

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Septuagesima Sunday February 5, 2012**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 37, 284:1-2, 149, 446, 508.

Lessons: Psalm 146, Romans 2:17-24, Luke 4:14-32.

Sermon Text: Mark 10:46-52

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The gospels record about 10 or 12 occasions when Jesus healed the blind. Some are general reports, as in simply reporting that he healed the blind and cured people's diseases and so on. A few, such as our text, are very specific.

In our Gospel lesson you heard Jesus read in the synagogue in his home town from the prophet Isaiah: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'*" Luke 4:18-21

Of course the people in the synagogue didn't like that. This man, whom they thought was just a carpenter's son, was claiming to be a prophet.

But we know from the Word of God that he was a prophet – and more. Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the very Son of God come down to earth to redeem mankind from all their sins. And today we hear again how

**JESUS CURES BLINDNESS**

- 1. Jesus miraculously heals those who are physically blind.**
- 2. Bartimaeus, one who is healed, praised God and follows Jesus.**
- 3. We ask God to remove our spiritual blindness.**

Jesus is passing through Jericho, about 15 miles east north-east of Jerusalem. This is found in three Gospels with slightly different details recorded, though we are not concerned about this. God's Word is true, and each evangelist is recording for a different audience.

Mark knows the blind man's name and uses it. Perhaps after his physical sight was restored Bartimaeus – the name means "Son of Timaeus" – had become an active follower of Jesus, well known in the church.

*"As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city [of Jericho], a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging."* Bartimaeus recognizes Jesus as the Messiah. *"When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'"* "Son of David" is a popular Jewish title for the coming Messiah. Matthew recorded previously that another pair of blind men had previously addressed Jesus as "Son of David" and had been healed. We read from Matthew 9:27-29: *"As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!' When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' 'Yes, Lord,' they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, 'According to your faith will it be done to you'"*.

It is certainly proper for Jesus to be called Son of David. His mother had been told before his birth: *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father*

**David."** Luke 1:32 Isaiah and other prophets make it clear that the Messiah will be a descendant of the great King David.

Jesus did not stop the man from using this title. This is really a double confession of the man's faith: Bartimaeus believed in the person of Jesus when he called him Son of David. But he also confessed faith in Jesus' ability, his power to have mercy on him.

We know that as the true Son of God, Jesus could heal physically. At least twice Isaiah tells us about his healing powers. **"In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."** Isaiah 29:18-19 We also read: **"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped."** Isaiah 35:5 But remember that Jesus doesn't just open the eyes of those physically blind. Jesus opens the eyes of the spiritually blind so that they may see the eternal salvation he offers and gives.

Matthew and Luke report this: **"Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'"** Matthew 9:27, Luke 18:39 It is as if people did not want him to bother the Lord, or perhaps some were selfishly wanting the Lord to do some healing just for them.

The man would not be silenced. He kept pleading. When someone becomes serious about his or her salvation, crying to God that his eyes may be opened, and begins to turn his or her back on the world and on all those "things" which other men strive for, there will be opposition. That opposition may not even come from the professed enemies of the gospel of Christ, but from such men like this multitude who seem to be with Jesus and on his side. Even such followers of Jesus will, on occasion, try to hinder any earnest crying to the Lord. Sometimes we don't want to share the gospel with others, perhaps because of their skin color or ethnic background. But our God is a God who, as Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:4 **"wants all men to be saved"**. Remember, Scripture says God loved the WORLD and sent his only-begotten Son to save all mankind, if only they will believe. John 3:16

**"Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' So they called to the blind man, 'Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.'" His fervent pleas were answered! For this reason, we must never stop praying. God wants to give all men his spiritual gifts, the most important of which is the forgiveness of sins. And where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.**

**"Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus."** In a sense, he got rid of what was hindering him. What a good example for us to throw aside every weight and sin that troubles us! The writer to the Hebrews in the New Testament encourages us **"let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."** Hebrews 12:1 Bartimaeus knew what he wanted and now it seemed like God was going to give it to him. He is overjoyed that his earthly healing might come about. But he was about to receive more than earthly healing of his sight. We are reminded of Jesus' illustration of the kingdom of heaven and how precious it is: **"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."** Matthew 13:44-46

**"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, 'Rabbi, I want to see.'" Remember that Jesus came to be the light of the world and to give light to all mankind. Jesus himself tells us "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** Matthew 20:28 Now was an opportunity to serve this man and let this miracle serve as a sign so that many might believe in Jesus' mighty power. If Jesus has the power to heal blindness, surely he has the power to forgive sins and do everything he tells us he can do!

