic. And I think one way we have to apply that is to say, I think Jesus is teaching his disciples about their spiritual blindness that they're still exhibiting.

This is even evidenced by the fact that the disciples who are in the crowd and the crowd more broadly, that they're still discouraging others from coming to Jesus.

And we can even say, especially the marginalized, you may remember, what's the other time we've seen this just recently? It was the children coming to Jesus. And remember what the disciples are saying? No, no, no, don't bother him.

He's too busy. Leave Jesus alone. And so now, if they're annoyed by children, now they have blind beggars crying out. You picture them, they're on this peaceful walk. They're hanging out with Jesus.

They're talking. And here's these guys on the side of the road screaming at him. No, be quiet. Leave him alone. Jesus is busy. He's got more important things to do. So has anything really changed with the disciples?

[9 : 19] The behavior is still following the same pattern, isn't it? Those who are marginalized, those who we would not consider to be great in our society, they still have this idea that maybe there's no room for them in the kingdom.

Jesus is too important to lower himself to children or to the blind or to beggars. And so they're encouraging them to be quiet.

And so I think it reflects their own understanding of worthiness and how one enters the kingdom. How do they assess who's worthy of salvation? And who, or how do you enter into the kingdom?

Now, this is probably a good point for us to reflect and say, do we do this? Do we sometimes think people are not worthy of the kingdom? Maybe we do this in terms of how we share the gospel.

We see someone and we think, well, they're going to understand the gospel. Maybe it's an intellectual issue. We think they can get it. I'm going to share the gospel with them. Maybe we see someone else and because of how they're living, whether that be, maybe it's an intellectual issue.

[10 : 26] Maybe it's even in how they behave. We know the kind of sin that they're living in. And we think, well, maybe it's the sexual sin that they're involved in. Maybe it's the alcohol or drug addiction that we think they're beyond the scope of what God can do.

That they're not worthy to enter into the kingdom. I think we in many ways have a similar attitude at times that we see people who we think, well, Jesus is going to save them. I'm not going to waste my time sharing the gospel with them.

And I think part of what we're being told here is that Jesus cares for these who are marginalized unlike his disciples. Unlike his followers who are going with him who are not concerned for these people, Jesus cares about them.

We also see in this that the blind men are actually the ones in the story who represent having spiritual sight. They're the ones who spiritually can see. I found in my studies someone quoted Helen Keller.

Someone once asked Helen Keller, you know Helen Keller, she lived her whole life being both blind and deaf. And someone asked her, isn't it terrible to be blind? And she replied, better to be blind and to see with your heart than to have two good eyes and to see nothing.

[11 : 39] And that in many ways demonstrates what's going on here. we say heart if we understand the spiritual reality here. She's saying it's better to be blind but have spiritual sight than to have both eyes and be blind.

And that really is the contrast in this story between the two blind men who see Jesus for who he is and the disciples who are still hoping that they'll be great in the kingdom next to Jesus.

Now, as we think about blindness, I think it's important that we understand it's not just about the disciples, is it? Apart from Christ, we're all spiritually blind.

None of us are able to see spiritual realities apart from Christ. And so in that way, and I think this is important, we all come to Christ as beggars. And the disciples are looking down at them because they're beggars and because they're blind.

And what I think one of the main points of the story is to say, this is how we all come to Christ. It's those who are spiritually blind and as beggars. And so if we're coming to Christ thinking about what all we have to commend ourselves and how high this might get us on the hierarchy of the kingdom, am I going to be sitting at Jesus' right hand?

[12 : 55] Maybe I'm fourth in line here? Then we're approaching the kingdom the wrong way. We're approaching it based on iron our goodness, our deserving of the kingdom. And what Jesus is communicating is no one deserves to enter into the kingdom.

All of us come as beggars and as spiritually blind men. I want to just demonstrate this from God's word. 2 Corinthians 4.4 We read, The God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

So the God of this world and this is speaking of Satan has blinded the mind of unbelievers. So at some point, so were all of you, right? We're all born unbelievers believers.

And as unbelievers, the God of this world, Satan, has blinded our minds to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

So, we're born blind, all of us, to spiritual realities. And not one of us can see and understand the gospel in a way that we can believe the gospel apart from God first giving us sight.

[14 : 19] And so, all of us are this way. Matthew 13, 14 through 16. So, going back to what we saw earlier in our study. Jesus says, Indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, You will indeed hear, but never understand.

