

Miracles of Jesus 12-11-18b

We continue our study looking at the healing of blind Bartimaeus at Jericho. We established quite a bit of background in our first session and discovered that by closely comparing the three accounts of this miracle, we realized that there was an intermission, there was a waiting period between Bartimaeus first seeing the Lord Jesus and actually getting the chance to speak with him and receive the deliverance for which he sought. In between that, you have the story of Zacchaeus, which is only in the Gospel of Luke.

Zacchaeus is considered to be a sinner and an outcast by the people around him. He's not just a tax collector, he is the chief tax collector. And he's not just a chief tax collector, he's a short guy.

And, you know, people always think that the extremely short have some sort of a complex and, you know, there's some justification at times for that. And one of the things you see is that nothing gets in Zacchaeus' way. He overcomes the obstacle of his stature by means of the sycamore tree.

It's interesting, even today in Jericho, you know, everything in the Holy Land is a tourist trap and they've got some poor old tree in the middle of town and they say, this is the sycamore that Zacchaeus climbed. Okay. But think about this though.

And there's so many, I was talking to Ken during the break, there's so many things that I do not have either the time or the capacity to fully address. There's some things I know are there. It's like that Christian comedian, you know, when he says, I didn't know, I didn't even suspect.

Well, I suspect, but I just, I can't quite close the loop on some of these things. I, as I said, I hear noise behind the door, but I can't figure out how to get it open. The location here in Jericho, and I'll submit the evidence for your perusal and you'll probably be able to figure out what's still somewhat opaque to me.

You remember the story of Jericho. After it fell, there was a curse pronounced on it, right? Never be rebuilt without a cost. And the cost would be a life.

And yet it was eventually rebuilt. And the man that rebuilt it, what was the price that he paid to build that city? His firstborn son, in the setting up of the gates specifically, and the gate is the entrance to the city. This is where Bartimaeus is sitting, is at the entrance.

You get near and you come to the gate of the city. And there was a curse, but the curse was overcome at the cost of a son. Remember that? Was it one son or two that he ultimately ended up with losing two sons, right? And as is often the case in scripture, you have a doubling for a reason.

In some cases, it is to picture the Lord Jesus Christ with two doves or with two goats because one cannot be raised to picture the second part of Jesus work and so you will have two. But there's something going on there with this Jericho story. It's no accident that this takes place in Jericho and outside Jericho and that you have this son of Abraham reference in the middle.

Secondly, you have an issue of sight. People in the military know all about sight lines. People in the artillery know all about line of sight, complementary angle of sight, sight factor has to do with clearing differences in elevation.

And that's two different kinds of sight, by the way. S-I-T-E is, in artillery, is compensating for the bend in a trajectory. When you say a target is higher than the gun or lower than the gun, when you achieve the range, the range is for, assumes a flat surface and no difference in elevation.

When you compensate for that difference in elevation by adjusting your tube elevation, well, the trajectory is going to bend. Just think about standing in your yard with a garden hose and you know that if you raise the hose, the trajectory changes. It gets sharper.

There's more of an angle. You get the McDonald's arch type of thing going on. Well, as you raise it, it gets skinnier.

Well, you compensate for this by measuring, first of all, angle of sight. You change it this way and then complementary angle of sight adjusts for that bend in the trajectory. But the whole idea here is what can you see? Is it easily seen or is it obscured? Well, if you're blind, you can't see from lack of capacity, lack of ability.

Zacchaeus can't see Jesus for a different reason. He's not blind. He's short.

Randy Newman's got a whole song about that. Most people don't remember that. See, it's disappeared because it's politically incorrect.

Just look it up. It's probably on YouTube or something. Short People by Randy Newman.

So what does he do? There is a human solution. There's not really a human solution for congenital blindness or total blindness. There is a solution for being short.

What does Zacchaeus do? He plans ahead. He sees where Jesus must go because there's a main road through Jericho. So he goes in advance.

He anticipates where Jesus is going to be. Zacchaeus anticipates where Jesus is going to be. And he does his own climbing.

He climbs the tree so that he can overcome his short stature and see the Lord Jesus. When the Lord Jesus draws up alongside, he looks up in the tree. He knows Zacchaeus' name.

And he says, I am coming to your house today. Your house is my destination. And when he gets there, Jesus says, salvation has come to this house for he too is a son of Abraham.

