

Sight For Blind Eyes

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Luke 18:31-43

We have now come in our study of Luke's Gospel to the last week of the life and public ministry of Jesus Christ. As far back at Luke 9:51, Jesus "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Why was He going to Jerusalem? To die upon a cross. He came from heaven into this world for one purpose: that He might die on the Cross for man's sins. He actually became God-Incarnate so He could suffer and die to bear the sins of many, and redeem both man and creation back to God.

So Jesus is now going to go from the Jordan Valley down by the Dead Sea where the city of Jericho was and make His way up to Jerusalem. He would ride into Jerusalem triumphantly on Palm Sunday. And the same crowd that cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Matthew 21:9) would, one week later cry out, "Crucify Him!...We have no king but Caesar!" (John 19:15).

In our text today, there are two things we want to look at. First, we'll look at the work of His Passion, His death of the Cross, verses 31-34. Jesus predicts that He's going to Jerusalem to suffer and die. And second, we'll look at the word of His power, verses 35-43. In this section, Jesus healed the blind eyes of Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus.

First we'll look at the work of His Passion, verses 31-34. Before Jesus heals Bartimaeus, He actually predicts His coming death by crucifixion. "Then He took the twelve..." "the apostles" "...aside and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem.'" You're always ascending when you're going up to Jerusalem. The Jordan Valley is below sea level, so you go from 1,500 feet to 2,500 feet in just a few miles.

Verse 31, Jesus said, "And all things that are written by the prophets..." that is, "the Old Testament prophets" "...concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished." In the context, that refers to the prophets' word of His death on the Cross. "For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." Praise God! "But they understood none of these things..." which is pretty typical of these guys. "This saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken."

I want to point out four things about this prediction of His Passion. Jesus goes from talking in parables to prophecy or predicting future events. Jesus is in control. He said, "No one takes [my life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). So everything is under God's plan, and everything is under God's control. He's going to Jerusalem to suffer and to die.

Let's look at the plan of His Passion, verse 31. "Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold....'" Whenever you see the word "behold," it means "look," because He has something very important He wants us to understand. And this is the third time that Jesus

explicitly predicted His death and Crucifixion on the Cross. And He includes the Resurrection in this text.

So Jesus continued, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.” “Son of Man” is a Messianic title used in our text from the book of Daniel. Jesus used it for Himself more than any other title.

I could have stopped here and preached a whole sermon on this verse; how God's Word cannot be broken (John 10:35). What the prophets have spoken will be fulfilled. Just as they predicted His first coming and His Second Coming, they predicted that when He came the first time, He would come as the Lamb of God to suffer and die on the Cross. And the second time He will come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah to reign on the throne of David forever.

The point is that the prophets spoke about it, and it shall be fulfilled. What God has spoken cannot be broken. Whatever Jesus says is going to happen and does happen. It indicates several things. It indicates that He is God; He is omniscient and He knows in every detail what is going to happen. He also has great love and great courage.

If I were Jesus, knowing that a cross was waiting for me in Jerusalem, I'd say, “Let's go the other direction. Or let's stay here in Jericho; it's a tropical climate. There are hot baths. We can kind of hang out here.” Why would I want to go to Jerusalem where I would be crucified? And the answer is that's the whole reason He came. That's why in the garden of Gethsemane, He said, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39). So He was going to the Cross to suffer and die. “Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2).

So I see His love, His courage, that He is in control, and the overarching question is that the Cross was not an afterthought in God's plan of redemption. It was preordained and planned before the foundation of the world. As far back as Genesis 3:15, it says that the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. And the serpent would bruise His heel. That is the Cross. When Jesus died on the Cross, Satan bruised His heel. But He divested Satan of his power. And Jesus was crucified as that Seed of the woman. Thus the Incarnation was for the purpose of Jesus dying to redeem us to God.

Psalm 22:1 says, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” The very words Jesus uttered on the Cross were those prophetically written in the psalms. And the rest of Psalm 22 perfectly, accurately, clearly predicts the Crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah.

And then there is Isaiah 53. In verse 5, it says, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities....And by His stripes we are healed.” All the prophetic words in Isaiah 53 came to be fulfilled when Jesus came to die on the Cross.

