

Trinity Baptist Church
Sunday 3rd October 2021 – Andy Banks
Mark 10:46-52 - Jesus, The Son Of David

We're continuing our series in Mark's Gospel, asking ourselves the question Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" And, "What difference does who he is make to your life?" Today we're looking at Mark 10:46-52.

[Read Mark 10:46-52]

46Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means 'son of Timaeus'), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'

48Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'

49Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.'

So they called to the blind man, 'Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.' 50Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

51'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, 'Rabbi, I want to see.'

52'Go,' said Jesus, 'your faith has healed you.' Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

[Pray]

Sometimes in life an opportunity comes along that we need to seize! Like Geoff Hurst famously did in the 1966 World Cup. As understudy to England's star striker, Jimmy Greaves, in an era with no in-game substitutions, Hurst might not have expected to play at all in the competition. But he certainly took his chance when it came, with a goal to win the game in the quarter-final, a pass to set up the winning goal in the semi-final, and famously, a hat-trick in the final itself. And he was a West Ham player, so worth celebrating just for that! He seized his opportunity and wrote his name into the history books.

So did Bartimaeus! For he is one of very few beneficiaries of Jesus' healing ministry who is actually named. His day would have started the same as any other day, probably led out by relatives or friends to the city gate – one of the busiest parts of the city – to beg from people entering or leaving. For, that was the only means of income available to a blind man in those days. As Jericho was the last major city before Jerusalem, and as many pilgrims would have been on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast, it might have been a particularly opportune time to beg, not least because pilgrims preparing themselves to worship God could be more likely to seek to enhance their standing with God by giving alms to beggars. Little did he know then that a far greater opportunity would present itself!

Suddenly, he heard a commotion, a crowd of people coming his way. Perhaps the number of voices surprised him, and caused him to ask what was happening. "Jesus of Nazareth is coming this way" was the answer. And Bartimaeus realised that this was his once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! Clearly, he'd heard about Jesus' ability to heal. And there was absolutely no way he was going to be silenced into missing out on the blessing he might have from Jesus. No matter how much the crowd rebuked him or told him to be quiet, this was between him

and Jesus and he was going to make sure he got Jesus' attention. And Jesus stopped and called for him, because his request was good and pure of motive. It isn't wrong to ask Jesus for the things that really matter to us if those things are honouring to him. Indeed, there's something about his tenacity and desperation that we could learn from for our prayers.

But he was not only desperate and tenacious, he was also wonderfully, *refreshingly*, astute in his understanding of who Jesus' is. "Jesus, Son of David," he cried out to him. And actually the "Son of David" part comes first in the original, thus giving it even more prominence. Now, although the Bible is clear that Jesus, was a distant descendant of King David by his earthly heritage through Mary (and by adoption through Joseph), yet it's not clear how widely known among the people this was. But that is not the point, anyway. This was not a simple statement of fact, like I might state that my ancestors, way back, hail from Florence in Italy. Rather, this was a statement of huge spiritual significance and, to understand why, we need to delve back into some Old Testament promises.

Firstly, we need to look at God's promise to David in 1 Chronicles 17. David had had in mind to build a house (a temple) for God, but God sent Nathan the prophet to say to him in effect, "nice idea, but not *my* idea," and also to say (vv.10-14), "I declare to you that the LORD will build a house for you: when your days are over and you go to be with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, *one of your own sons*, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne *for ever*. I will be his father, and he will be my son ... I will set him over my house and my kingdom for ever; *his throne will be established for ever.*"

This is the first of a number of prophecies about a coming Son of David, whose reign will be even greater than David's reign. Those prophecies found partial fulfilment in the reign of David's son, Solomon, who built the temple that David had planned for God, and whose reign was, for a time, even greater than David's. But even so, his reign did not come close to fulfilling either the full scope or the eternal nature of the these prophecies about this Son of David.

For instance, Psalm 72, which many think was a coronation psalm, bestows a blessing on the king so that he can be a blessing, and thus sets out the responsibilities of the King to bring justice and prosperity to the land and people. So, in vv.1-4 and 15-16 we read:

- ¹ Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
- ² May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.
- ³ May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.
- ⁴ May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor ...
- ¹⁵ Long may he live!
May gold from Sheba be given to him.
May people ever pray for him
and bless him all day long.

¹⁶ May corn abound throughout the land;
 on the tops of the hills may it sway.
 May the crops flourish like Lebanon
 and thrive like the grass of the field.”

