

**Mark 10:46-52****Transformed by faith**

*Preached at the confirmation service of Riley Henke at Immanuel Point Pass*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we will witness Riley confirm his faith. Together with him, we will confess faith in the Triune God. But did you know that we've already had a confession of faith in the service today? We heard it in the words of Bartimaeus at the start of the service and again in the gospel reading. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" is a confession of faith. It confesses something about who Jesus is. And it confesses something about what Jesus does.

It confesses that Jesus is the promised Messiah. This is found in the phrase 'Son of David'. To our ears, that's just one of many titles given to Jesus in the bible, but it is a specific reference back to the old covenant, and the promise of a Messiah that would be sent by God to rescue God's people. So Bartimaeus is effectively saying, "I believe Jesus is the promised Messiah sent by God. I believe Jesus is the one who will rescue the people of Israel. I believe Jesus can rescue me."

Now the crowds there told him to shut up, but he persisted and again said, "Son of David, have mercy on me." It's possible that the crowds took offence at the phrase 'Son of David'. They would have all known what it meant. But it's more probable that the crowds took offence at a blind beggar disturbing their day. Even so, we see in this our first example of the characteristics of faith in Jesus Christ. Bartimaeus persists despite hindrances and opposition.

The attempts to silence him remind us that he had no social standing. Here we are outside of Jericho, outside of the city, outside of the normal economic activity of its regular citizens. As a blind man, Bartimaeus lives outside the usual structures of employment. There were probably some in the crowd that thought he didn't deserve to be healed. There were probably some in the crowd that thought he must have been a terrible sinner afflicted with blindness as punishment from God. There were probably some in the crowd wishing he wasn't there begging so they didn't feel guilty about ignoring his pleas for help. But Bartimaeus understands the nature of God. He knows that the promised Messiah would come with the love and compassion of God. And so, in faith, he persists in his cry for mercy.

In the closing verse of our text, Jesus does name faith as the important factor in this encounter. In faith, Bartimaeus persisted. His confession of faith didn't go into great detail. It wasn't some grand doctrinal statement. But it was a conviction that Jesus can and will rescue him in his time of need. So, he has recognised that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the promised Son of David, and he believes that Jesus is compassionate. Despite his blindness, he sees the truth. And in faith, he expects a transformation.

Presumably, Jesus could have walked to Bartimaeus to talk with him. Instead, he tells the onlookers to summon Bartimaeus to him. Now those who sought to inhibit the beggar must assist in Jesus' ministry to him. But there's another little detail here that we might not have noticed: Bartimaeus tosses aside his cloak. The beggar's cloak is important, as it's potentially the only thing to keep him warm at night. And as a blind beggar, you don't really want to lose track of this most important of possessions.

It seems Bartimaeus fully expects his status to change right here in this encounter with Jesus. He trusts that Jesus can restore him to a place of wholeness that will involve him in the regular happenings of society. When Bartimaeus casts off his cloak, he confidently expects that he will no longer sit on his garment dependent upon handouts from passers-by. And so, when Jesus does have compassion and asks Bartimaeus what he wants, the response is simple but filled with confident faith. "My teacher, let me see again."

Unlike two of the apostles a little earlier in this chapter of Mark's gospel, Bartimaeus doesn't ask for glory or power. He just wants to see the world around him. Unlike the disciples, who so far hadn't really understood what Jesus was about, he is already a man of faith, courage, and true discipleship. He recognises who Jesus is, the Messiah, the Son of David, promised long ago. He believes Jesus can help him as he cries out in mercy. Usually, you don't ask for help from someone incapable of helping you. And after receiving that saving help, he leaves behind his begging cloak, his spot outside the city, outside the community, and he follows Jesus.

The text says he 'followed him on the way.' Again, this is a phrase that might not mean much to our ears. But 'Followers of the Way' is an expression used in the book of Acts to describe the early Christian church. This comes primarily from Jesus himself who taught that he is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to God except through him (John 14:6). Jesus also taught that the way is narrow and that few find it (Matthew 7:13-14).

But this blind beggar outside Jericho has found it. He now follows Jesus on the way. He follows Jesus who is the way. We get a great contrast between his sitting beside the road and then his following Jesus on the road. This is an image of conversion, of coming to faith, and of that faith transforming your life. His faith transformed him and saved him in more ways than one. His persistent and expectant confession of faith as Jesus first approached did result in the restoring of his sight. He was saved from his life of begging outside the city.

That same persistent and expectant confession of faith also showed him to be a true disciple of Jesus. In this way, he is a model for our faith. He trusted Jesus to rescue him. He recognised Jesus as the promised Messiah sent by God. He knew that through Jesus he would receive love and compassion, and so he had the courage to cry out for mercy. His social status didn't matter. His blindness didn't matter. Faith in Christ Jesus is open to all and can be grasped even when sitting in the gutter on the side of the road.

This faith can be just a simple expression of trust in Jesus, recognising who he is and trusting that because of who he is, he has the power to rescue us. That's it. Saving faith doesn't need to be any more complicated than that. And our confession of faith can likewise be just as simple: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. Amen.