

Matthew 21-10-17b

We're ready now to resume our study in Matthew chapter 21, having looked at this pericope which precedes the triumphal entry in all three gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all put this in, and it's there for a reason. We are supposed to behold, as it says in verse 30.

And unlike the multitude, when Jesus stands still and calls to the blind man and says, what do you want me to do for you? They said to him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened, that our eyes may be opened. What happens when Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes? There are times when it says that Jesus had compassion on the multitudes and healed all who were sick. He has compassion on the multitude because they stay with him and they've had nothing to eat.

It's not without significance that in this particular case, this multitude that is acclaiming him all the way from the Jordan through Jericho and beyond, it doesn't say that Jesus had compassion on that multitude. He has compassion on the blind man. They are the ones who acknowledge their need, who call out to him as the son of David against the wishes of the crowd, against the attitudes of the crowd.

And he has compassion on them and touched their eyes. It's a fascinating study to look at the different healings and see when Jesus makes mud out of spit and dirt. And when he puts his fingers into a man's ears and says, Ephatha, be opened.

When he heals at a distance, when he heals by a touch, he can heal with a word. Later on in scripture, handkerchiefs that the apostles have touched would heal people. A shadow of an apostle passing by people that that shadow would hit and they would be healed reminds you of the men in the Old Testament who are trying to bury a guy and bandits, their dead friend and the bandits come and they try to hide and they accidentally drop the corpse on top of Elisha and the guy springs back to life.

There's all different kinds of ways that people are healed in scripture, but it is significant that when Jesus touched their eyes, he doesn't just say, be it to you as you desire. Your faith has made you well. He touches their eyes.

Keep your finger here and look at the parallel again in Mark chapter 10 in verse 51. Look at verse 49 that once again, many warned him to be quiet, but he cried out all the more son of David have mercy on me. So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called, commanded him to be called.

Jesus stood still. It's an emphasized point in every version of this story. They called the blind man saying to him, be of good cheer rise.

He is calling you here in Mark's story. We have this interesting additional facet where the

call can be communicated by intermediaries. Bartimaeus hears the crowd.

He calls out, he figures out who it is and he calls out to the son of David. Jesus commands that he be called. This to me is a stronger piece of evidence for the evangelistic side of Christian faith and practice than others that are adduced.

Acts 1.8, Matthew 28, 19 and 20, great commissions and so on. This is solid biblical support for the idea that the call to those who recognize their need for Jesus can be communicated by intermediaries. Jesus says, tell him to come.

And so the crowd says, and this is a good way to phrase the gospel. If you have the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ, or to give information to a believer who is far from God and far from their spiritual priorities being right, and they want to get there, this is how you formulate the call. Be of good cheer.

Get up. He is calling you. Three elements.

Don't be depressed. Things are looking up. Be of good cheer.

Rise. He is calling you. They don't pick them up.

They don't grab them by the arm. They just communicate the call and the person comes to Jesus on their own behest, under their own steam, under their own power. Throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.

Throwing aside his garment, throwing aside his beggar's garment. Why does he throw his garment aside? I think he already knows he's not going to need blind beggar rags anymore. He's already anticipating.

He already believes what Jesus is going to do. When he hears that Jesus is calling him and responding to his appeal, he casts the old clothing aside. He rose and came to Jesus.

He did exactly what he was asked to do. He arose and he came. Jesus answered and said to him, what do you want me to do for you? Do you understand what is on the table here? Do you understand the issue? The blind man said to him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.

Jesus said to him, go your way. Your faith has made you well. Here, we don't have the touch mentioned because the gospel of Mark is making a different point.

This is in line with Mark's theme of Jesus power, Jesus action. The instruction, go your way. Your faith has made you well.

Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road. In Matthew, it says the blind man followed Jesus. You do the same thing over in Luke.

When you go over to Luke chapter 18, the Jesus stood still in verse 40 and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he had come near, he asked him, commanded him to be brought. Once again, you have the action of intermediaries.

Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet. Jesus stood still commanded him to be brought. When he had come near, he asked him saying, what do you want me to do for you? He said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

Jesus said to him, receive your sight. Your faith has made you well. Immediately he received his sight, followed him, glorifying God.

All the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. So in every case, you have this interaction. Jesus stops.

The command is issued. The blind man or men come and Jesus says, what do you want me to do for you? The same question that was posed to Salome and James and John, what is it you wish? What do you want? Contrast that question with the answer in each case back to the theme, especially here in Matthew. Do we understand the role of the Lord Jesus Christ in our life? There's a lot of people that treat him like a good luck charm, wear a cross, have a bumper sticker, go through the motions, identify as Christian, use Christian language, talk Christian talk, keep some Christian things around, your Bible's laying out, there's a verse on the wall, but it is a talisman Christianity.