He even refers to the Resurrection in our text. And Matthew 12:40 says, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” But just as Jonah came out of that fish, so too Jesus

would come out of the grave. Jonah actually died in the whale, and God revived him back to life. So Jonah was a picture of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The whole idea was that Jesus accurately predicted His death and Resurrection. So it wasn't an afterthought, something that mistakenly happened. "Oh, what a bummer! Jesus went and got Himself crucified!" No; it was all planned and coordinated by God before the foundation of the world.

And as I said, this was the third time Jesus predicted His Cross. The first time Jesus predicted His Cross, Peter spoke up and said, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" Then Jesus said, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:22-23).

The second time Jesus predicted His death it was a situation in which the disciples argued over who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God. Jesus had just said He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and die, and what were they arguing about?! Who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom of God (Matthew 18:1-5). I don't know where Jesus got these guys!

Then the third time Jesus said He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and die we learn from Matthew's Gospel that Mrs. Zebedee, the mother of James and John, came to Jesus and said, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." I don't know if the sons asked their mother to do this for them, but this was a mother's ambition for her sons. She didn't say which one was on the right and which one was on the left; it doesn't matter. "But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.'" Then Jesus said, "To sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but is it for those for whom it is prepared by My Father" (Matthew 20:21-23). Jesus was talking about His death on the Cross.

So every time Jesus referred to the Cross, they didn't get it, as we'll see in our text.

Verse 31 is the plan of His Passion, preordained and designed by God the Father before the foundation of the earth.

And now I want you to see the particulars, how detailed He got about His Passion or death, verse 32-33. "For He will be delivered to the Gentiles." This is exactly what happened. They turned Jesus over to Pilate and the Roman government. Had they executed Him, it would have been a stoning to death, which was not prophesied in the Old Testament. So they turned Him over to Rome, so He would be lifted up upon a cross and would die for the sins of the world, of which the prophets had spoken.

Continuing, "And will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him." They mocked Him, put a crown of thorns on Him, put a purple robe on Him, put a staff in His hands and bowed to Him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Mark 15:18). They whipped Him with a cat-o-nine tails with many lashes. And they spit on Him, which is only found in this

text. God became a man; Jesus was God in the flesh, and sinful men spat in His face! The Creator of the universe had human spittle dripping off His face!

Verse 33, "They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." They whipped Him, beat Him and put Him to death.

All the prophets have spoken about this; it's so very clear. It's the particulars.

Notice the power over His Passion, the end of verse 33. "And the third day..." it's very specific "...He will rise again." That is a clear prediction of His Resurrection.

If Jesus Christ had not been crucified and had not risen from the dead, then you could forget everything that Jesus had ever taught. If Jesus Christ had not risen from the dead, "We are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). We would still be in our sins, and there is no hope beyond the grave of seeing our loved ones who died.

But thanks be to God that Jesus rose from the dead! He conquered sin, death and the grave. He is "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Jesus said, "Because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19). He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). John makes it clear that He was speaking of the temple of His body and not Herod's temple; that He would raise from the dead. So the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of all our hopes.

Also notice the perception of the Passion. They just didn't get it. They didn't comprehend it, verse 34. "But they understood none of these things." Isn't that great?! Jesus said He was going to go to Jerusalem, was going to be handed over to the Gentiles, would be whipped, beaten, spit upon, put on a cross, crucified, three days later He'll rise from the dead. And they said, "Ah, I don't get it." Lord, where did you get these guys?!

But notice what it says in this verse. It stood out to me as though I had never seen it before. Three times in this verse Luke makes it clear that they didn't get it. "But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken." First, they didn't understand anything. Second, it was supernaturally and ordained by God that they wouldn't get it until the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, and they would then understand what was going on. It had to be after Pentecost and post-Resurrection. It was hidden from them. And third, they didn't get what was spoken.

So three times in one verse it says they didn't get it. They were slow to perceive. Why? Because God had a purpose and a plan and a design.

But my point is that they should have very simply, humbly and with great receptivity believed what Jesus said. And so should we. When Jesus says something, I believe it; that settles it. They should simply have believed God's word.