Despite what everybody says, despite what everybody thinks, despite the disparaging negative, he too is a son of Abraham. Well then Jesus is coming back out of the city and Bartimaeus is still there. Now here's what we want to get to.

All of that, you step back and you say, wow, there is a great symmetry here and a shadowing of the sequence of events in God's plan and purpose. You think of Zacchaeus sort of in terms of the church, which by faith, both Jews and Gentiles become sons of Abraham indeed. And these people were limited not by a congenital blindness.

Gentiles were limited by an accident of birth. They were born Gentiles, right? But what happens? That can be overcome. If you're interested and you want to see the Lord Jesus, he will come to your house and salvation comes to your house because you too by faith, by accepting Christ, are a son of Abraham.

Paul details this in Romans. So now Jesus, having accomplished the deliverance for which he went into Jericho, kind of reminds you of the trip across the lake just for the demon-possessed man or men, now he's coming back, coming back out. He went into Jericho, got to come out the same way to go to Jerusalem.

Bartimaeus is sitting there still. Now, note the details of the story and this is found in all three accounts. It's important if it is said twice.

It's really important if it's told three times. In the mouths of two or three witnesses a thing is established. Well, you've got your three witnesses here for these details.

They warned him that he should be quiet, but he cried out all the more. This man, the son of honor, the son of value here, is crying out, identifying Jesus as the son of David. You remember back in Matthew chapter 9, the two blind men did the very same thing, son of David.

This means something. This is an acknowledgment. Jesus isn't just a rabbi.

He's not just an interesting guy. He's not just a prophet. Son of David means one thing in Israel.

What's that? Messiah. Son of David. Messiah.

He recognizes Jesus as the Messiah. Son of David. How often does the church appeal to the Lord Jesus and say, oh, son of David? He is son of David, but that's not near the top of the list of pertinent things for the church.

The church could be the church whether or not Jesus was the son of David in many ways.

He would still be our head. We would still be his body.

He would still be our Savior. He would be our Redeemer. He would be our any number of things, our righteousness, peace and sanctification.

Son of David specifically ties Jesus to his Old Testament role as the Messiah, the fulfillment of promise as David's greater son. This man calls out. He's blind, but he hears about Jesus, cannot see him, but he hears who he is and he calls out, son of David, have mercy on me.

I can't see you, but I'm calling on you. This is pretty much the status of all of the Old Testament saints. What did Balaam say in his prophecy? I see him now, but not near.

He's a distant apparition on the horizon. They can't see him, but they hear of him and express faith on the basis of what is heard. That's what Bartimaeus is doing.

He is a son of honor, but he's got to wait. Jesus goes on by. Big crowd.

Jesus has got a different destination for now. Passes him by. On the way out of the city, he is still ready and still crying out.

In the meantime, this second unnamed blind man apparently joined him. Maybe he witnessed him. This guy is kind of like the second demon-possessed man in Gadara, Gerasa, etc.

There is a second blind man, but he's kind of an afterthought. He's sort of a shadow. He's a two-dimensional accompaniment to the main guy.

So watch closely. He cried out all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. Depending on where you want to slice this and where the gap is, crying out all the more may be when Jesus is emerging.

You get the idea that maybe the crowd wasn't quite as large. Maybe not everybody understood or agreed with Jesus' decision to eat with Zacchaeus. Maybe that thinned the crowd some.

And so it is easier for Bartimaeus to now have this conversation with the Lord Jesus than it was on the way in. Too much clamor. Too many people.

Hosanna. Too much going on. Now the crowd has thinned out.

A lot of people don't agree. Well, he can't be the Messiah or he wouldn't be eating with a sinner. And I don't care what he says about Abraham.

Carping and criticizing. The crowd is thinner now, maybe, on the way out. So he cries out all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me.

So Jesus, now, Jesus stood still. Bartimaeus is crouched, laying, prone, prostrate, supine. I don't know what he is.

He's planted on the side of the road. Has been since Jesus came in. It's been hours.

He's still in the same spot. This guy doesn't move around much. Unlike the two blind men of Matthew chapter 9 who get up and tap their way after Jesus and follow Him and get their way all the way into the house and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us.

They don't take no for an answer. They navigate. Bartimaeus doesn't do that.

You say, why? Well, he is not moving much. But Jesus doesn't come over to him. Jesus stood still.