It's an identification Christianity. Many believers of my acquaintance, mostly in the past now, really identified with their church. I go to a prominent church.

There's some very big churches in the Dallas area. I go to this church. I go to that church.

This guy is my pastor. We have these ministries. We have these missionaries.

We have these functions. We're on TV. We have resources.

We've got wonderful seminars and special groups and ministries that meet the needs of people in various categories. And so I wrap myself in the glory of my church. And there are people who want to wrap themselves in the glory of Jesus without actually seeing who he is and what God's priorities are as reflected in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the way to the father. He's not an end in himself. So in all three accounts, they follow him.

What is the significance of this blindness? You remember John 9, the account of the blind man in John 9 and the discourse back and forth, the dialogue the Pharisees have with the blind man and with his parents and everything else. And you get to the end of John 9 and in verse 40, some of the Pharisees who were with Jesus heard about this exchange. Jesus

says in verse 39, just before that for judgment, I have come into this world so that the blind may see.

And those who see may become blind. The physical blindness that Jesus cures is emblematic of spiritual blindness. The blind may see and those who see, who think they see, who claim to see, who believe they see, who are comfortable with what they do see will be exposed as blind.

So some of the Pharisees who are with him heard this and they asked him, are we blind also? And you remember famously Jesus' response in John 9, 41, if you were blind, Jesus said, you would not be guilty of sin. But since you claim you can see your guilt remains. Recognition of need and prioritizing God's power to meet that need, recognizing the source of God's power in his word, in his spirit, through the Lord, Jesus Christ, submitting ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

It's all about priorities. If you're the rich young ruler, you're not going to get there. If you're James and John trying to angle for seats without drinking the cup, not going to get there.

James and John actually are able and will drink the cup, Jesus says. But they don't come to that understanding until after they've made this rather precipitous request. Well, this brings us now to chapter 21.

That's the background, not forgetting the following. There are times when Jesus tells someone they want to follow and he says, go home. Tell what great things God has done for you.

There's other times when his instruction is tell no one, but they noise it abroad and make Jesus mission more difficult here. These two blind men who receive their sight, the response is not trivial. They follow him, says specifically in Luke that that the blind man glorified the Lord Jesus and all of the crowd gives praise to God, but he changes his life.

He's no longer a beggar and he's no longer blind. What does he do with his life? He follows Jesus. That brings us to 21 called in our Bibles, the triumphal entry.

You know my name for it. Now, when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Beth phage, you got a text note in your new King James that just says Beth's phage, but it doesn't tell you what it means. You know what bait is? Bait lechem, Bethlehem is the house of bread.

So we just need to know what something that starts with F and ends with G is house of figs. This is the house of figs, phage here. That's just Greek for figs.

So he comes to the house of figs at the Mount of olives, olives and figs. How much more symbolism do you need to tie into the rest of scripture and to the symbolic acts that

Jesus engages in, in terms of cursing the fig tree, unripe figs, ripe figs. We've been through that many times in the Passion Week studies that we've done.

The olive tree, Paul is going to use that figure extensively in Romans, talking about the branches that are broken out of the olive tree because they're unfruitful and wild olive branches are grafted in, figs, specifically Israel, olives, all of those who are enabled and empowered to bear fruit by the oil of the Holy spirit or to produce a flame, light and heat. When they drew near to Jerusalem and came to the house of figs at the Mount of olives, Jesus sent two disciples saying to them, go into the village opposite you and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her loose and bring to me. Notice the *thems* are in italics, a donkey tied and a colt with her loose and bring to me.

If anyone says anything to you, you shall say the Lord has need of them and immediately he will send them. This was done. I don't think the word *all* is there.

I agree with your new King James text note. This was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet saying, this should sound a bit familiar. Tell the daughter of Zion, behold, your King is coming to you lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the full of a donkey, Zechariah nine, nine.

So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. How many disciples did Jesus send to how many blind men just received their sight to how many men asked to sit at Jesus right hand and at his left in the kingdom to there's a running theme here to, to, to, we'll figure out why as we get a little further along. So the two disciples in verse six went and did as Jesus commanded them.

They brought the donkey and the colt laid their clothes on them and set him on them. And the, the, and you text is better there. He sat on them and a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road.

Others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out saying, Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord Hosanna in the highest.

When he had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved saying, who is this? The multitude said, this is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee. We're only going to get partway in this. We'll probably be able to finish it next Sunday, but here's what we want to notice.

What did we just see in the blind man's story? Jesus came near to a city, came near to a town, and suddenly there is a multitude. Others, i.e. the blind man, hear the multitude, realize who's coming and cry out to him. Contrast that with what happens as Jesus approaches Jerusalem on the donkey.

Now the crowd is crying out, Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in

the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest. And when he comes to the city, the city is in turmoil.

