

“For the Sake of the Call”
The Gospel According to Mark 10:46-52
August 12th, 2018

A young farmer, standing in one of his fields, was looking up to the sky when he observed a peculiar cloud formation. The clouds formed the letters G, P, and C, and he thinks them to be a call from God.
*The call? **Go preach Christ!***

The farmer rushed to the elders of his church and insisted that he had been called of God to preach. Respectful of his eagerness, they invited the farmer to fill the pulpit the next Sunday.

That Sunday, the sermon rambled; it was long and boring. When the service was finally over, one of the elders muttered to the would-be preacher, "Seems to me the clouds were saying 'Go plant corn.'"

With today's text of Scripture – **Mark 10:46-52**, we come to the end of our study of the 10th chapter of Mark's gospel account. With 52 verses, it's a lengthy chapter; today's message is the 6th sermon we'll have studied in this chapter.

The main theme in these 7 verses is actually two-fold. First, we have the matter of God's call to men, women, and children. That call has both an internal and an external aspect to it. The second aspect we'll study in addition to God's calling is faith; the faith to respond to God's call wholeheartedly and without reservation. We'll must rely in faith in Jesus to answer His call.

I remember God's call in my life both to salvation and to the gospel ministry. The month of August marks several high points of God's work in my life. It was August 1981, while stationed with the Air Force in England that God called me to Himself saving me from my sins. And it was August 1999 upon my retirement from the Air Force, I was ordained and began serving a call with our church in Alabama. I simply cannot believe that August 1st next year, I'll observe my 20 year anniversary in pastoral ministry.

(Incidentally, it was also August – August 2001 - when you flew Jan, Zach, Molly, and I up to Aledo for our candidating weekend with Trinity Church. The result was receiving your call for us to serve you, and 2 ½ months later we left Alabama for Aledo.)

Back to my call to the gospel ministry. Sometime in the summer of 1997, while I was a deacon at First Presbyterian Church, Prattville, I was studying the Parable of the Talents in **Matthew Chapter 25**. Through that passage, God convinced me that if I didn't submit to His calling me to pastoral ministry, I would be a living illustration of the one talent servant – the one who buried his talent in the ground where it couldn't impact the lives of unbelievers for Christ. So, that fall, as I was taking my final class for a Master's degree in Human Resources Management, I was also taking my first class for a Master's degree in Biblical studies with the intent of serving full-time in pastoral ministry.

As we read today's text, notice Jesus calls to a blind beggar, and then that same blind beggar calls upon Jesus. It is a beautiful picture of God's gospel of grace. Compared to the rich young ruler who had great possessions spoken of earlier in this chapter (his story is included in verses 17-31), no one could be more dissimilar than a poor, blind beggar.

The Gospel According to 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.”

We’ll focus upon the words of Bartimaeus and Jesus as we work through this passage. **Since he speaks first, we’ll begin with the words of Bartimaeus.** His name means ‘Son of Timaeus.’ The name Timaeus means “to honor.” Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, lived in the city of Jericho, some 18 miles away from Jerusalem; the destination of which Jesus, His disciples, and the crowd of people following them were headed as they passed through Jericho.

Bartimaeus, and likely many other beggars, were sitting along the road depending entirely upon the pity of those who walked by and be moved to give a handout to them. But, this particular day, a distinguished Guest was passing through town. It’s not hard to imagine that people were hurrying past and discussing with excitement that Jesus of Nazareth – the One who healed the lame, lepers and blind – the One some were saying was the Messiah – was passing by.

Bartimaeus could have sensed that His greatest opportunity to improve his miserable plight was at hand. He must’ve been desperate, perhaps even frantic. For sure, he had a very low quality of life sitting in the dirt along a dusty road, not able to see to work or have any kind of life worth living. But, he evidently had a grasp of Who Jesus was.

Someone once bluntly asked blind and deaf Helen Keller, “Isn’t it terrible to be blind?” To which she responded, “Better to be blind and see with your heart, than to have two good eyes and see nothing.”

In verse 47, Bartimaeus cried out “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” One commentator calls this ‘the perfect plea, the perfect prayer’ because Christians have been whispering it for centuries: ‘have mercy.’” (Card, 133) Those around him, within ear shot, anyway, shushed Bartimaeus, warning him to be quiet. But, their criticisms didn’t phase Bartimaeus in the least. Verse 48 says he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

With verse 48, we are given an incredible act of mercy of Jesus in that he “stood still.” With all the hustle, bustle, noise and clamoring going on, Jesus heard the raspy, frantic voice of one calling to Him in desperation, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus called out to have the man crying for Him to come to him. The disciples (we’re not told who) spoke words of comfort (verse 49), “Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.” Note, carefully, the blind man’s response to the call of God the Son (verse 50), “Throwing off his coat, he was on his feet at once and came to Jesus.” (*The Message*) Unlike the rich man who asked Jesus what he had to

do to have eternal life, Bartimaeus spontaneously left everything he owned (his cloak!) to come to Jesus. There's no thinking twice when Jesus calls you!