All three accounts give the identical same sequence of action and inaction, movement and no movement. Jesus stood still. All three accounts say He commanded him to be brought to Him.

That's what it says in Luke. What does it say in Matthew? Jesus stopped and called them, the two blind men. Jesus stopped and called them.

What does it say in Mark? Jesus stopped and said, call him. There is a call. Jesus stops and calls.

The guy is not moving. Hasn't moved all day. When Jesus went in, He didn't follow.

Jesus comes back out. He hasn't risen up and prostrated Himself in the path. He is still planted there.

Jesus hears Him calling and Jesus stops. There is still a distance and Jesus calls Him. Now, why would that be important at all? Well, if you remember at the end of the book of Daniel, flip with me, keep your finger in one or another of these Gospels and go to the end of the book of Daniel.

When you get to chapter 12, at that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people. There shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." You remember the Lord Jesus refers to this event in John chapter 5 when He says, John 5, 24-25, I say to you, He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment but is passed from death into life. Most assuredly I say to you, the hour is coming and now is the time of the

resurrection of the dead.

And the resurrection of the dead is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. What's going to happen at the second advent, at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? Rapture has already taken place, we're pre-trib, pre-mill, pre-everything. What happens when the Lord Jesus returns to Israel at the end of the tribulation.

He will call, and as Ezekiel sees the valley of dry bones and flesh and sinews cover them, and he prophesies again, and life enters them, and they stand on their feet. Now, they can't very well follow the Lord Jesus when He leaves the first time. What did Jesus tell the disciples in the upper room? Where I go you cannot come, but I will come again, and then you will be with me.

Well, this is Old Testament Israel. They cannot follow where Jesus is going. Jesus has a plan and program for the church, and there's a generation that can become church, but Old Testament Israel has got to wait.

It's got to sit in place. Where He goes they cannot follow, but He will come again, and when He calls, they will arise and they will come to Him. That, I would submit, is being pictured here with Bartimaeus.

That's why Jesus stops. Jesus knows every detail of what He is doing counts. It matters.

So He stood still, and He calls the blind Bartimaeus who hasn't moved all day. Now, in the physical realm, I would say that Bartimaeus is probably only capable of short distances. Maybe there's something else wrong with him.

Maybe he's not ever learned to navigate very well because he's blind. He's not as brave as the two guys that went all the way through town. But he doesn't, in the realm of purely physical things, he doesn't appear to be very active.

But when Jesus stands still and calls, what does it say happens? Well, you can look at it in Luke. It says, Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him, and when he came near, he asked him. We don't get a detail there.

When you go to Mark, Jesus stopped and said, Call him, and they called the blind man, saying to him, Take heart, rise, he is calling you. Now, do you find that at all sympathetic with what I've just sketched out? Rise, he is calling you. Hey, man that doesn't move, move.

Rise, he is calling you. And throwing off his mantle, throwing off his covering, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, What do you want me to do for you? The blind man said to him, Master, let me receive my sight.

This is the plea and the cry of the Old Testament saints. You remember when we went through Ecclesiastes and Solomon, the wisest man of the ancient world, felt that glass ceiling, that bubble beyond which he could not go. He said, I'm trapped in time.

I'm trapped in the moment. Things that you try to accomplish in this life end at death. The possessions and accomplishments and things you build must be handed to another.

How can I get to eternity? How can I get into the transcendent realms? Everything here is going to the wind. You partake and you're trying to grow and build and it is like consuming the wind. It is chasing the wind.

It is ephemeral. It is transitory. It doesn't last.

Well, that's the nature of the mundane world. How can I get into the eternal? Show me what I cannot see. Well, this is the limitation of the flesh without the spirit, isn't it? The carnal mind cannot understand the things of the spirit.

Jesus explained this to Nicodemus in John chapter 3. The wind, the spirit, goes where it wills. You hear the sound of it, but you can't see where it comes or where it goes. So it is of everyone who is born of the spirit.

The spirit obviously knows where it came from. The spirit knows where it's going. But people who don't have the spirit can't see that.

But those who are born of the spirit can. The call of the Old Testament saint is to I want to see. You have that pictured in Paul on the Damascus Road, Saul at that time.

What happens? At the appearance of the Lord Jesus, he can't see him. He is immediately struck blind and he just hears the voice. He hears him.

