

## The Disciples and the Blind Man

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弟子と盲人

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Luke 18

31 Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "Pay attention! We're going up to Jerusalem. Everything written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled,

32 because he will be handed over to the unbelievers, and will be mocked, insulted, and spit on.

33 After they have whipped him, they will kill him, but on the third day he will rise again."

34 But they didn't understand any of this. What he said was hidden from them, and they didn't know what he meant.

35 As Jesus was approaching Jericho, there was a blind man sitting by the road begging.

36 When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening.

37 They told him that Jesus from Nazareth was coming by.

38 So he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

39 The people at the front of the crowd sternly told him to be quiet, but he started shouting even louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

40 Then Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him,

41 "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, I want to see again!"

42 So Jesus told him, "See again! Your faith has made you well."

43 Immediately the man could see again and began to follow Jesus, glorifying God. All the people saw this and gave praise to God.

[International Standard Version]

I could have entitled today's sermon as "The Clever Disciples and the Stupid Blind Man", which might have sounded more plausible to everyone. However, according to the verses we just read, the reality was totally the opposite. That is to say, it was the disciples who did not understand what was going on, while the blind man knew the truth, as these verses indicate. Why don't we go back to verse 31?

Luke 18

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When Jesus explained his purpose of coming down into this world, none of his disciples understood what he was talking about. It was so tragic, wasn't it? The story of this blind man begins from the next verse.

Luke 18

35 As Jesus was approaching Jericho, there was a blind man sitting by the road begging.

In those days, Jesus was called Jesus of Nazareth, which, needless to say, was wrong. Jesus was Jesus of Bethlehem, not Nazareth. People of those days all misunderstood. None of them understood anything about him except this blind man.

Luke 18

38 So he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

"Jesus, Son of David". He actually shouted "Jesus, the promised savior." A prayer like this is always heard. "Have mercy on me." Although the people leading the group rebuked the blind man and told him to be quiet, he shouted even louder, "'Son of David, have mercy on me! You can save me. I have faith in you.'" Finally, he joined the disciples of Jesus. Let's take a look at some other verses quickly. These are well-known verses from Mark, chapter 10, which describe the same person. I would say that these are the most important verses in the Gospel according to Mark.

Mark 10:45-52

45 because even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many people.

46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus, his disciples, and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus) was sitting by the road.

47 When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was there, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

48 Many people sternly told him to be quiet, but he started shouting even louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

49 So Jesus stopped and said, "Call him!" So they called the blind man and told him, "Have courage! Get up. He's calling you."

50 He threw off his coat, jumped up, and went to Jesus.

51 Then Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man told him, "Rabbouni, I want to see again."

52 Jesus told him, "Go. Your faith has made you well." At once the man could see again, and he began to follow Jesus down the road.

He was liberated and now he was filled with joy. He became a disciple of Jesus. I would like to talk about this man, Bartimaeus. Among the sick people who appear in the Gospel according to Mark, he is the only one whose name is known. Although Jesus healed an uncountable number of sick people, no other name is recorded. Only the name of Bartimaeus is clearly scripted. It implies that the attitude of this blind man was so impressive to the disciples that it remained deeply embedded in their memory.

Let's look at three different stages in the life of Bartimaeus. Firstly, Bartimaeus before he knew Jesus. Secondly, Bartimaeus standing close to Jesus. And thirdly, Bartimaeus when he obeyed Jesus.

First of all, when we think of Bartimaeus while Jesus was not around, it compels our thoughts toward this undisputable fact; the worst pain which can be inflicted on men is not being with Jesus. It must have been most painful for Bartimaeus to not know Jesus. For him, not being with Jesus meant having no hope at all of healing and salvation. And without such hope, life must be so dreadful. It means a life with no joy, no peace.

We can imagine how Bartimaeus' life must have been from the verbs used to describe all actions he took during this event. In Verse 46, he was sitting by the road begging for money. At verse 47, he found out that Jesus was coming near and began to shout. Verse 48, he continued shouting even louder. In verse 50, he threw off his cloth. And finally at verse 52, he could now see Lord Jesus and began to follow him. This series of verbs summarizes how Bartimaeus' life went on.