This question is intended to encourage the faith of a man who is pleading with Jesus. Previously he had just been crying and hoping for mercy, now he asks to receive his sight.

Matthew says Jesus touched the eyes. Mark simply reports **"Go' said Jesus, 'your faith has healed you.'" And so it is with the Words of God. Just as Jesus healed by his words, so it is by the word of the Gospel that anyone can be saved eternally. Only believe! Only have faith! It is not works or good deeds that save eternally, but faith in the words and works of God.**

Faith had led to Jesus healing others, as we read in the case of a woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years: ***"Jesus turned and saw her. 'Take heart, daughter,' he said, 'your faith has healed you.' And the woman was healed from that moment."*** Matthew 9:22

Jesus commends the blind man's faith. It was not a shallow, temporary emotion, because we read that Bartimaeus then followed Jesus. ***"Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road."*** Luke gives more details: ***"Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God."***

He now follows Jesus, and is also glorifying and praising God. We are reminded of the one leper of the ten who were healed of their leprosy by Jesus: ***"One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice."*** Luke 17:15

Bartimaeus is not the only one who received this blessing. All who saw it recognized the power of Jesus to heal. Even today, we are able to see and marvel at the power of God to do what he wants to do.

Bartimaeus' persistence and his faith are a model for our own prayer life. He was persistent. God blessed him. We, too, must be persistent in our prayers. Think of the Lord's Prayer, and how 6 of its seven petitions ask for spiritual blessings. The Lord wants nothing more than to give us every spiritual blessing.

Bartimaeus – and others – are healed of physical diseases, including blindness. But even more importantly, everyone who believes is healed of spiritual blindness.

This blind man had faith in Jesus but many who could see physically remained spiritually blind. That is even true today. Many remain spiritually blind, even though they have heard God's Word and heard about and even seen God's great power. Today you have heard of God's physical power to heal physically.

Many things blind men to God. For example, we read in 1 John 2:15-16: ***"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world."***

How easy it is to be blinded by things of this world – possessions in this world, or wisdom, or the desire for power. There are surely many who are searching for true wisdom. We find news stories about how people are searching for some kind of "relevant" religion or "spirituality". You, by God's grace, have learned and believed about the very most relevant religion possible. All else except Jesus Christ leads to eternal damnation. In John 14:6 we read: ***"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"***

We daily must ask ourselves: How well do we see? How well do we see what our weaknesses and illnesses have to do with our eternal welfare? Like all humans, we are all by nature looking at earthly, temporal things. But we must look also at spiritual things and not remain blind to God's abundant blessings in Jesus Christ.

Do we want to see like this man did? Spiritually I mean? Or do we want to remain blind? We pray that God give us the earnest desire to see all the spiritual blessings God offers and wants to give us.

We might also think about how we see and WHAT we see. Do we see only for ourselves or for others? What I mean is do we look out for others, too? Are we daily concerned about sharing the only way to eternal life?

It is our calling to tell – to proclaim, to preach about Jesus Christ – and to let his light shine in our lives so that others may see our good lives and praise God and glorify God.

We have the light. In fact, Jesus says believers ARE the light of the world. We can, by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Ghost SEE. We have come to see our salvation. Let us seek to do all we can so that others can see that salvation. May the Word of God remove spiritual blindness from our hearts as well as from others.

Spiritual blindness is replaced by faith for all in whom the Holy Spirit does his work. Faith comes by hearing, but hearing what? ***"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."*** Romans 10:17 May we share what we can see: the good news about Jesus! Amen.