And it isn't for a specified number of days that he cannot see. And then something like scales fall from his eyes and then he can see and he is now the Apostle Paul. Well, here you have the call, Lord, this is what I want.

I want to see. But notice he's got to express that and believe that Jesus can do it for him. Jesus said to him, go your way, your faith has made you well.

Not all of Israel that is raised is going to have this faith. Not all are going to respond and have the scales drop from their eyes. Not all are going to be able to see.

Not all of them are asking this question. Not all of them are willing to wait. This is why we saw the Pharisees in John chapter 9 with the man born blind saying, are we blind also? And Jesus said, what? If you were blind, you would have no sin.

But because you say we see, your sin remains. And they are Israel. They are genetic sons of Abraham.

They are Abraham, but not spiritually. And their sin remains because they refuse to acknowledge that they are blind. They refuse to appeal.

They refuse to throw themselves on the grace of God. They don't understand the righteousness of God and they are seeking to establish their own. Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Where is Jesus on the way to? Jerusalem, Jerusalem. Heading in to hopefully establish the kingdom. And it will be a bit of a delay there, but when the kingdom is established, when the millennial kingdom begins, guess who is going to be accompanying the Lord Jesus right into Jerusalem? It will be Bartimaeus.

It will be all of those Bartimaeuses who dwelt in the Old Testament age, who waited for the Lord Jesus Christ in and by faith. There is a wonderful application of the word for us in this. We may see what looks like a great time of opportunity pass us by and for some reason we cannot rise up and take advantage of it.

We are limited. There is an obstacle. Bartimaeus, the crowd is too big.

He can't navigate as a blind man. Apparently he is only able to cover short distances. He can't follow Jesus into the city for some reason.

But it's possible, as a couple of you suggested, that he knew that Jesus had to come back by and he figured, I'll wait. He's got to come back by here. I'll be patient and wait.

And when he comes back by, I'll be ready. I think that's more than likely. He said, I'm not going to try to get there on my own legs.

I'm blind. I don't do distance as well. Last time I tried it, something really bad happened.

So I'm going to wait. And sure enough, the Lord Jesus comes back out. But when Jesus comes, he has got to respond in faith and obedience.

He's got to know when to stand up on his legs and walk. Kind of like when Jesus said to Peter in the boat, come on out. Peter says, if it's you, bid me come to you.

And he says, come on. Jesus didn't come to the boat and help him out. Jesus stood there and said, Peter, you walk out to me.

Here, the blind man has got to stand up, throw off his mantle, and come and respond to the call. There's a time to sit and wait and there's a time to stand up and respond. Hopefully we're as smart as Bartimaeus and we know when that time is.

And when it is time to stand up and move at the call of the Lord Jesus, notice Jesus didn't call him and say, hey, you want healing? Come on. Tap your way into the city, follow me, and if you can find Zacchaeus' house, I'll heal you. But Bartimaeus knows when they tell

him the Lord is calling you, hey, this is time to get up and move.

We want to have this discernment. We want to recognize there is a time to wait and there is a time to act. There is a time for everything under God's heaven.

Jericho was a beautiful city that was destroyed, was placed under a curse, and was rebuilt only when that curse was satisfied in the death of sons. It was and is a fragrant city. There's balsam that grows there that gives off a fragrance.

Ken's been there and says it still smells as fragrant as it did back when Solomon wrote the Song of Solomon and talked about the fragrance there. The tradition which goes back thousands of years says that the Queen of Sheba brought these fragrant plants and Solomon planted them in Jericho and they persist to this day. They talk about there being a balm in Gilead that heals the sin sick soul.

The Old Testament talks about balm in Gilead. Well, that word for balm is the balm that grows in Jericho. There is deliverance in Jericho.

There is a sweet-smelling savor in Jericho. It starts out as a curse, but that curse can be turned to blessing for those who are patient, who will wait, and who will recognize the Lord Jesus when He draws near, call on His name in faith, and when He calls back, respond. The result of this is that Bartimaeus knows that He is coming.

Bartimaeus receives His sight, and kind of like that one leper that we saw last week out of the ten who returned to give thanks and to glorify God, Bartimaeus does the same thing. It is not enough for us to simply call out and receive God's grace, but to appreciate it and think through what His grace does for us. If you've been blind and you can see, you think of all of the possibilities you can do now that you have sight.