And you will indeed see, but not perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed.

Lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them. But, blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears for they hear.

Now, the context of this is Jesus was speaking of why he's teaching in parables. And he's saying, yeah, the Pharisees and everyone else's crowd, they're not understanding this.

Why? Because they have not been given spiritual sight. And he's saying to the disciples, you're understanding it because God's granted you spiritual sight. And even they need the help of Jesus explaining it to them that they might understand it.

[15 : 26] But we see in that, again, just the reality that the word of God will be foolishness to us apart from God changing our eyes. Changing our heart, giving us spiritual sight, that we might understand the message of the word of God.

And then Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 15, verse 14, he says, let them alone. They are blind guides, and if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

So the religious leaders of that day who were apparently unbelievers, Jesus calls them of their father, the devil, and of the offspring, they call them a brood of vipers.

And so, as unbelievers, Jesus says, they're blind guides who are leading blind people, and they're both going to go astray. Our closing hymn today is Amazing Grace, and in that we sing, I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.

So you've sung this truth, you've affirmed it, I'm just showing you it's there in Scripture. We're going to sing it again in a little bit, but what I want you to see is that this is true of all of us. If you're a Christian, you once were blind, and now you see.

[16 : 38] If you're an unbeliever here in this room, then the reality is you're still blind to these spiritual things. My hope is that even today, the Spirit would be working you to help you to see the truth of these things.

I think of that miracle where Jesus heals the blind man in two stages. You remember at first he says, I see things like trees walking around. And Jesus heals a second time and then he can see clearly.

And maybe there's some of you in this room who the Spirit's helping you to see some of the truths of this, but you're still in need of further healing and seeing spiritual realities.

Well, what I want you to understand in this is that Jesus came to address this problem. Jesus came to heal this blindness. John 9, verses 39 through 41, Jesus said, For judgment I came into the world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

And so here Jesus is saying, he's come to give sight to those who are blind. He says, and to those who see, and I think here he's speaking of those who imagine themselves as seeing, the Pharisees and people like this, who think they understand things, to them he's going to judge them by giving them further blindness.

[17 : 55] But we see, Jesus came into the world. For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see. John 8, 12, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

You can imagine pure blindness as darkness. darkness. And that's how we all were. That's how our world was. And so the light of the world came into our world.

Jesus entered in and he brought the light of life that we might be able to see and that we would no longer walk in darkness. In Ephesians 1, 18, Paul prays that believers would continue to have the eyes of their hearts enlightened that they may have greater spiritual understanding.

Now that even, I think, helps us understand what's going on with the disciples. I think the majority of them, we know not Judas, but that the Lord's worked in their hearts. They've already professed that he is the Messiah.

They still have a misconception of what the Messiah is intended for. But Paul prays that believers would continue to have the eyes of their hearts enlightened. So we still need to see more spiritually.

[19 : 05] If you're a Christian, even if God's giving you sight to understand his word, we don't understand it all. There's room for growth. Even I think as we're putting sin to death by the Spirit, we're unable to see more.

Like you think of cataracts die and how they might affect us. And sin so blinds us to the spiritual realities and truths that we need to understand. And so as we look at this miracle, I don't want us to miss the spiritual context of it.

This isn't just a physical miracle that's going on. Jesus is teaching us spiritual realities. And I want to show that even, we see that even with the blind men. But the second thing I want us to look at is the blind men themselves.

And what does true faith look like? What can we learn from them and their example as it was? Well first, they refuse to be discouraged by the crowds. Maybe there's some of you in this room who maybe come to church who have listened to the gospel but have never professed faith in Christ because of fear.

what are other people going to think? What are people going to say? Maybe there are people who are discouraging you. Maybe it's not welcomed even in your home. And I'm encouraged by them because they're not discouraged by the crowds.

[20 : 18] The crowds actually, I mean the followers of Jesus, right? Jesus' followers are saying, hush, be quiet. Now how easy would that be for us to think, well this is coming from Jesus himself.

He sent his people over to tell me to be quiet. But they're not discouraged. They were looked down upon by the crowds. They were told to be silent by Jesus' followers.

In many ways, these were unimportant nobodies in that society. Again, much like the children that we saw earlier that the crowds pushed away.

But I think one lesson we can learn from these blind men is that true faith persists. Though the world, and even though other believers would discourage you. I know that's sad to say, but in Ebony, even for those of you in this room who are Christians, there may be ways that you discourage other people from coming to the kingdom.