And when it comes to prophecy in the Old Testament, just believe what God has said. If God

says Jesus Christ is coming back, guess what's going to happen? He's going to come back. If the Bible says that Jesus will reign for 1,000 years on a throne in Jerusalem (Revelation 20), what's going to happen? Jesus will come back and reign for 1,000 years in Jerusalem. How hard is that?! Just simply believe God's Word! You can take the Bible to the bank; what God has spoken cannot be broken.

Now we move to the second section of our text, verses 35-43. It is the story of Jesus healing a blind man. As a footnote, I thought it was interesting that the only time blind people were healed was in the public ministry of Jesus Christ. Other than Ananias praying for Saul of Tarsus, that his blinded eyes from the Damascus Road experience would be restored from their temporary blindness, in the Old Testament, no one was healed of blindness.

But the prophet said that when the Messiah would come, He would heal the blind. When John the Baptist questioned whether Jesus was the Messiah, because he was in prison instead of reigning with Jesus on earth, he sent some of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him, "Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: the blind see and the lame walk...the dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached to them'" (Matthew 11:3-5).

So in the Old Testament, the prophets said that the blind will see. And the only blind people who were healed of their blindness in the New Testament were those healed by Jesus in the Gospels. And a lot of Jesus' miracles were of the healing of the blind.

I like the story where a blind man came to Jesus, and He spit in the dirt, made mud and put it on the man's eyes. I thought, It was a good thing the man was blind and didn't see what Jesus was doing! Then this man was instructed to go to the pool of Siloam, wash his eyes and he could see! Isn't that great?!

So any time Jesus healed a blind person, as well as with other miracles like leprosy or raising someone from the dead, it is a picture of how sinners are saved. This is a true story; it actually happened. But it is a picture for us of how God saves sinners. And it certainly is true of this story as well.

This story of Bartimaeus is also recorded in Matthew 20:29-34, which sheds a little more light on the story. It's a challenge when a story is found in multiple places, because you have to bring them all together. And it's also found in Mark 10:46-52. Searching out these Scriptures, you'll find that there were two blind men. One was called Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. He was probably the most vocal, and it is believed he was the one who was healed spiritually and went on to follow Jesus. Some tradition has it that he became a leader in the church in Jerusalem and was included in Mark's Gospel because of that fact.

This story starts out in the city of Jericho. Starting in verse 35, "Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho..." which is down by the Dead Sea "...that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant." He couldn't see

them, but he could hear them. Sometimes blind people have a heightened sense of hearing. “So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.” I want you to notice that He was referred to as “Jesus of Nazareth,” but Bartimaeus called him “Son of David” when he heard it was Jesus in the crowd.

Verse 38, “And he cried out, saying, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’” This is going to be repeated twice, but he was actually saying it over and over. What a beautiful, heartfelt prayer that came from this blind man! “Son of David” is a Messianic title. David was promised that through his lineage, Messiah would come and sit on his throne.

Verse 39, “Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’” There will always be somebody who will try to keep you from crying out to Jesus. The word “cried” in the Greek means that he “shrieked, screamed, yelled loudly.” A very powerful word is used.

Can you imagine if you were in the Rose Parade, the floats are going by and someone shrieks out like this?! The guy needs help!

So Bartimaeus would not be distracted. He just kept freaking out. But notice what happened, verse 40. “So Jesus stood still...” he didn’t just stop, but He “stood still”; I like that “...and commanded him to be brought to Him.” Jesus was probably instructing the same people who had told Bartimaeus to be quiet. In Mark’s Gospel, it says that they told Bartimaeus, “Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.” How excited Bartimaeus must have been: “All right; I got His attention!” And Mark says, “And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus” (Mark 10:49-50). As faith welled up in his heart, he must have known he would not need it; it was a badge of his blindness.

“And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’” This is one of the questions Jesus asks in the Bible. Don’t you think Jesus knew what Bartimaeus wanted? Yes. So why did He ask this question? He wanted Bartimaeus to say what he wanted; He wanted to hear it from his own heart.

