

THURSDAY 07 April 2022 "Bartimaeus & Zacchaeus"

Luke 18:35-19:10

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

As you receive information about a newsworthy event are you frustrated when the reports are not identical, or are you grateful each reporter had a slightly different perspective of the event so their unique focus gives you a wider perspective of the event? Do you find that when you put together several reports of a major event it helps you gain a well-rounded picture of what actually took place, especially if you were not present to see it for yourself? That is one reason I so much appreciate the four Gospels in the New Testament,

Yesterday I left you standing with Jesus and His closest followers as He had just announced to them the shocking news that He was heading to Jerusalem and would be arrested, tried, flogged, mocked and killed! *They evidently listened respectfully but did not either believe it or understand it.*

Today let's walk with them as their travels toward Jerusalem take them through the ancient town of **Jericho**. When you hear that name "Jericho" what comes to your mind? Joshua? Rahab and the spies? The crossing of the Jordan river by the huge Hebrew nation and their conquest of Jericho as the first city in the Promised Land? Do you remember the unique battle plan God gave them found in Joshua 6? Perhaps you remember they destroyed that city and God gave Joshua a warning: **"Cursed before the LORD is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations, at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates."** (Joshua 6:26)

I've learned when God issues a warning it's important to take note and remember! Would you believe 520 years later this warning of God was fulfilled as recorded in 1 Kings 16:34 whereas the record says: **"In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken by Joshua son of Nun."** Oh, my friends, let's learn the lesson to pay attention when God issues a warning!

As Jesus and His friends went through Jericho two remarkable and exciting events happened which I'm sure simply further validated any feelings the '**apostles**' had that the horrible prediction Jesus had given them about what awaited Him in Jerusalem was really nothing to be worried about. While Matthew, Mark and Luke all describe the remarkable healing of the blind man, it is only Mark who tells us his name: Bartimaeus. (Mark 10:46) Thank you Mark! Also, Matthew and Mark tell us this miracle took place as Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho, whereas Dr. Luke says, **"As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside...and he called out "Jesus Son of David, have mercy on me."** (Luke 18:35)

Now I'm not going to let that discrepancy steal from me the excitement and awe of a blind man receiving his sight. My father is almost totally blind, and I'd give anything for my Dad to experience the healing touch of Jesus like this! It could be, since there were so many blind folks in those days, and Jericho was a major trade route with lots of travelers going in all directions, Jesus met one or two coming into Jericho and one or two on His way out of Jericho. Regardless of how many or exactly where they sat along the roadside, I invite us to walk along with Jesus and His friends and experience it together with them. Come on...

Dr. Luke, as a physician, must have been fascinated by this miracle and investigated it thoroughly. He writes: ***"When the beggar heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.' The blind man called out, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Those who led the way rebuked the blind man and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to Him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, 'what do you want Me to do for you?' 'Lord, I want to see', he replied! Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight, your faith has healed you.' Immediately the man received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God."*** (Luke 18:35-43)

It's not difficult for us to imagine this scene is it, my friends? You've been in crowds; you've seen beggars on the roadside. Can you imagine the excitement in Bartimaeus when someone rushes over to him, grabs him by the arm and says *'come quickly, Jesus has stopped and is calling for you.'* A moment ago, he was being told to be quiet, that Jesus can't be bothered with a beggar... and suddenly he's being helped to his feet because Jesus has invited him to come to receive the help he has called out for! I'm fascinated that Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted. Jesus did the same thing to a man crippled for 38 years lying by the pool in Jerusalem. On that occasion Jesus asked him, *"Do you want to be well?"* John records that in John 5. *Both these men had great needs, but it would be their full trust in Jesus to help them that would unleash Jesus' healing power into them bringing about the life change they desperately needed!!* Have you and I learned that lesson yet my friends?

Jesus and His friends and the large crowd, now with celebrating, SEEING Bartimaeus, walked along through Jericho until suddenly Jesus stopped under a tree. Can you see everyone looking around wondering why He had stopped? Everyone listened, there was no cry of a beggar this time, but then Jesus simply looked up and sure enough, a short man had climbed the tree to get a glimpse of Jesus surrounded by a crowd! Only Luke gives us this story and he tells us Jesus called the man by name: ***"Zacchaeus come down, I must visit your house today."*** (Luke 19:1-6) Do you feel the shock wave rushing through the crowd?

This was no blind beggar on the side of the road, this is a scoundrel. This Zacchaeus was a 'chief tax collector', very wealthy by all the corruption he had been involved with over the years, levying taxes far beyond what was legally right. The people hated him. Why would kind, loving, helpful Jesus want anything to do with this thief? *But here's the real question my friends... from an eternal perspective, what's the difference between the deepest need of blind beggar Bartimaeus and the deepest need of scoundrel Zacchaeus?* No difference... they both needed deliverance from the bondage in which they were living, and they couldn't free themselves, *only Jesus with His unlimited power could free them. Bartimaeus from his blindness bondage, Zacchaeus from his pride, greed, deceitfulness bondage.*

Luke tells us Zacchaeus came down from that tree, invited Jesus and those of His friends who wanted, to come to his house for a meal. In that gathering, Zacchaeus experienced the same powerful deliverance that blind Bartimaeus had experienced. Zacchaeus stood up and said, ***"Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay them back four times the amount."*** ***Jesus then said, 'Today salvation has come to this house...for the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.'*** (Luke 19:8-10)

So, let's pause here friends, experiencing this remarkable gathering in the plush house of a 'chief tax collector' in Jericho. Over there are Jesus and His disciples, do you see them? And over there among that group of folks enjoying a meal is a man everyone here used to know as 'blind Bartimaeus' but look at how much fun he's having SEEING! And walking around making sure everyone has enough to eat is Zacchaeus... everyone is celebrating the deliverance and life changing power of Jesus!! *Let's simply be awed by how the power of Jesus can change any life, as long as they will trust Jesus to do what only Jesus can do for them.* What about you my friends, is there something your life desperately needs that only Jesus can accomplish? Are you ready and do you believe enough that today might be your day to do as both Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus did...trust Jesus for your miracle?