It may be in how we act, and how we talk, that we blaspheme the name of Christ, that we're inconsistent with what we're saying we believe. It may be in specific things we say to unbelievers.

[21 : 30] But even though they're being discouraged, they persist on. And that's what true faith does. It presses on, it looks to Christ, even though there are those who would discourage them.

They also took the chance they were given to be healed. Verse 34, we see Jesus is passing by. How many times might they have sat outside the city gate for those leaving the city, maybe those coming in, that they might ask for some money?

How many days have they spent there? How many years of their life may be spent? There's no way of supporting them unless their family is taking care of them. This may be their only means of support is that people would give them a little money.

If so, that's their full-time job. They're there all the time. This is what they do. They beg. It just so happens that one day Jesus is passing by. And I think they really grabbed the opportunity.

They had heard of him. Maybe they believed certain truths about him. We see about what they say. But now as Jesus is passing by, they cried out to Jesus for mercy.

[22 : 35] And that's really a third point we could say is that if we want to have true faith or what does true faith look like, true faith cries out to Jesus for mercy. One distinction that I see, again, with the contrast between the disciples and the beggars is they know their need.

They need mercy from God. I think one of the most dangerous places we can be is if we think we don't need mercy. We think we've got it all together. We can handle it ourselves.

But they knew they needed mercy and they cried out to Jesus. They looked to the right place to receive mercy. Not to the crowds, but to Jesus. I could argue that they prayed.

They asked, asked for specific requests from the Lord. Jesus goes to them and even asks them what is it that they want? And they would say that they're for their eyes to be open.

We see in verse 33. And so they had a very specific thing they're coming to Jesus and asking for. That their eyes would be opened. Now, to even ask that also means a fifth reality is that they believe that Jesus is capable of healing them.

[23 : 51] they believe that Jesus could do it. They had faith in Jesus that he could do what physically was impossible. There weren't any doctors in that day that could give them sight.

There's no surgery they're going to have. They're not going to, in their blindness, stumble into a tree and then get knocked the right way and be able to see again. It's not going to happen. And they believe that Jesus could do what physically was impossible, which was supernatural, which was a miracle.

They believe that Jesus could do it. They had faith in him. And that, of course, is exactly what he does. As we see in verse 34, he gives them their sight. But we also see in this that with the physical, he also heals the spiritual.

And Jesus in pity touched their eyes and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him. Now, I've already argued that the crowd, there's some spiritual blindness in the crowd. I think even though there's some faith there, there's some spiritual blindness.

So you might say, well, the fact that he's following him doesn't mean that they're actually believers. But I think we have other evidence that they're believers.

[25 : 05] One is the pattern we have in the gospel that Jesus, most of the time when we see physical healing, it corresponds with spiritual belief and then following Jesus, not just in large crowds but becoming a disciple of some sort of Jesus.

But also we see that this is affirmed in Mark and Luke's gospel. In both of those accounts we see that they truly are believers and we'll look at that in just a moment. But that also, now this is tricky for me because Jesus heals them and gives them faith but yet there had to be some faith already working in them.

The spirit was already working in them because they cry out certain things. They believe Jesus was the Messiah. They call him the son of David. That's not just saying that he's from the tribe of Judah.

The reference to the son of David is specifically to the Davidic covenant. There would be a son of David who would sit on God's throne who would reign forever. Now I've argued all along the disciples are believing this aren't they?

Because they believe Jesus is going to Jerusalem to whoop up on the Roman Empire to take the kingdom and to reign forever and they're going to be there on his right hand the left hand. So they're understanding this as well but they believe him to be the son of David who would sit on the throne.

[26 : 21] No one has sat on the throne for hundreds of years now. Over 400 years it's been that no one has sat on the throne and they believe Jesus is the guy who's going to do it.

And so this is a great deal of faith and understanding of who Jesus is. They believed him to be the promised savior, the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. But Luke 18 records only one of the beggars but there we read and Jesus said to him recover your sight.

Your faith has made you well. And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him glorifying God and all the people when they saw it gave praise to God. So Jesus says your faith has made you well.

There's a degree of faith that they're trusting in Jesus not just for physical sight. So it's not just that Jesus did this to indicate spiritual realities. There's a spiritual reality there.

They want to see Jesus not just physically but spiritually open our eyes. Mark likewise says, Jesus speaking, says go your way. Your faith has made you well.

