

GIVING UP IS NOT AN OPTION

Mark 10:46-42

Ezekiel Oghenekaro

*⁴⁶ Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." ⁵⁰ And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." ⁵² Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road. **Mark 10:46-52***

Background

Jesus and his disciples were passing through Jericho, which was 15 miles from Jerusalem. And the streets were packed with people, which is not surprising because everyone was getting ready to make the journey to Jerusalem for the Passover. It was a Jewish law that every male living within a 15-mile radius of Jerusalem had to attend the Passover, so they would have been on the streets starting the journey.

So Jericho was jam-packed with people. And here, in the midst of all the hustle and bustle, sits blind Bartimaeus begging for money at the side of the road. I suppose that, just as with beggars on our streets today most of the people were just passing him by, thinking of him as an inconvenience, getting in the way of their busy day. But Bartimaeus is listening to the conversations of the passers-by and hears that Jesus is there and he shouts out, *'Jesus, Son of David! Take pity on me!'*

The crowds are annoyed by him, annoyed that he should presume to engage with city life, perhaps in the same way that people today treat the homeless and beggars on our streets as somehow less than human and without any rights or dignity and the crowd tell him to be quiet: to get on with his begging in the anonymity of his marginalised position in society.

But Bartimaeus has a greater sense of self-worth than that and he keeps calling out and in verse 49, we read that Jesus stops and says, '*Call him*'. And so, his encounter with Jesus begins and the healing is received.

So, what do we have to learn from how Bartimaeus approached Jesus? What can we learn about how we should approach God if we want to receive healing and new life from him? *There are 6 things we will look out from the passage:*

1. **Never Settle for Less.**

Most times we settle for less when we can go for more. In verse 46, it tells us Jesus Christ was about to leave Jericho.

Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging

During the past few hours or days, Bartimaeus could have already heard that Jesus is in the city. Now that He is about to leave, Bartimaeus knew that this is his only chance to get as close as possible to Christ.

Bartimaeus was a blind man. He was poor and his main source of income comes from begging.

The people around Bartimaeus can certainly give him money. They can give him food. They can give him clothing. However, there is something that these people cannot give to Bartimaeus. That something is of **spiritual in nature** and it is something that can only be given by Christ Himself. So, you can see that this man has not given up on himself. He has not resigned to fate. He still believes he can get more.

In the same manner, as Christians today, this world can certainly give something that we all need but at least at the physical level. All of us has a deeper yearning. All of us has this deep spiritual hole in our hearts that cannot be filled by material possession and wealth. *The deepest yearning of our hearts could only be satisfied with Christ*. Bartimaeus knew that and he is about to take his first step to get closer to Christ.

2. **Get Prepared:** there is a saying that we should let *preparation meet opportunity*. A story is told of a lady who met late Stella Obasanjo.

Late Stella Obasanjo, the wife of the former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo attended a programme close to where she obtained her Secondary School education. After the programme, while stepping out of the venue, she heard somebody shouting from behind, "Aunty Star!, Aunty Star!, Aunty Star!....."
This was the name her juniors in School used to call her while she was in Secondary School. She turned around and saw the woman calling her and beckoned on her escorts to allow her pass through.

The woman informed her that she was one of her juniors while they were in school. Her Excellency was so pleased to meet her. The woman took the opportunity to plead with Stella to assist her as she was a widow and was suffering with her children. Her Excellency, been a very compassionate woman asked her to name what she wanted her to do for her. The woman replied her by saying "Anything". This question was put to her again and she repeated the same answer! So Her Excellency instructed one of her escorts to give the woman #50,000. After which, she gave the woman her private number and asked her to call her in two weeks time, that she was about traveling out and that by then, she should have thought out exactly what she wants to be done for her.

The woman went home rejoicing and even went to testify in Church! However, before the 2 weeks elapsed, Stella Obasanjo died abroad while undergoing a surgery! We will come back to this story in the course of discussion.

In **verse 47**, we read:

*And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say,
"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

When He heard the commotion, he knew that this could be the moment he was waiting for. He feels that there is something special happening around him. Instead of asking for alms, he asks, "*What's happening?*" He wants to confirm what he felt inside. Finally, Jesus of Nazareth has passed by.

He has heard a lot of wonderful things about Jesus Christ. He heard about His teachings. He heard about His way of life. And he heard about His ability to give sight to the blind. All the years of waiting, all the years of not knowing what it feels like to see live colours, all the years of living in darkness will now come to an end if and **ONLY IF**, he can get Christ's attention.

So, what did He do? He cried out, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*"

As you can see, the blind man did not directly ask for his eyesight to be restored. **He asked first for mercy for Christ is filled with mercy and compassion.** He appealed first for Christ's attention by asking for His mercy.

Bartimaeus knew that this is the closest he could get to Christ. By being a blind man, *he is powerless on his own.* He cannot run toward Jesus. All he can do is shout and cry out as loud as possible to get Jesus' attention.

3. **We Must be Persistent With God.**

Too often, we treat prayer like a Lottery Ticket. We want to receive something from God, so we will pray about it maybe once or twice and then, when we do not receive it, we think, "*Oh well, that's that, then...*"

Bartimaeus knew that persistence was at the heart of receiving from Jesus. In verse 47, he calls out to Jesus but the crowds tell him to be quiet. But in verse 48, we are told, *“But he shouted even more loudly, ‘Son of David, take pity on me!’”*.

Notice again, life is full of distractors and people who will discourage you. Do not expect life to make things easy for you. Nobody was ready to just give way for this blind man. Consider the woman with the issue of blood, consider Zacchaeus. The Bible is full of characters who were persistent in their pursuit of God: Abraham, Moses, Elijah, the prophets, John the Baptist, the parable of the persistent widow, Bartimaeus – and many more...

