

## That's What Jesus Does

Wayne Waibel – 10/24/2021

Today we'll be ordaining and installing your church officers. On this occasion we'll take the opportunity to support and uplift them in their calling. They represent nearly a fourth of your membership, which translates to a decidedly active congregation. You and they – are to be commended.

The human spirit has a strong calling to be free, and to belong to something greater than oneself is always liberating. That pursuit, if you will, becomes our guiding force. In the case of Bartimaeus, it drives him to call out for mercy to the one he knows is able to render mercy.

No one else in the book of Mark has been able to perceive so much about Jesus with so little data. He refers to Him as the Son of David. This reference sets Jesus apart as royalty. Despite his blindness, Bartimaeus sees the royal dimension in Christ unlike anyone else – including His own disciples. Clearly – this man is on to something.

When the crowd begins to chastise and otherwise attempt to squelch this guy from interfering with the procession, Bartimaeus calls out even louder until he is heard. And when Jesus hears him, He does something He hasn't done to this point – He commands the crowd to summon him.

Now this is a very important departure for Jesus. He could've walked to Bartimaeus, as He had done in the past. Instead, He tells the onlookers to summon Bartimaeus to Him. Now those who sought to inhibit the beggar must assist Jesus in ministering to him. That's what Jesus does.

In a sense – He invites them to have faith. And as we've seen throughout the book of Mark – faith is in short supply with these people. Again – including the disciples. And that faith usually has to surmount hindrances and obstacles, and Bartimaeus understands this. So, when the crowd tries to silence him – he cries out even louder until those cries penetrate the crowd and reach the ears of Jesus.

.....

We see it every day in our world. The barriers that we need to overcome in order to pursue our dreams – reach our potential. Often, we get in our own way.

There are many forces at play that distract, hinder, and beat down our efforts. Sin cripples us because it traps us in the past; never-ending resentment and guilt can shut down our natural vitality and inhibit our growth.

The thing is – you don't always end up where you expect when it comes to missions. You've got all these big plans and wide-eyed expectations and after years and miles and changing priorities you end up looking back and wondering how you ever landed where you did. It happens all the time.

Generally speaking – as long as your faith remains steadfast – you end up where you need to be despite the original goal. That's what Jesus does for you – He illuminates the adventure of landing nowhere near the destination you may have envisioned.

This is not to say that you can't end up precisely where you expected to be. But if you leave yourself open to the Holy Spirit at work in your life – there's a very good chance you'll arrive at a much cooler place than you could've imagined.

I look back at most if not all of the arrivals in my life and I can say with complete candor that my journey's end far exceeds anything I've envisioned. And I have absolutely no problem with that.

It seems the more I try to affect an outcome, the more elusive that result becomes until I let it go and just put one foot in front of the other. It's a real solid argument for staying out of the way and allowing divine interference to determine your movements. This is a concept the Deacons and Elders will become intimately familiar with in the course of their mission.

.....

One of the more subtle components to today's gospel lesson is a very small, yet decidedly profound gesture on the part of Bartimaeus. When Jesus commands the onlookers to summon him, Bartimaeus throws aside his cloak and goes to Jesus.

Now – if you were a blind beggar, the last thing you would do is lose track of the garment that protects you from the elements and also serves to comfort you as you sit at the city gates begging. The fact that Bartimaeus casts it aside intentionally tells us that he fully comprehends the reality that it is the awareness of God's presence that transforms.

Then Jesus asks him exactly the same question He asked James and John, "What do you want me to do for you?" Same exact question. While James and John were quick to demand privilege and esteem, Bartimaeus has a simple request voiced with the confidence that Jesus can deliver. "That I may receive my sight." Clearly the sons of Zebedee are blinder than Bartimaeus when it comes to understanding what Jesus has come to do.

This blind beggar displays a remarkable grasp of the path that Jesus is on. His way leads to Jerusalem, and the triumphant entry, and the last supper, and the trial and the brutality and the cross. Though he is not the first person in Mark seeking a miracle who approaches Jesus in faith – he is the only one that ends up following Him.

.....

We may stumble and fall along our path, but God is there to pick us up – prop us up – and send us along. When you have the kind of faith that Bartimaeus had – the kind of faith that assumes divine intervention and transformation, your journey is not only life affirming for you – it sets you up to help others along the way; that’s precisely what Jesus does.

As we assemble our travel kits and prepare for the lifelong journey, we are well advised to keep our vision clear, and our path uncluttered. There is a balance and unity to a life in Christ that trumps anything man has to offer. It’s called the love of God. He equips us for the journey. He even sent His Son to show us the way.

None of us can do it alone. And Jesus is overjoyed when we invite Him along. Things don’t necessarily get easier – quite often just the opposite is true. But what’s also true is that any difficulty is made manifest in the ease with which we pass the grace we’ve come to know as a result of hard lessons - on to others. That their path may be made a little surer and we can all rejoice in a life made whole. That’s just what Jesus does - for us. Always and forever. Amen.