

**Mark 10:52 Jesus told him, “Go. Your faith has made you well.” Immediately [the blind man] received his sight and began following Jesus on the road.**

There he was hunkered down on the side of the road, questioning his future, knowing that everyone around him was against him, recognizing that he was at a crossroads both figuratively and literally, resolved to the fact that he had only one chance, he cried out, desperate for deliverance. I’m talking, of course, about Martin Luther. (You thought I was going to go a different way with that, didn’t you?) Take a look:<sup>1</sup> ♦ Yes, desperate for deliverance, knowing that he would be a disappointment to his family, Luther cried out for mercy to the only mediator he knew in his medieval Christianity - a saint, St. Anne, the patron saint of copper miners.

As the video said, Luther kept his word, became a monk, wrestled with his faith, studied the Scriptures, and cried out once again. Only this time, it wasn’t to *seek* mercy. It was to *proclaim* mercy, the mercy of God for the deliverance of his people. And in so doing, the Lord put Luther on a life-journey of faith lived in thanksgiving for the Lord’s merciful deliverance: First the mercy, then the journey. And as we consider God’s mercy and our journey, today, please, join me...

This week marks the conclusion of our Growth Group Series: Who Do You Say I AM? We’ve looked at Jesus as...

- ♦ The Messiah (Mark 8:27-35)
- ♦ The Servant of All (Mark 9:30-37)
- ♦ The One Who Gives us Purpose
- ♦ The Lover of Family (Mark 10:2-16)
- ♦ The Seeker of Souls (Mark 10:17-27)
- ♦ The Payer of our Debts (Mark 10:35-45)

And today we come to see Jesus as ♦ *the One Who Delights in Showing Mercy*. In a way, this is an umbrella-type description of Jesus since each of our descriptions through this series has

to do with his *mercy* for us motivating him to *act* for us.

But before we get too far down the road, the road on which Jesus and Bartimaeus met that day, it is important to ♦ understand *mercy*. The Greek word here for ♦ mercy is ἔλεος and is tied to the ♦ Hebrew word רַחֲמִים. (You may recall רַחֲמִים from last week’s service.) One dictionary describes this *mercy* as “*kindness or good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them.*”<sup>2</sup> (Thayer’s) Or, as the catechism defines it: ♦ “*God’s kindness in not punishing sinners as they deserve but providing a Savior instead.*” (2017 p. 381) That’s what was so important to Luther in the aftermath of his roadside experience. He recognized his need for deliverance and was not finding it in the work-righteousness of the medieval church.

At first glance, Bartimaeus sought a different kind of deliverance – a physical deliverance. And yet, it is evident that he sought more than sight for his eyes. He sight light for his soul. Mark tells us that ***Bartimaeus... was sitting by the road begging. When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*** Understand, Bartimaeus calling out ***Jesus, Son of David*** would be like you and me calling out *Jesus, Savior*.

You see, every Jewish child knew that God’s promise to King David, was that his son would sit on David’s throne both directly after him AND eternally for him, a promise fulfilled immediately by Solomon, but forever by the promised Messiah. And so by addressing Jesus as he did, Bartimaeus was loudly and publicly pointing to Jesus as the One promised from of old to save his people. And though the crowd tried to *shush* him, notice that they didn’t try to silence him in dispute of his claim. Rather, they didn’t want Jesus to have to bother with such trivialities as blind beggars crying for mercy.

I think that sometimes we feel that way, too, don’t we? I mean, typically, we don’t direct that type of thinking at others. But we often direct that type of thinking at ourselves. God has bigger things to deal with than my

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Hql6iiJiLk>

<sup>2</sup> Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon

little problems. (As if God is too busy for us.) Or, surely, God didn't mean me when he said that he will never leave us or forsake us. (As if God's presence is only for the very good.) Or even, I don't want God to be part of what I'm doing and feeling right now. (As if God won't notice.) No, be quiet, we say to ourselves. Deal with it on your own. Be on your own. Do what you want on your own. There's no sense in **begging** for *mercy*.

Sadly, be it Bartimaeus in his physical blindness, Luther in his spiritual blindness, our you and me blinded by the cares and covetousness, the trials and temptations of this life, ♦ whether we want to admit it or not, we are beggars, beggars for God's mercy, put to begging by own sinful, miserable condition, lost in darkness, and desperate for light and sight lest it consume us forever.

But ***Cheer up, [my friend]! He is calling you! Because of his great love for [you], God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made [you] alive with Christ even when [you] were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised [you] up with Christ and seated [you] with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to [you] in Christ Jesus.*** (Eph 2:4-7) ♦ First the mercy, then the journey.

Not many of us can say that we've had a roadside experience that changed our lives. Certainly, even fewer can point to one that changed their eternity. But according to the Scriptures alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, we beggars are delivered. This is the heart of the Lutheran Reformation – the alone's, the sola's of the Lutheran Reformation. And they have changed our eternity.

For most of us, that change took place on the day of our baptism as with water and Scripture alone, by grace alone, you and I were ♦ made alive in Christ. And all for his purposes: a journey from this time of grace to the glory that awaits. Just look at Bartimaeus, ***"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man replied, "Rabboni, I want to see again."*** <sup>52</sup> ***Jesus told him, "Go. Your faith has made you well." Immediately he received his sight***

***and began following Jesus on the road.*** Jesus presented himself, Bartimaeus begged for mercy, Jesus granted his request, and a blind man could see ♦ nothing but a new path before him, a new journey to follow Jesus.

We don't know what happened to Bartimaeus after this, where his journey took him in this life. Matthew and Luke record that there were two, unnamed blind beggars. So, it is likely that Mark refers to only one beggar, naming him as the Bartimaeus well-known to his *first* readers, though not to us. Some have speculated that Bartimaeus went on to be a pillar of the church in Jerusalem, his journey ending upon his welcome into eternity.

We do know, of course, what happened to Luther after his roadside experience. He went on to follow Jesus as a mouthpiece for the gospel, a voice that still cries out today throughout the world. But he never lost sight of who he was by nature and who he was made to be in Christ. On the day of his death in 1546, written on a scrap of paper were these words: *Wir sindt bettler – Hoc est verum.* We are beggars – this is true.

For us beggars, first the mercy, then the journey, huh? For that is where we have been and that is where we are and like them, that is where we will one day be: ***seated...in the heavenly realms [with] Christ Jesus.*** This is our sure, certain, and living hope even as we continue our journey here below.

A little later today, the first draft of the Strategic Planning Committees Vision Statement for the future ministry of New Life congregation will be shared. Essentially, it has two components:

- 1) ♦ **Grace Given** (recognizing that we have been entrusted with the saving message of Jesus and the salvation he gives)
- 2) ♦ **Grace Driven** (helping each other as followers of Jesus to put that message to work in our lives and the lives of others)

All of it, firmly rooted in the Word of the Lord. All of it, a vision for those looking to put that Word into practice. All of it, just another way to proclaim: First the mercy...then the journey...as we follow Jesus, the *One who Delights in Showing Mercy* ♦ It is to him that we pray *kyrie, eleison*: ♦ Lord, have mercy. ♦