Moved means there's, you know, people are coming out in the street saying, what is this noise? And the crowd has to explain, this is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee. Bartimaeus and his friend hear the multitude. When they find out it's Jesus, they say, son of David had mercy on me.

When Jerusalem hears Hosanna to the son of David, they say, who's that? What's the difference in Bartimaeus and his friend and the city of Jerusalem as a whole? When they hear it's Jesus, they know he's the son of David. They make that connection. They already know this.

Jerusalem hears the son of David is coming. They don't know it's Jesus. How many times has Jesus been to Jerusalem every year for the assembly feasts? He has taught in the streets.

He's taught in the temple precincts. He has healed in the environment in and around Jerusalem. He's been on the Mount of Olives any number of times.

He's raised people from the dead. How can they not know who the son of David is when they hear the crowd acclaiming him, but they don't? Why don't they know? Bartimaeus and his friend are interested enough to find out. They listen when they hear about Jesus, they have never seen him.

And he's never, they've never been in his presence before, but they found out who he was. People in Jerusalem with their sight are coming and going, traveling the country. Caravans are coming in.

People from all over Galilee and Judea are coming to town all the time, feeding the 5,000, feeding the 4,000. How can these people not know unless they are willingly uninterested? How can they not know? Jesus has been ministering for over three years. He is notorious through these healings.

John can figure out in prison, John the Baptist, when the disciples come, disciples of John and say, are you he that shall come or do we look for another? And Jesus says, go tell John what you've seen and heard, what you've seen and heard. And he'll know who I am, that I am both the suffering servant, the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world and the coming one, the coming King. He will know from what you see and hear that I do.

So what does this tell you about the population of Jerusalem? They're not interested. They're not ready. This is why Jesus is going to stand on this same Mount of Olives and weep over Jerusalem.

How often I would have gathered you under my wings as a hen gathers her chicks. You would have none of me. It's not just on this day.

It's on every previous day for the past three years, the city as a whole, the population as a whole, isn't recognizing their need. They're not making a priority of their spiritual need. They're content.

They say, we see just like the Pharisees who lead them. Leaders do not long last over people who are disgusted with them. Something will change just as a note from history.

Uh, the bulk of the population will not long tolerate odious leadership. If they have any say about it at all and are not just under brute force, they will do something about that leadership. If Jerusalem didn't like the Pharisaic leadership, they could have stopped listening to them, stopped paying attention to them and found good rabbis, faithful teachers of the old Testament scriptures and heeded and followed them.

But they're content. They kind of like the system. They, they tolerate and even glorify the Pharisees and the Pharisees bask in that adulation.

It's a mutual admiration society. So there is a crowd coming down the Mount of Olives, throwing clothes on the road and pronouncing Jesus, the son of David. This has a nucleus of Jesus disciples and the outer, uh, core of followers, blind Bartimaeus and his friend are probably in this crowd.

Uh, others, uh, in the extended group of, uh, disciples that have been following Jesus, uh, beyond the 12 are in this crowd and that's the core. Others pick up the call follow the, uh, the ritualistic, uh, crying and, uh, putting down a palm branches and so on. There's kind of a, an infectious atmosphere to this.

And so the pronouncement is made. Remember in the blind story, in all of the accounts, the call of Jesus is communicated by others to the blind men, and they get up and come to Jesus. This call is being communicated by the crowd surrounding Jesus, surrounding the donkey and the foal.

It's symbolic. It's prophetic. Zechariah 9, 9. What is the response in Jerusalem? I don't see it.

Who is this? What's going on? You're creating a ruckus. You're creating a turmoil. The whole city is moved, but I don't get it.

This is a call. This is an opportunity. And Jerusalem is apathetic and indifferent.

This is why when Jesus goes in verse 12 to the temple of God and drove out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold us, how long has this industry been going on? Decades,

centuries, perhaps the people have tolerated this. They didn't look around and say, these are the holy precincts. Why are you turning church into a business? If you want to make a direct application, you're turning worship into business.

There's money changing hands here. There's coffers that are being filled by product for worshipers. This is a dangerous, dangerous thing in the church to make merchandise of the word of God, to turn the house of God into a den of thieves in the name of God.

We're providing a service. We're being helpful. We're helping people sacrifice and so on.

It is a dangerous rationalization, willing suspension of disbelief for this kind of thing to go on. Worship at a cost is entirely different from God loving a cheerful giver. So this is another symptom.

Jesus says to them in verse 13, it is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer. You have made it a den of thieves. This combined scriptures from Isaiah and Jeremiah.

And you remember anytime there is a quote, we'll go back and look at these next time. Now look at verse 14, then blind and lame came to him in the temple and he healed them. If you didn't get the message from Bartimaeus and his friend, once again, blind and lame are able to see and walk.

Could have been all kinds of maladies. There's any number of diseases, but what are the ones that are mentioned? Blindness and lameness. What was Bartimaeus able to do once he got his sight? He could see, and he could follow.