“He said, ‘Lord’...” notice he called Him “Lord” “...that I may receive my sight.” Can you imagine what it’s like not to see? The blue sky? The brown hills of Moab? The palm trees swaying in the wind? Not to see the faces of the family members you love?

Verse 42, “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.’” This is a picture of how God saves sinners—by faith. “And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.” Bartimaeus probably followed Jesus and the crowd into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and probably saw Him crucified.

I think there is an intended contrast of the rich, young ruler, who had wealth, health and power but wouldn’t let his riches go, wouldn’t believe in Jesus and wouldn’t follow Jesus, so he went sorrowfully away from Jesus, with this poor, wretched, blind man, Bartimaeus. He believed in

Jesus and received his sight. I believe the text is clear that he got saved; he received more than his physical eyesight but also became a child of God and in his new life began to follow Jesus along the way. So in contrast, what a blessed story this is.

Verse 43, “And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.” That might have included the very people who had told Bartimaeus to be quiet.

This was a prayer that stopped Jesus in His tracks. I want to know what kind of prayer stops Jesus and gains His ear. What kind of prayer gets Jesus to listen? Let me give you some ideas. Number one, Bartimaeus’ prayer was born out of a painful awareness of his condition. He was poor, helpless, blind and he was a beggar.

When you pray, you come to God poor, helpless, destitute and needy. You don’t come bossing God around, ordering God or commanding God. God is in heaven; you are on earth. In the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5:3, where Jesus gave the Beatitudes, He said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” “Poor in spirit” means that we are spiritually bankrupt before a holy God. It means you have nothing with which to commend yourself to God. You come empty-handed. You come naked for your dress. You come that He might anoint your eyes with eye salve that you might see. “Give me sight and give me clothes. Forgive me and restore me!” So prayer that arrests the ear of Jesus comes out of a painful awareness of our true condition.

What a grace it is from God when He allows us to see how unworthy we are, that we are wretched sinners! Bartimaeus is praying for mercy. Rightfully so, because mercy is not getting what you deserve. He said, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Anybody who says, “That’s not fair! I deserve....” You want to know what you deserve? You deserve hell. So when we come to God we pray for mercy.

So many today are blind to their own sin. But this man’s prayer was born out of a painful awareness of his condition.

Number two, Bartimaeus’ prayer was in great faith, displaying great insight into the person of Christ. He prayed in faith to Christ understanding who He was. And when we pray, we must come in faith, believing that Jesus “is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

And notice the phrase, in verse 38 and 39, “Son of David.” Bartimaeus was told that Jesus of Nazareth was in the crowd. No; to him it was “Jesus, Son of David.” He used a very specific, Messianic title, and he believed Jesus to be the Messiah. So this is a clear indication that this blind man had a heart that could “see” and understand that Jesus was the Messiah.

Then in verse 41, he said, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.” He called Jesus “Lord.” And the New Testament scholars I read this week affirmed that the word “Lord” here doesn’t just mean “Master” or “Ruler” but it means “Lord, God”; that he understood who Jesus was.

That's why in verse 42, "Then Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.'" So we must believe in the Person of Christ. Bartimaeus was blind, yet he could "see" Jesus.

Someone told Helen Keller what a sad thing it was that she was blind. She responded, "Better to be blind and see with your heart than have two, good eyes and see nothing." I like that. so it's the heart that grabs hold of seeing who Jesus is.

Number three about his prayer is that he prayed with a passionate persistence, verse 39. We've seen that he would not be distracted. He prayed passionately and persistently; "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus gave the parable of the unjust judge and the widow, who wouldn't relent. He was teaching us that "Men always ought to pray and not lose heart," verse 1. So be persistent and passionate. The Bible says, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

Jesus loves you and Jesus cares for you. I like the passage in 1 Peter 5:7, which says, "... casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you."

when you cry out to Jesus, He stops, He hears and He will answer. So Bartimaeus was passionate, and Jesus stood still. How marvelous!

This is where I told you they told Bartimaeus, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." And I like Mark 10:50 where it says, "And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus." That garment was his security blanket. That garment was his white cane with a red tip. A blind person keeps their things close, and if they lose something, they don't know how to get it. The garment being thrown aside meant that by faith he realized he was going to get his eyesight. He wouldn't need that old, "beggar blanket" any longer.

