

Same Question, Different Answer

Intro. Over the past few weeks, Mark has reminded us several times the Lord is “on the road,” and this week, he is leaving Jericho on the way to Jerusalem, his final destination. The Lord’s three-year road trip was almost finished.

I. Jerusalem is only about fifteen miles from Jericho. Large numbers of pilgrims and traders traveling to and from Jerusalem passed through Jericho. Bartimaeus had a good spot at the gate. He was acutely attuned to the traffic; he depended on people for his food. He knew something unusual was going on; there was some different in the air. I am struck, not by how a blind man begging on the side of a busy highway knew Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. *Everybody* knew who Jesus was and

where he was from. Bartimaeus easily found that out by asking the crowd. What got my attention was how Bartimaeus used a well-known title for the Messiah: *Son of David*. Implied is that Bartimaeus had a “prophetic insight” into who Jesus really is that few others had. [Sacra Pagina, The Gospel of Mark, p. 319, M. Glazier Publishing, 2002] Most *seeing* people were blind to that, including some of his disciples. He took a chance to change his life. The disciples should have been embarrassed when they heard Bartimaeus’ question. Not because he was shouting and wouldn’t shut up. His request was for mercy and healing of his blindness, not about something petty like power or authority or money which the disciples expected. They are soon silenced by his honest question and how the Lord, seeing his faith, granted his request unlike James and

John's in last week's gospel. In chapter eight where another blind man was healed, the Lord touched and prayed over him; here the Lord never mentioned healing. His response to Bartimaeus was that his faith in the Son of David *saved* him. *That* led to his healing. The Lord also said, "Go your way."

Bartimaeus decided to follow the Lord on *his* way to Jerusalem. We never hear about him again. We are left to wonder if he followed the Lord to Calvary or if he lost sight of him along the way.

Concl. Bartimaeus' recognition of Jesus was prophetic. Shortly after this miracle, the Lord entered Jerusalem to shouts of, "Hosanna. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming." [Mark 11:9-10] It was Bartimaeus' *heart*, not his eyes that recognized Jesus as the Son of David, the Messiah.

It was his *faith* which led him to ask for mercy and sight. Because of that both of his requests were answered. We "see" the Lord today with our hearts and respond with our faith. We are within a few short weeks of All Saints, All Souls which lead us into Advent and of course, Christmas. There is a wave of distractions building that can blind us from seeing the Lord and forgetting the purpose of these Holy Days. **However, if our hearts are open to him, we may be able to recognize the Lord when he passes by on these busy days.**

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