He could walk with purpose, walk carefully, directedly, safely, blind and lame. When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple saying, Hosanna to the son of David, same response as the crowd. When Bartimaeus and his friend cry out, this shouldn't be happening.

Be quiet. Do you hear what these are saying? This identification of son of David needs to stop. Jesus said to them, yes, I do hear it.

Have you never read out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants? You have perfected praise. Psalm eight two. We did Psalm eight in our Psalm study.

You remember this? Then he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and he lodged there, went out of the city. Notice there is no enthronement scene. There is no descent of a throne from heaven.

Jesus doesn't start the millennial kingdom at this point. Why? When he comes to the temple, it is totally unacceptable, totally unsatisfactory. People are not ready.

They're not making a priority of God and the things of God, and they cannot receive him when he comes to his own. This is tragic. It is scary, and we don't want it to ever happen

to us.

When the Lord Jesus Christ stands at the door of our heart and knocks, when it is on the line, the possibility for him to dwell with us and make his home with us in our lives, in our hearts, in our homes, are we ready? Do we recognize our need? Do we say, I am blind. Please give me my sight. I am blind to sins I perpetrate.

I am blind to evil I unconsciously participate in. I am blind to my faults. I am blind to my misaligned priorities.

I am blind to my poorly organized goals. I am blind to values that I hold that need to be refined. There is dross in me that needs to be boiled out and scooped away.

There are rocks in the soil of my soul that need to be plowed up and removed. The word of God needs to be a fire and a hammer that breaks those rocks in pieces. As David prays way back in Psalm 51, show me my hidden faults.

I know I am blind. I acknowledge my blindness. Only you, oh Lord, can cure my blindness.

Show me what I cannot see. Give me the power not only to see, but to walk, to follow. You can identify a problem, you can be aware, and you don't have the power to escape it.

I read another long article about addiction and addictive personalities and the subtle ways that addiction takes hold. We can see a problem and not be able to cure it. We can have a problem of worry.

We can have a problem of gossip. We can have a problem of talking about ourselves too much and not listening to others enough. We can have a problem with impatience.

We can have a problem of excessive concern about provision or money or excessive involvement in subjective eyes on people. There are just any number of ways that we can be blindly missing spiritual priorities. We can be so excited about the coming kingdom that we forget that there is a cup to drink and there is a baptism to be baptized with.

We sort of omit to think about that and what that might entail for us personally and whether there is a cup on the table right now. Jesus says, you see this cup in the upper room to his disciples, drink ye all of it. All of us have a cup and we don't have to look around and say, well, his cup's bigger than mine or his cup's smaller than mine or that's just a shot glass for them and I've got this great big bowl.

That's those who are working for a denarius and want to know what other people are doing. All of this is in our context. All of this leading to this tragic day when Jesus issues

the same call to Jerusalem that he issues to the blind men through intermediaries with interesting reversals.

What is the response? Unlike the blind men who their blindness is, they know it's their biggest problem and when it is cured, they immediately follow him. This should be our prayer. Show me my hidden faults.

Try me and see if there be any wicked way in me. I'm having trouble seeing it. I think something's not right.

You can be sure that the prayer of David will be far more effective when we pray it than the prayer of Jabez. I wonder why books are not written about the prayer of David in Psalm 51. It's a wonderful Psalm.

It ought to be a part of our thinking every time we come before the Lord. Cure my blindness. I want to see and I want to follow.

No matter how much progress we've made, no matter how far we think we've gotten, there is always in our sinful nature, there's always in our priorities and our goals and our values room for improvement. Things that we can see more clearly. I just lost a pair of my aunt's glasses that I've been relying on and I dug up some old glasses of mine that were they've been sitting around for years.

One had a broken bow and the other had a missing lens. I found a place that would fix that stuff and sent them off. I can see.

I'm looking at everything now with my eyes, but there are times when I really want to see more clearly and I need help for that. I have to acknowledge that I need it. I can't be proud and say, uh, I look better without glasses.

Uh, we do what it takes to be able to see as clearly as possible in the spiritual realm. It is essential. Behold, verse 30.

Look at this story. You don't even get a behold in the triumphal entry, but you get a behold for Bartimaeus and his friend. Why is that? It's one of the most important features of this entire section of the gospel of Matthew and something worth reflecting on.

Well, we'll pick up here. We have some more things to see in the tragic entry when we pick up next time, but let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for its power to convict, to lay open our hearts and our souls, and to make a path for your grace and your power to fix us where we are broken, to heal us where we are wounded or sick, to give us sight where we are blind. We pray that as we reflect on what we've seen in your word this morning, that your Holy Spirit will administer it to us

as a curative, as a source of strength, guidance, and inspiration for our lives in the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.