Number four, notice that his prayer was in the will of God. I like this, verse 41. Jesus said, "'What do you want Me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight.'" Don't you know that's what God had planned? God orchestrated Bartimaeus being there on the roadside leading to Jericho at the very moment Jesus was passing by.

How wonderful to see God's providential care in our own lives. He brought that person, that sermon, that Scripture, that radio program just when you needed to hear that. Jesus was passing by.

If you're in church today, Jesus is here. Jesus is passing by. Jesus knows your heart. If you cry out to Him, He will help you. He will save you. He will restore you. He will deliver you.

So his prayer was in the will of God.

1 John 5:14-15 says, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything

according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” So we want to pray according to the will of God.

And that's what prayer is about. It's not about getting my will done on earth; it's about getting God's will done. So find out what God wants to do by pleading a promise in the Scriptures, and praying accordingly. Prayer's not overcoming God's reluctance; it's laying hold of God's willingness.

And you don't want your prayers answered if your prayer is not in the will of God. If you are praying for something that is not God's will, you don't want it answered. When the Old Testament people of Israel began to pray for meat, it says God “gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul” (Psalm 106:15). Sometimes God will let you have what He knows isn't good for you, so you will realize He was right and you were wrong. That wasn't His will. So never be afraid to end your prayer by saying as Jesus did, “Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Some people don't like that. Some people want to order God around and tell Him what to do. God is a lot smarter than I am, so I'm ready to submit to His plan and His purpose. So Bartimaeus' prayer was in the will of God.

Number five, his prayer was answered. Verse 42 says, “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.”

Now notice the picture of how God saves sinners. First, his prayer was answered. How was it answered? It was answered immediately. When you pray, “God forgive my sins, Jesus come into my heart, be my Lord and Savior,” immediately you are born again. It's not a process. Salvation is not a process; it happens immediately. But sanctification is a lifelong process. And being changed into His image is a lifelong process. Salvation happens immediately. From death we go to life. We go from blind to seeing. We go immediately from being a child of the devil to being a child of God. When we are saved, we go immediately from being on our way to hell to being on our way to heaven. From being lost to being found. Isn't that great?! So Bartimaeus' healing was immediate.

Second, Bartimaeus' healing was complete. It wasn't partial; it wasn't just one eye.

It was funny that when I was studying this passage, I was looking out the window a little cockeyed, the glass was weird with double images, a neighbor was walking by and I saw two of him. I thought, Was that the glass, or am I having problems here?! I see two of the same neighbor! I'm seeing double! Thankfully it cleared up. Thank You, Lord!

Sometimes we think it's not going to happen instantaneously or it's not going to be complete. But Paul says in Colossians 2:10 that if you're a Christian, “You are complete in Him.” That's a nautical term. It means that you are “shipshape, fully rigged and ready to sail.”

When you become a Christian, you are complete in Christ. You don't need any addition; you just need appropriation. You need to grow in grace and knowledge, in living by faith and drawing on the blessings that are already yours in Christ.

Third, his prayer was in faith; he was saved by faith, verse 42. Jesus said, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well" or "saved you." The Bible teaches, "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is faith; believing, trusting, receiving—all synonymous terms for believing in Jesus Christ by faith.

Fourth, this prayer resulted in a changed life. Verse 43 says that he "followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God." What a powerful witness this man was of the power of God. This miracle is nothing less than the power of God. Jesus Christ is God. He just speaks the word, and the man's eyesight is restored.

I believe Jesus is passing by right now. There are some of you who are in great need. You need to cry out humbly, broken and with an empty hand come to the Lord and say, "Lord, have mercy on me!" Maybe you don't need physical eyesight. Maybe you need your marriage healed or a child healed. Maybe you need some issue in your life healed. "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13). Jesus is passing by. He is here right now.

Bartimaeus knew that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. He wasn't going to waste it or let it slip by, so he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Don't you miss this opportunity to cry out to Him and say, "I need You, Lord! I need You!" He will hear your cry and answer your prayer. Jesus today is passing by; don't miss this opportunity.