

Bible Study Guide: Week of 10-18-2021

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Mark 10:46-52

⁴⁶They came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁹Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” ⁵⁰So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” ⁵²Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

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Jesus is continuing on his journey. He is on his way to Jerusalem where he will suffer and be killed and on the third day rise. Along that way, he comes across a blind beggar. Interestingly, we know not only who this man is (Bartimaeus), but also who his father was (Timaeus). This level of detail is unusual in Mark’s gospel and is particularly striking given the earlier mention of a rich and important person who questioned Jesus about inheriting eternal life—he was simply “a man.” Meanwhile, this poor beggar (by contrast) is named and given something of a back story.

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Bartimaeus is the first and only person in the Gospel of Mark to call Jesus “Son of David”—a clearly Messianic title which is echoed with shouts of “Hosanna!” by the crowds in Mark 11:10 as Jesus enters Jerusalem. The shouting of Bartimaeus calls to mind earlier sequences in which demon possessed people shouted at Jesus. Perhaps this is why the crowd tries to silence him. It is also possible that as a blind beggar Bartimaeus would have been seen as stepping out of his place to approach Jesus in such a bold way—the poor and disabled were often seen as lower members of society in Jesus’ day. Sometimes people believed that those who were blind or otherwise disabled were being punished by God (see John 9:1ff) The crowd’s demand for Bartimaeus to be quiet is similar to Jesus’ rebuke of unclean spirits, Peter’s earlier rebuke of Jesus, Jesus’ rebuke of Peter, the disciples’ rebuke of the crowds who brought little children to Jesus, and Jesus’ rebuke of the wind and waves on the sea during a storm. The crowd essentially fusses at Bartimaeus to shut up. He refuses to be silent, but rather cries out even more loudly for Jesus to help him.

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Bartimaeus leaves his outer garment behind. As a blind beggar, this may have been his only possession of any value, but he joyfully casts it aside to come to Jesus and follow him. Compare this action with the action of the unnamed rich man in the previous story who went away from Jesus sad because he had many possessions. This word for cloak literally refers to the outermost garment. It is the same word used to describe the garment that the hemorrhaging woman touched when Jesus passed by in order to be healed. The crowds throw their cloaks or outer garments on the ground along with palm branches as Jesus enters Jerusalem. It is also the same word used to describe the garment placed on Jesus as he is led out to be crucified. In Matthew’s gospel, it is the garment about which Jesus says in the Beatitudes, “If someone takes your shirt, give them your outer garment, as well.” And it is the outer garments of Jesus for which the soldiers cast lots in several of the gospel accounts. So this simple word for an outer garment takes on lots of meaning and symbolism in the gospels.

⁵¹Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.”

Bartimaeus is one of only two people in scripture to call Jesus *my teacher* (literally *rabbouni*). The other is Mary Magdalene in John 20 after the resurrection. Here, this blind man calls Jesus two titles we don't often hear—Son of David and rabbouni. It is almost as if this blind person has a keen spiritual insight that is incongruous with his lack of physical vision.

⁵²Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Jesus restores Bartimaeus' sight and praises his faith. He says his faith has saved him. Though we translate this as “healed” or “made well,” it literally means “to save.” His trust in Jesus and this encounter with him has changed Bartimaeus' life. No longer does he sit “by the way/road,” now he follows Jesus “on the way/road.” His trajectory has changed—he is now on the road rather than beside it. And his action has changed. He no longer sits, he follows. This is what salvation looks like—not just the physical restoration of a lost sense, but a new way of living and being in light of Jesus' calling.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. Why do you think Mark tells us so much about Bartimaeus, yet comparatively little about an unnamed rich man who had a similar encounter with Jesus earlier in the gospel?**
- 2. Why do you think the crowd tries to silence Bartimaeus? Whom might we try to silence today and in what ways?**
- 3. What do you think is the difference between being “made well” and being “saved” in this story?**