What did Bartimaeus do with his newfound ability? He followed the Lord Jesus in the way. Oh, I want to go see my grandkids. Oh, I'd like to see the sights, the landmarks, and the wonderful... There are so many things I want to see.

I want to see the Jordan River. I want to see the walls of Jerusalem. I want to see this.

I want to see that. He wanted to continue to see Jesus, and so he follows the Lord Jesus. This is what he does with God's grace.

What did the Samaritan leper do with the grace that was bestowed on him? He was cleansed, can go anywhere, can do anything. What did he do? He went back to express gratitude to the Lord Jesus. That's what he did with his grace.

He responded with thanksgiving. We need to recognize individually what God does for us and use our answered prayers, our receiving of grace to follow the Lord Jesus, to express our thanksgiving and our gratitude. Nine other lepers can go their way.

Plenty of other healed people can go their way, but you notice those who loved the Lord Jesus the most and appreciated Him the most asked if they could follow. Remember even the demon-possessed man asked if he could follow. Jesus said, actually, I've got a different task for you.

You go and tell your family. You tell your household what great things God has done for you. So this is what Bartimaeus does, and there is this second companion.

My final suggestion is there is a blessing by association. Bartimaeus is the initiator. Bartimaeus is the motivated one.

Bartimaeus is the patient one. Bartimaeus is the named one here. There is this sort of shadowy second blind man that Matthew mentions, just as he mentions the shadowy second demon-possessed man, just as he is the one that mentions the mother of the foal that Jesus will ride very soon in the triumphal entry.

What does that guy mean? Why is he even included in the story? Every detail counts. Why is he there? There are those, and I think this depends on the identification with Old Testament Israel, there are those who are in the periphery. There are those who are near the ones of great faith, who receive blessing by association, who are healed and blessed along with the ones who actually have the motivation, who actually have that aggressive pursuit of the grace of God.

There are those nearby who say, Oh yeah, me too, and they are blessed. Remember in the New Testament, Paul says that God will bless a household just for the sake of one believer in it. There is this ride along for a time.

You too can receive your sight. You too can be blessed in a household just for the sake of the one faithful believer that dwells there. The entire town of Sodom, for crying out loud, could have been blessed if there had been ten righteous men within it, and probably had been preserved just because Lot was there.

But there came a time of reckoning where that ran out, and there is a time of reckoning where the go-along runs out. Children with faithful and motivated parents are blessed and exist for a time under that umbrella that God puts on that household, but there is a time when they leave, and now they are on their own recognizance. That blessing by association is not going to forever extend.

People in Israel will start in the kingdom, the millennial kingdom, with great blessing. Their eyes are opened. They have opportunity, but remember there is that sheep and goats judgment at the end.

What have you done with what you were given? Did you share it with those who didn't have? Did you express obedience? Did you express Christ-likeness? Did you express the generosity? What did you do with the grace that you were given? Are you one of the nine

lepers who wanders away, hooray, I'm clean? Or did you return to the Lord Jesus and express gratitude? This is our challenge. As I said at the beginning of the morning, we have to have our own faith. We have to have our own walk with God, our own relationship with God that is not ultimately dependent on others.

We enjoy fellowship. We can be encouragement. We can be close.

We are drawn together as a body, as brothers and sisters in Christ, but ultimately and finally you, fill in your name here, have a personal, individual relationship with Jesus Christ, and that is what is on the line. That is what determines everything about the present and the future. So we don't want to be shadowy, also ran guy.

We want to be Bartimaeus, known by name, called by name, healed by name, recorded in God's book by name. Don't settle for also ran, the other guy. You see the credits at the end of a movie, you know, man number two.

I don't want to be man number two. I want to have a name. I want to have some lines.

I want to be significant. I want to be worthwhile and useful to the Lord God who expressed grace to me and saved me and equipped me and gave me opportunity and gave me capability. This is who we want to be.

It is a small thing compared to what the Lord Jesus has done for us. Hopefully we are up to that and we are motivated to fulfill it. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the wonderful truths that you reveal to us in your word through didactic teaching, through narrative, through the histories, through even the smallest details in these accounts. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will teach us the eternal truths that are conveyed in these earthly words and earthly records. We pray that as we grow in grace and knowledge we will be more and more thoroughly equipped and more fruitful and more in tune with your plan and purpose as we prepare ourselves for an eternal future life with you.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.