[27 : 26] And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way. Again, that's the reference to Bartimaeus who I think is one of the two blind men here in this instance. But your faith has made you well.

I mentioned this previously when we looked at the idea of Jesus healing those who are blind. But Isaiah 35, 5-6 describes the messianic age as a time when, quote, the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. So blindness was one of these four miracles that was to indicate the messianic age, the messianic time, the fulfillment of these things.

So if Jesus was the Messiah, then these blind men reasoned he would have mercy on them and give them their sight. So this isn't just, look, I'm tired of being blind.

I'll try any cure you got. Give me the snake oil. Give me whatever. You know, I'll stay up late night television ordering those strange products at two in the morning. This isn't what's going on with them. The reason here, this is the son of David.

[28 : 33] What does God's word say about the Messiah? When the Messiah comes, he will give sight to the blind. This is good news for me because I'm blind. That's the guy who can do it.

And so there's genuine faith that's spurring them on to ask Jesus for this. And then I think we should be encouraged as well that they responded in worship.

So I read to you earlier Luke 18. In verse 43 it says, Immediately he recovered his sight and followed him glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

So the response to this is worship. It's praising God. The response to witnessing this is what? Worship. It's praising God.

So as we think about this spiritual reality and what these blind men are experiencing, how they look to Jesus in faith, Jesus heals them, he gives them even greater faith, he gives them salvation, and what's the response for us when we're saved?

[29 : 40] It should be one of worship, glorifying God. But also, what should be the response of the crowds when we witness someone else being saved? It ought to be worship.

We ought to glorify God when we have the privilege of witnessing this. And I mentioned this already, but another point is that they follow Jesus. They receive physical sight.

They don't just go their own way. Even think of the rich young ruler that we looked at previously. Jesus says, sell all you have and follow me.

me. And he walks away sad. Remember Peter's response? Jesus, that's what we did. We gave up everything to follow you.

Well, here are these blind men who maybe have little to nothing, but when Jesus gives them the sight, when they have the faith, where do they do? Where do they go? They follow him.

- [30 : 41] They become followers of Jesus. They become disciples. Again, as we think of the contrast between them and the disciples, their concern is with the greatness of Jesus.
- They glorify God. They want to see Jesus in contrast to the disciples who are worried with their own greatness. They're worried with their own greatness.
- look at verse 32. In stopping, Jesus called them and said, what do you want me to do for you? Now, this question, does it seem familiar at all?
- Look back at verse 21. And Jesus said to her, what do you want? She said to him, say that these two sons of mine are to sit one at your right hand and one at your left hand.
- And we argued back then that this was really the urging of James and John. And so, I don't think the contrast with the disciples is arbitrary. I'm just manifesting this. The question really is the same.
- [31 : 56] Jesus asked these blind beggars, what do they want? And their desire is to regain their sight, to have sight, maybe if they've never had it before. Whereas the disciples' response was that they might be great in the kingdom.
- And so, I would argue that even at this point, the beggars seem to understand better than the disciples that Jesus came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. And if that's true, that means he's the fountainhead of all mercy.
- mercy. Jesus is where we go for mercy. Not for personal greatness. But we come to him as beggars. And so, if we take that question and expand it and say, what if Jesus is asking all of us that question?
- What do you want from Jesus? Jesus is saying, what would you have me do for you? How would we answer that question? Maybe we even analyze our own prayer lives.
- What are the kind of things we're praying for? What would we have Jesus do for us? Are we seeking mercy or are we seeking personal glory? I think we have to cry out with these beggars, Lord, have mercy on us, son of David.
- [33 : 19] Have mercy on us. That's really their prayer. So, part of the lesson Jesus has been teaching over the last three chapters is that we must all come to God as beggars.
- This is how we approach him. And so, I think there's great importance in this. This isn't just a coincidence that Jesus happens across beggars. Believe it or not, God's sovereign.
- And so, those beggars are there that day for a reason. Jesus heals them for a reason. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all include this in their gospels to teach us something.
- And I think this is the primary lesson. Jesus wants one last time before the triumphal entry to nail it into the head of the disciples. And for all of us, this is how we come to Christ.
- This is how we come to God. Not in our greatness, not seeking our greatness, but we come to him as beggars. We come to him like children who are dependent upon their father and their mother.
- [34 : 22] father. We look to God, our heavenly father, for all things, especially salvation. And so we must all look to him for mercy.
- We cannot depend on our own greatness, but solely upon his greatness. So these realities are true. What does this mean for us? How do we apply this? Well, I've made some application along the way, but at first, maybe this is the one that's probably the least connected, but I think is relevant for us nonetheless.
- I believe our prayer life is affected by our sense of need. Our prayer life is affected by our sense of need. We see this modeled well for us with the beggars.