If we want to receive from God, we must develop persistence: not because he is unwilling to give to us and needs to be worn down but because, as we develop persistence, so we develop strong, spiritual character and we grow into spiritual maturity.

4. Giving up is NEVER an option

Given the current situation, giving up is simply the easiest thing to do. However, giving up will only lead to nothing. It will not get you anywhere.

We need to be ready to sacrifice everything, if necessary, to achieve our spiritual goals in life. We could see that Bartimaeus will not let his request go unanswered. He did not falter. He did not let other people silence his request. Here is a blind, weak, and poor beggar who will not get denied. He is up against a crowd of healthy and able-bodied men, **but this did not stop him**.

He knew this could be his only chance. He was desperate. He did not just shout but he cried out. It was a matter of life and death for him. It was now or never.

If you are stranded on an island, would you shout on the top of your lungs when you see a ship nearby? If you fell in a deep ditch, won't you cry out with all your might to get the attention of any passerby?

In the same way, Bartimaeus cried out to get the attention of Christ. Even if he only saw a small ray of hope, he won't let it pass by without doing anything. If in case Christ didn't hear him at first, Bartimaeus cried out all the more, *“Son of David, have mercy on me!”*

5. We Must Act Immediately

Because of the persistence and steadfast faith of Bartimaeus, what happened? Verse 49 tells us: *So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called.*

As a result, Christ stood still. Christ, in His great mercy and compassion, commanded Him to come near. Christ could have simply carried on with His busy schedule, but He stopped and took notice of the poor blind man.

Verse 49 continues:

Then they called the blind man, saying to him, “Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.”

Can you imagine how the face of this blind man transformed? I mean, this man was just a moment ago desperate and hopeless. He knows that every passing second means that Christ is getting farther and farther from him. He knows that if Christ continues to go His way, he will not be able to meet Him ever again.

When he was in his lowest, when he thought that all hope was gone, someone compassionately told him, “*be of good cheer.*” At that very moment, it seems that the heavenly windows were open and the angels sing for this blind man.

This could be the best message that the blind man could ever hear. After many years of living in darkness, now, he is now going to have the chance of being near the Light of the World – Jesus the Messiah! Now that Bartimaeus knew that the Saviour is calling him, what was his response? Verse 50 reads:

And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.

He threw aside his garment. He threw anything that he thought would hinder him from fully following Christ. He might have thought that the garment would simply slow him down. Maybe, the garment would let him get entangled and will not be able to get to Christ.

So, he threw it aside. He badly wants to be with Christ that he, being poor, is willing to even forsake his garment!

This should teach us an incredible lesson. ***let us also let go of the things that could hinder us from getting into the Kingdom of God.***

As **Hebrews 12:1** told us, “*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*”

In this point, the blind man could easily rationalize to simply ask for Christ to come to him. Why not? He is the one who is blind. It takes more effort to go to Christ than for Christ to approach him. But no, Christ is teaching him a lesson and everyone who is witnessing this amazing moment. Jesus wants to test the determination of the blind man.

Following Christ involve action. It is not simply about believing or accepting Christ in our hearts. No, but the blind man rose and recruit all the strength that he has, to fully come to Jesus.

6. We Need to Know Exactly What We Want from God

If I ask each of us here today, “*What has God done for you this week?*”, would you be able to give a reply? If I asked you, “*Which of your prayers has God answered this week?*”, would you be able to list them? That would be an awkward situation for some of us, I am sure - and I think at the root of it is that we all tend to pray abstract prayers rather than tangible, measurable prayers.

We might be tempted to pray on a Monday, “*Lord, help me to have a really good week*”. But what does that mean? How do we measure that? When it gets to Friday, some things will have gone well and some things will not, sometimes, we will have been happy, other times we will have been a bit miserable. What does ‘*a good week*’ look like? So it is impossible to know whether or not God has answered that prayer.

But more tangible prayers are more meaningful. “*Lord God, I have an important meeting on Monday. I am nervous about it – please give me the confidence and the words to say*”. “*Lord God, I want to get into Bible reading more this week. Help me find 20 minutes each day to read, so that this week, I can get through the whole of Paul's letter to the Galatians*”. Tangible prayers, more specific prayers, are a great encouragement to us, because we more easily recognise God is acting in our lives. Look at Anna. She knew what she wanted. God, give me a male child.

And Bartimaeus knew that. In verse 51, Jesus said, “*What do you want me to do for you?*” and he replied, “*Teacher, I want to see again*”. Now that is a tangible request: he was going to leave Jesus’ presence either still blind or seeing again. And he knew that Jesus had answered his request when he was healed. As a result, we read in verse 52, “*He followed Jesus on the road*”.

Summary Thought

Life is full of challenges, hence, the simplest thing to do is:

- Settle for less
- Live life as we meet it daily (unprepared).
- Just give up (why should I persist when people are there to discourage me)
- No need to press on
- I can come to Jesus next time, I am not ready today (procrastinate)
- Anything you can give me is ok. (Don't know what I need)

You can change the narrative. May God bless us in Jesus name, Amen.

References

ⁱ The Inspiring Lessons from the Healing of Blind Bartimaeus – Joshua Infatado (July, 2018) web page publication - [The Inspiring Lessons from the Healing of Blind Bartimaeus \(Mark 10:46-52\) | Becoming Christians](#)

ⁱⁱ Mark 10:46-52 - Receiving from God - Dr Steve Griffiths – webpage publication - [Mark 10:46-52 - Receiving from God \(standrewsenfield.com\)](#)