So far so good. But then there are further aspects of the blessing in this psalm that far exceed what any of David’s descendant kings achieved, and in some cases what any mere human king *could* achieve. So in vv.5, 8, 11 and 17, we read:

⁵ May he endure *as long as the sun*,
 as long as the *moon*, through *all generations* ...
⁸ May he rule from sea to sea
 and from the River [the Euphrates] *to the ends of the earth* ...
¹¹ May *all* kings bow down to him
 and *all* nations serve him ...
¹⁷ May his name endure *for ever*;
 may it continue as long as the sun.
 Then *all* nations will be blessed through him,
 and they will call him blessed.”

This pointed to someone far greater even than Solomon. Likewise, in Ezekiel 34 – a passage where God lambasts the godless shepherds (rulers and prophets) who failed to look after and maintain the holiness of his flock (his people), such that they were sent into exile – in that passage God promises another Shepherd who would rule over God’s flock with *justice*. And this Shepherd will have a dual identity. Firstly, God says (vv.15-16), “*I myself* will tend my sheep and make them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. *I* will search for the lost and bring back the strays. *I* will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong *I* will destroy. *I* will shepherd the flock with justice.” But later he adds (vv.23-24), “*I* will place over them one shepherd, my servant *David*, and *he* will tend them; *he* will tend them and be their shepherd. *I* the LORD will be their God, and my servant *David* will be prince among them.”

Therefore, from these, and many other similar passages, there arose an expectation of a great Messiah King to come – an even greater *Son of David* who would *forever* restore the fortunes of God’s people and under whose kingship *all the nations* would gladly come and bow the knee. Interestingly, from the passage in Ezekiel, we find that this Son of David would also be God himself – a feature of the prophecy which the Jews did not understand and therefore missed until Jesus came, even though they expected the Messiah to live forever. That’s why they objected so much to Jesus’ claim to be God in human flesh!

Now, it’s unlikely that Bartimaeus understood *all* of this significance when he cried out “Son of David, Jesus.” But, like every Jew, he would certainly have understood that the term “Son of David” was reserved for the Messiah, the Saviour King, the one they had waited centuries for. It is a hugely significant statement, and despite the opposition of the Jewish leaders to Jesus, Bartimaeus was not afraid to publicly own his belief that Jesus was that promised Messiah King.

“Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!” And to that faith and to Bartimaeus’ cry for mercy, Jesus responded. He used exactly the same words as his question to James and John in our previous passage:

“What do you want me to do for you?” But there is no careful guardedness about the question *this* time – it is simply an invitation from Jesus to Bartimaeus to ask of him what he wished. And Bartimaeus’ response again indicates his *personal* faith, which is slightly masked by the translation. Literally he says, “Rabbouni,” which means “My Rabbi” – *my* teacher. “My Rabbi, I want to see.” So, with a word Jesus healed him – no need for touch on this occasion. “Go, your faith has saved you.”

As a result, Bartimaeus literally “*began* to follow Jesus,” either “along the road” or “in the way” – either translation is possible. The second of these is an interesting possibility, since Christians were called “followers of the Way” before they were called Christians. But either way, the fact that he “*began* to follow” indicates that this was no fleeting attachment. Bartimaeus became a true disciple of Jesus, following him in the way he would go; which might be why he is named – because he was known to the community of disciples.

But what can we learn from this narrative? Firstly, we are called again by Mark to consider the question, “Who is this Jesus?” Is he, as Bartimaeus confessed, the long-promised Son of David, the Messiah King, the Saviour of the World, God himself in human form? If he is, then he deserves and commands our *total* allegiance, the bending of our will to his, living as *he* calls us to live, following him and *his* example.

But secondly, we can see again Jesus’ and his Father’s incredible willingness to meet our needs and our cries for mercy. His arm does not need to be twisted to make it happen. If our faith is in Jesus, and if our request is according to his will (which at the very least will mean it will be a *godly* request), the base line assumption should be God will grant it! Jesus did not commit to grant James’ and John’s request, because it was an ungodly request for personal power and status. But he granted Bartimaeus’ request immediately, because it was a godly request to be granted the opportunity to fully live. Sometimes, of course, it’s not quite as easy to distinguish requests as it is with these examples. There is a mystery around unanswered prayer, when sometimes we *don’t* see – perhaps *never* understand – how God’s glory may be better served by an answer of “No” to some prayers. But we should not base our theology on the exception. Jesus said on many occasions that we *will* receive whatever we ask for in prayer. So, our baseline position should be one of expectancy that God will answer our prayers, just as Bartimaeus was expectant that Jesus would meet his cry for mercy. What is it that you need today? Not what you want for your own glory or ease, but what you need to live life to the full and for Jesus’ glory? Ask him. Jesus invites you to ask him. Amen?

[Pray]