They're needy. They know their need because they're blind. There's a specific need they have, and so they cry out for mercy to the Lord. Maybe for you, if your prayer life is struggling, right now, if you're struggling to pray, maybe if there's not a desire to be at corporate prayer, to join us in prayer, maybe even personally, you just don't want to pray right now.

Is it because of a lack of dependence upon God? I've said before, I think this is a major concern for us here in America. Life generally is fairly easy. I know we all have hardships, I know life can seem hard at times, but comparatively, if we just look at this in the scope of human history, we've got it pretty good.

[35 : 55] There's air conditioning, there's heat, even our cars have that. We have heated seats in our cars. We have grocery stores. We can get stuff when it's not even in season.

Most of us weren't out begging out there by the highway this week. I think even the poorest in our society have it comparatively good compared to those in the past.

And so because everything seems to come so easy to us, maybe there's not really a good sense of need for us. I think this is evidence even in your life. Maybe there's been times when there's been a physical need for you.

Maybe you got some diagnosis from the doctor that causes you to cry out to God. And you know in that moment how your prayer life looks different.

And so maybe there's a way that we need to regain a sense of our neediness before God to stop believing that we can handle it all on our own.

[36 : 53] To see that we are utterly dependent upon God and not self dependent. Have you failed to come to him as a beggar? Do we come to God like he's a friend that can kind of help with some needs when we need that friend?

Or do we come to him as beggars? Do we look to him like that newborn child looks to its mother? Secondly, I've been teaching this all along, but their blindness portrays our spiritual condition.

They also show that to be saved from sin, we need a powerful, forgiving, and saving grace of God which is found in Christ alone. There's no one else who can take away that spiritual blindness, or that physical blindness that we see with the beggars.

And so two, there's no one who can remove spiritual blindness. There's not any one person, not ourselves, not anyone else, who can take a heart of stone and make it a heart of flesh.

Who can take someone who's spiritually dead and make them spiritually alive other than Jesus Christ. And so, we all need Christ. We must see that need for Christ.

[38 : 05] Apart from him, we're spiritually blind, we're spiritually dead. And spiritual sight and spiritual life come only through Christ. So again, we all approach the throne.

We approach Christ, we approach God as beggars, as those who are debtors of mercy. Thirdly, all who cry to Jesus for mercy will receive it.

Again, the contrast between the crowd and Jesus. for the crowd, these screaming beggars are an annoyance. The children coming to Jesus are just getting in the way.

But that's not the attitude of our Savior. He stops. Maybe that seems like nothing to stop along the way, but let's just consider for a second. There's this beeline that Jesus is making for Jerusalem right now.

The passion's coming. The cross is coming. He's headed that way. There's a mission that Jesus is on. And he stops in the midst of the mission. They're headed to Jerusalem.

[39 : 14] And he makes one detour that we have recorded for us here. And the one detour, the one stop along the path is what? To heal blind beggars that the crowd cares nothing for.

And so, unlike the crowds, Jesus goes out of his way to minister to the marginalized, to those whose society gives very little credit to, to the children, to the blind beggars, we've seen as well, to the lepers that no one else would touch, to the lame, to the deaf.

Jesus has mercy on them. And so, we too ought to be encouraged that there's not one of us who will not receive mercy if we come to the Lord. Maybe we can think of this as two sides of the coin.

On one side, we think we're too good to need mercy. And on the other side, we think we're so bad that we can never receive it. But all who come to Christ seeking mercy will find it in him.

Fourthly, I want to encourage you that wherever you find yourself, that today is the day of opportunity for you. I've talked to you already in many ways about the gospel.

[40 : 32] Jesus is headed to the cross to die for our sins, for the specific purpose that he might take men who are blind and deaf and even dead and give them sight and ears to hear and give them spiritual life.

That's the gospel. And so, if you can imagine for a moment the blind beggar sitting there day after day and they get a coin here and there and nothing really amazing happens in their life and then Jesus comes along.

I want to say that's where you are today. Jesus is, as it were, walking by right now. The gospel is being presented clearly. Here's your opportunity to cry out to Christ for mercy.