Bartimaeus, who used to be a blind beggar, could now see and began to walk after Jesus. What a transformation it was! It is indeed a striking contrast which is beyond expression, isn't it? Through the

encounter with Jesus, he finally acquired joy, peace and a reason to live.

How did this happen? First of all, he heard about Jesus. Undoubtedly, he must have desired to know more about Jesus. He heard many people talking about Jesus and he came to believe that the Lord was incomparable, nothing was impossible for the Lord and thus, Jesus would undoubtedly be able to heal him too.

He had a strong conviction in his heart that the Lord Jesus was the savior, the Promised One. It was predicted that the promised messiah would come to open the blind eyes, as we can see in Isaiah, chapter 42.

#### Isaiah

42:6 I've called you in righteousness. I'll take hold of your hand. I'll preserve you and appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light for the nations,  
42:7 to open blind eyes and to bring out those who are bound from their cells, and those sitting in darkness from prison.

Secondly, Bartimaeus trusted in Jesus 100% and believed in him wholeheartedly. Although other people referred to him as Jesus of Nazareth, Bartimaeus did not call him that when he met him. Instead, he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David", which implied that he recognized Jesus as the promised Savior. Bartimaeus talked to Jesus, calling him Rabbouni, which means 'the Lord'. He used this word, Rabbouni, which expressed a much deeper sense of respect than Rabbi, which is another word that refers to the 'Lord'.

Thirdly, Bartimaeus was not satisfied with simply listening to what people said about Jesus and placing trust on him based on hearsay. He had an unquenchable desire to know the Lord Jesus from his own experience. That was the reason he did not quiet down but continued to shout even louder. His whole life had been nothing but a cry for help. It was not a whisper, but a shout. It meant, 'I absolutely have to come to see Jesus'. He was filled with this feeling.

According to verse 48, he kept shouting fiercely and many people told him to be quiet but he didn't listen. No one could stop him, as we can see from this verse. As recorded in verse 50, this man threw off his coat and jumped up as he desperately wanted to come close to Jesus. Because his pain was far stronger and deeper than his fear of the multitude, he struggled to run up to Jesus. He did not have another coat but he did not care about his clothes at all.

He took the most important step, which was to go to Jesus. Then he heard the people shouting to him,

“Have courage! Get up. He’s calling you.” No one but Bartimaeus was called. Why did Jesus call and seek only him? Because it was only this man who cried out for help wholeheartedly. To those who seek the Lord Jesus with an honest heart, he never fails to answer.

When Bartimaeus was called up by the Lord, he came close to him. The blind man finally found a way that lead him to Jesus. And this was the turning point of his life. All who come close to Jesus will be totally recreated. For Bartimaeus, his life without Jesus ended here.

Now, let’s move forward and think about Bartimaeus when he moved close to Jesus. Jesus asked this despairing blind man what he wanted him to do. “What do you want me to do for you?” Can you imagine how much authority and supremacy it takes to put forth a question like this? The blind man answered, “Lord, I want to see again.” We can see unshakable conviction and immovable belief in this answer. This kind of attitude will absolutely be rewarded.

In the very next instant, he regained his sight and saw Jesus, who had opened a new world for him, watching him. Everything, including the money he had been given that day, a cane he had been carrying and the clothes he possessed turned totally meaningless at this moment. Then, he realized that he was not standing at just another street corner but he was standing by Jesus. Now, the only choice he could make was to follow Jesus. It became his desperate desire and strong wish to stay with Jesus and walk after him.

When he met Jesus and knew him, all darkness within him disappeared. He was liberated. This blind man understood from his own experience that when men stay by the side of Jesus, everything is fulfilled.

I would like to introduce a song from Germany. Please let me read it out. This song is actually a prayer, confession and testimony at the same time.

“Lord Jesus, now I understand that the resting place of my heart is nowhere but inside yourself. After so many ordeals, I have finally found perfect peace. I have been searching for happiness and peace of mind for many years. But somehow I never sought it from you. Still, your love embraced my heart and I could finally belong to you. The fountain of worldly pleasures is so meaningless that it can fulfill no one. However, whoever drinks water from your fountain of life never feels thirsty again.”