You've heard of Emily Post? She was an American author, the foremost authority in etiquette and manners, who lived from 1873 to 1960. She was once asked the correct procedure when one is invited to the White House and has a previous engagement.

Her answer? "An invitation to lunch or dine at the White House is a command, and automatically cancels any other engagement." Similarly, Bartimaeus took Jesus' words as a command to which He should automatically respond.

At this point, **we come to the first of two sentences uttered by Jesus in this passage** in verse 51, "What do you want Me to do for you?" This is exactly the question Jesus posed to James and John in verse 36 from the passage of Scripture we studied last Sunday morning. I've often thought it seemed a bit peculiar that Jesus would ask such an obvious question. After all, He knew Bartimaeus was blind, He was fully God in addition to being fully man! In asking the question, Jesus graciously allows Bartimaeus – and James and John before him – to hear with their own ears how they believe Jesus can help them. In other words, it's a matter of faith. And, that brings us to the second primary doctrinal teaching in this passage. Faith; saving faith; the capacity to trust in God and His Word to be sufficient in meeting our needs and desires.

"Bartimaeus was blind in body, but not in soul. He had witnessed none of our Lord's mighty miracles. He had not had the opportunity of seeing dead people raised with a word, and lepers healed by a touch." (Ryle, 222) But, he had heard of Jesus' works, and hearing, Bartimaeus believed. He had incredible faith; he was desperate and driven to improve His life, and He put His trust in the One passing through Jericho that day.

Oh, that we would have similar faith! We haven't seen Jesus with our eyes, either. But, we have the report of His power and His willingness to save. We have great promises in the Word of God to believe on Jesus Christ and be saved from the eternal death our sins deserve. For instance, **Joel 2:32** reads, "Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." What is the first step of a Christian, but to cry out like Bartimaeus, "(Lord) have mercy on me!"

Bartimaeus answer to Jesus' question is in verse 51, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." Bartimaeus brings his greatest need before God the Son and He has faith to believe that Jesus is able to do something about it. Jesus replies to him in verse 52, "Go your way; your faith has made you well."

Dear ones, what is your greatest need? For those who are not yet saved from the punishment due their sins – and according to the Bible, everyone is a sinner – your greatest need is to be saved from an eternity in hell. The Bible teaches that God is holy, and He must punish sin. Unless you are living for Jesus, you are a sinner in need of salvation. Jesus, God the Son, has come from heaven – fully God, and taken upon Him our flesh, also fully man. Jesus came to earth to live for you and to die for you. If you fully believe in Him as Master and Lord, then you will not have to face the death that Jesus died in your place. But, if you do not believe in Him, *you* will die for your sins. It's either Jesus or you – *which should you prefer?* "Jesus still stops for those who call on His name, and He listens to our prayers for help." (Ferguson, 178)

For those who've trusted in Christ, *what is your greatest need?* I submit it is forgiveness. For, even though we are redeemed from hell for eternity as Christians, we still sin, and sometimes, we sin grossly. We mustn't treat our salvation so lightly and presumptuously that we risk dragging other people down by our sin. God has called us, fellow believer in Christ, to live free in Jesus. That means we are to steer clear of living in sin while professing to be Christians.

There are a host of other possibilities, but sexual sin is so prevalent in our day and age, even among the youth. **Dear ones, God has called us to pursue holiness as we live for His glory!**

One of my favorite Christian musical artists is Steven Curtis Chapman. Steven and his family are members of Christ Community Church, a PCA congregation in Franklin, Tennessee. Among his many award winning songs is his 1990 song, "For the Sake of the Call." I couldn't get it out of my mind as I studied this morning's text.

"Drawn like the rivers are drawn to the sea,
There's no turning back, for the water cannot help but flow.
Once we hear the Savior's call, we'll follow wherever He leads
Because of the love He has shown,
And because He has called us to go
We will answer...

We will abandon it all for the sake of the call.
No other reason at all but the sake of the call.
Wholly devoted to live and to die
For the sake of the call."

God doesn't call us to sin; He calls to holy living. *Have you heard His call? Will you do His call?*

Timothy Stackpole was a firefighter who was severely burned in a June 1998 five alarm fire in Brooklyn, New York. Two fellow firefighters were killed and more injured in a building collapse. Tim spent over two months in the burn center with fourth and fifth degree burns over 40% of his body. He endured many surgeries and months of painful rehabilitation. He had two goals: to recover and spend as much time as he could with his family, and to return full-duty to a job he loved. Against popular opinion, he succeeded.

On March 10th, 2001, Tim returned to his lieutenant's job. He was a great firefighter, passionate about his work and was soon promoted to Captain on September 6th, 2001. He was in FDNY headquarters, off-duty, the morning of September 11th. Of course, he responded.

Timothy was one of the firefighters who ran into the second tower of the World Trade Center to try to save some people. After he did, the building collapsed and took his life. He knew his calling—to save people. The Holy Spirit has called us to a life of service. We must live for Him.