And the reality is we don't know that we're given another opportunity for that. The blind beggars probably would not have had another opportunity. In just over a week, Jesus is dead. He's crucified.

He's headed to Jerusalem. They're not going to see him again. He's not coming by again. This is their opportunity. I think this may well be the case for some of you in this room.

[41 : 41] Will you cry out today to Jesus for mercy? Will you believe in him? No matter what your situation is right now, if Jesus shows mercy to blind beggars, he will show mercy to you.

If you, too, cry out to him and believe in him. Fifthly, we see another lesson about greatness in the kingdom. If you desire to be great, be merciful to others.

Show them mercy. Jesus just said, the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. He said, those who are great will not lord it over them, but they'll become a slave or a servant to all.

And so now Jesus is living this out. Here's true greatness. He stops to show mercy to those who no one else cares about. So I think the same is true for us.

True greatness in the kingdom will be demonstrated by the mercy that we show to others. I think in particular, we need to invite others into the kingdom and not to hinder them from coming, to welcome them to Christ and not to get in the way, to be a servant and slave to God and to others for the sake of his glory and his kingdom.

[43 : 03] So as we come to Christ as beggars, dependent upon his mercy, we too will be merciful to others. When we know and understand how much we've been forgiven, we will forgive others.

And so if we want to be merciful, and I can even extend that and say, if we want to be great in the kingdom, because Jesus isn't diminishing greatness in the kingdom. He's trying to teach them what does greatness look like.

So if we want to be great in the kingdom, we need to be merciful to others. And if we want to be merciful to others, how are we going to get that? Well, we need to pray. We know that this is spiritual fruit, that God works in us.

But I think the primary way we're going to be merciful to others is when we begin to see that God has been merciful to us. That we grasp and we understand how much mercy we receive.

Then we'll be merciful to others. Or if I said another way, one reason we're not merciful to others is because we think we haven't received mercy. We don't see the mercy we receive. We don't keep that in our forefront. We think we're deserving of mercy, which isn't really mercy, is it?

[44 : 08] We think we're deserving of the kingdom. We think we somehow are good enough and others aren't. We need a big dose of understanding that we are blind beggars. And that what we have, we receive by God's mercy alone.

So let me encourage you in closing that we pray that God would continue to remove spiritual blindness in those of us in this room who are Christians. And give us insight into ourselves and to his church.

And that he would make us to be merciful and welcoming to others. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a merciful God.

That mercy is demonstrated in the simple fact of you sending Christ to this earth at all. But to die for our sins, to redeem us from them, to give us eternal life, to bring us into the kingdom.

And Lord, we realize that in our day-to-day lives there's so much going on that we rarely give thought to the fact that each and every day is a display of your mercy. The wages of sin is death and I'm still breathing.

[45 : 20] Lord, we thank you that you are a merciful God. We thank you for our Savior, Jesus Christ. Lord, we pray there's anyone in this room who has not trusted in him that this day they would cry out to him for mercy.

That you would remove the scales from their eyes. That you would give them eyes to see the truth of your word. That you would save them and make them alive spiritually. And for those of us who have, Lord, we pray for those of us who have been made alive and been given spiritual sight.

Lord, we know that there's still blindness in us. Continue to remove it. Help us to see how much mercy we have received, how much forgiveness we receive, that we might be merciful and forgiving to those around us.

That we might live as a servant and a slave to you and to others for the sake of your kingdom. That you might be glorified in us and in our lives. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Let's stand together and sing of God's mercy and grace as we sing hymn 460.

Amazing grace. 460. 460. Amazing grace.

[46 : 46] How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

grace. I was lost, but now I'm found, was mine, but now I see.

T'was grace that taught my heart to hear, grace, that grace that Paul and Mek are in the air, those who say them, grace, and the aim of chúng, and the measure of the people.

Do you, your names, are you and the ransomed. Of them you shall see.

Through many dangers, foils, and snares I have already come His grace has brought me safe thus far And faith will lead me home The Lord has promised good to me His word my hope's in your heart He will my shield and portion be As long as I may lose

[48 : 42] And when its flesh and heart shall fail And mortal life shall cease I shall possess within the veil A life of joy and peace And even there ten thousand years Bright shining as the sun We know God's grace to sing God's praise And when He first began

Now may the God of our Lord Jesus Christ The Father of glory Give you the spirit of wisdom And of revelation in the knowledge of Him Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened Amen Amen