“You loved me so much that you opened my eyes. Lord Jesus, you gave your own life to me and

reformed me completely. My heart is filled with gratitude and joy and, until the day I sing a new song with you at your father’s house, I will never stop praising you all day and all night. There is no one but you in this world who can fulfill me.”

“Only in you who love me so much, I find true joy.”

In this way Bartimaeus, who used to be blind, was transformed into one who was willing to follow the Lord Jesus with great glee. Those who are able to express the same feelings are truly blessed, aren’t they?

Finally, I would briefly like to talk about Jesus himself (on this occasion). It is clear to anyone that Jesus is the central character here, just as he has always been. Let’s look at the verbs that describe the series of actions Jesus took. Verse 49, “Jesus stopped and said to call him.” Verse 51, “Jesus asked what he wanted him to do.” And verse 52, “Jesus told him to go.”

Jesus stopped walking when he heard this miserable beggar shouting toward Him. At that moment, Jesus was walking the most important path of His life. That is to say, he was on his way to Jerusalem. He was heading toward his death. It was on that way that he heard the beggar shouting. However, Jesus did not walk away, telling the beggar that he had more important business. Instead, he stopped.

Had it not been Jesus but some emperor or prince, they would have passed by without bending their ears to a beggar shouting at them. But Jesus did not behave in that way. He stopped.

This whole world was created by Jesus for Jesus. All power and authority belong to Jesus alone, who is the king of kings, the Lord of Lords. This man stopped walking for one miserable blind beggar. Not just stopped to listen to the shout of the beggar, but also turned his face to the beggar with all his benevolence and authority.

Of course, Jesus did know the desire of this beggar and did not need to ask. Nevertheless, he asked what the blind man wanted from him. It was because Jesus wanted all sinners to be honest and beg for help, through which their faith would be revealed.

Well, what kind of man is Jesus? He is the light. All others are darkness and have no hope. In particular, this blind man could not see at all and thus he could never find the way to escape. How miserable! Jesus does not just offer strength, he is the way. Blind men did not know how to find a way. They were destined to beg for mercy on street corners and there was no other way for them to live.

On the other hand, Jesus is life itself. Contrarily, this blind man had no hope in his life and could never expect a bright future. These two were complete polar opposites and had nothing in common with each other. For this very reason, they had to get together with each other.

He lived in the town of Jericho. According to the Old Testament, Jericho was a cursed place. Just like the town of Jericho, Bartimaeus never had any blessing in his life. He was miserable, extremely exhausted and had lost all joy and hope. He could not work and had no reason to live, no purpose in life. Why did he have to suffer so much? Because Jesus was not with him.

As I mentioned earlier, at that time Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to sacrifice his own life. Religious leaders in Jerusalem were spiritually blind to Jesus' truth. But, Bartimaeus was totally the opposite. Although physically he could not see, he realized that he was blind. It compelled him to pray sincerely, and he was finally healed.

Those who refused to accept Jesus insisted that they were doing just fine and could see everything. However, they were actually blind. According to John, Chapter 9, Jesus mentioned in relation to this fact;

#### John 9

39 Then Jesus said, "I have come into this world to judge it, so that those who are blind may see and so that those who see may become blind."

40 Some of the Pharisees who were near him overheard this and asked him, "We aren't blind, too, are we?"

41 Jesus told them, "If you were blind, you would not have any sin. But now that you insist, 'We see,' your sin still exists.

It is unbelievably dreadful for people to believe that they can see when they actually can't. Contrarily, to those who realize their blindness and begin to seek the true light in the eyes of their hearts, a wonderful blessing and grace will be given!

How can we summarize the most important fact in our life? If someone studied at Tokyo University, received a PhD, was named as an honored professor and finally presented with the Cultural Medal, that person would receive great acclaim from people. It might be seen as a respectable way of life, but it would be so pitiful if that person does not receive anything else before his or her life ends. Have we all encountered Jesus?

When you heard about Jesus, what did you pray about? If you did not pray then, I plead you to do so

today. Jesus will absolutely stop and listen to your prayer exactly as he did for Bartimaeus. Once you hear about Jesus, you are supposed to calm your mind, contemplate quietly and pray to find your answers in the Lord. It will be such a wonderful blessing if we come to Jesus with our eyes open, and then we are allowed to follow him.

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