

MATTHEW 20:29-34

BLIND BEGGARS AND BLIND FOLLOWERS

Have you ever heard the expression, “Can’t see the forest for the trees?” To most of us, the meaning is simple. Someone is looking right at something, but they can’t see it – normally meaning that they are misinterpreting what they see either because of some preconceptions or because they are distracted.

We have spoken quite a bit lately about distractions. When I talk about distractions, I mean when something takes our focus from Jesus and places it back on something of this world. The strange thing can be that we can lose our focus even when we are engaged in doing something or think we are doing something for God. We can actually be “following Jesus” and not be following the will of Jesus. What do I mean by that? Well, today we will see. Let’s look at the text.

29 Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. 30 And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” 31 Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” 32 So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” 33 They said to Him, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened.” 34 So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

This is a short pericope and sometimes those can be the hardest to teach. But it isn’t just inserted here arbitrarily. For one thing, chronologically it shows where they are on their journey.

- In or out of Jericho?

Keep in mind that the background of the last chapter has been that of the trip from the Galilee to Jerusalem. This is taking place in the weeks and days leading up to Passover. The road through Perea (define) would have been filled with Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples are apparently traveling with a throng of others from the Galilee who are acquainted with Him and His

teaching. So as they are walking along, the large group that is in their immediate vicinity is not just a bunch of total strangers, but those who have been following Jesus, not just on this journey, but His ministry for some time.

- Blind beggars and good business.

LK 18; 35-39

35 Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. 36 And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. 37 So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

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!" 40 So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, 41 saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

42 Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."

43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

- He heard the multitude but something was different about this, probably the conversation.
- Jesus called the blind man to Him.

Mark 10: 46-52

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.

- Blind Bartimaeus – son of Timaeus. Or son of the unclean. Jesus called the unclean to Him!

- Once again, Jesus called Bartimaeus to Him.
- He threw down his garment – his beggars cloak.
- Also notice that Jesus is no longer telling people to keep His identity on the “down low.”
- So we have some different details, but the crux of the story is the same, no matter which Gospel you read.
- Beggars are accustomed to being led. We say we aren’t but we really are. The challenge is to be lead in the right direction and to the right destination.
- The crowd walking with Jesus, the same crowd that will cheer Him on as He enters Jerusalem, attempts to keep the blind men from gaining access to Jesus. Does this sound familiar? The disciples have been doing the same thing with children and other so-called “untouchables” for some time. Now the whole crowd is involved.
- Why? The blind men are addressing Him in the most respectful way. They are sincere in their requests to speak to Jesus. So what’s the problem?
- But the blind men wouldn’t be denied. They understood just how helpless they were. This could be their only chance. **They understood the urgency in their own lives. But the crowd doesn’t see that. They can’t see the forest for the trees. Do we see the urgency in our lives?**
- Those who are able to see are walking right past the one of the very ministries of Jesus that proves His claims to deity. He can heal the sick, blind and lame! Why would they walk on past? Why would anyone discourage anyone from coming to Jesus?
- **The answer: This distraction is a hindrance to what they see as the most important thing. But what they see as the most important thing, is not the most important thing.** And that is that Jesus gets to Jerusalem so they can declare Him king. Once He is king, in their minds, He can rid them of the Romans and restore Israel to her former greatness. And that is who Jesus is to them.
- **God’s plan will proceed on His timeline, not theirs. This means that He always has time for us!**

Do you see how easily this sort of thing can happen? These people are walking with Jesus. For the most part, the immediate crowd knows who He is. They were with Him now and again in the Galilee and are now traveling with Him to Jerusalem for the Passover. They will declare Him to be Hosanna. But they are unaware of His plight. And while that isn’t their fault, they are still in a worldly mindset, as are the disciples. We don’t hear of them helping the beggars. Everyone is in the parade, on the way to the triumphant entry. The beggars are here because they know business is better when there is higher traffic volume and people are on their way to a religious ceremony. And though Jesus has taught time after time that the kingdom of Heaven, which came to be at His baptism, at least in some form, is 180 degrees removed from the way the world works, no one sees the beggars and when they are

“bothered” with them, they tell them to be quiet. They can’t be bothered with them when they are walking with Jesus on the way to such an important event.

They have their own ideas as to what Jesus wants to do. And though they are following faithfully, they are wrong!!! Are some of them fair-weather followers? Certainly! Many of those who cheer Him on as He enters Jerusalem will scatter like peas on a bald hill once He is arrested and tried by Pilate. But the disciples are no better. And isn’t it that way in the church today? I’m sorry to say that it is.

The point is that those walking with Jesus walked right by the blind men. And when the blind men spoke up they attempted to squelch them.

Jesus had addressed this problem with the disciples as a group and also in His teachings to the larger groups, but at least to some extent, it was to no avail. This way of thinking has to be unlearned.

And we can fall into the same trap. We can be so busy “following Jesus,” “doing His will,” at least as we interpret it that we can walk right by the more immediate needs of others. And though we would say that none of us would attempt to squelch someone calling out to Jesus, when we walk right by or are following along in our zeal, we can squelch him or her by being a stumbling block. We are walking along thinking we’ve got it all figured out, or maybe so pre-occupied with something on our worldly plate that we don’t see the immediate, more important need right in front of us.

But remember, that while those people were walking with Jesus and missing the mark, Jesus was still walking with them. And He didn’t condemn them. Instead, He addressed the need and gave them an object lesson. He stopped, addressed and even touched those poor men. And what was the result? **Those men followed Jesus.**

There were actually three different miracles going on in this story. The first was that of restoring sight to the blind. The other was/is that any of us can even have the opportunity to walk with Jesus. That is the second miracle. In order to do that, He had to come here and die for our sin and conquer death. In order for that to happen, He had to humble Himself, leave the throne room of Heaven and come here as a man. That is the third one.

Jesus – the ultimate servant! Emmanuel - God is with us! Why is He with us? Because He loves mankind so much! We were created so that we could fellowship with Him! That is our purpose! And even though we fail on a regular basis, He still walks with us and gently gives us object lessons... if we only open our eyes in order to see.