Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

A Blind Beggar Receives Saving Sight
Scripture: Luke 18:35-43
Code: 42-237

Let's open our Bibles to Luke 18 and we will look at the text of verses 35 through 43, it is the last section in the eighteenth chapter of Luke's glorious gospel. Luke chapter 18 verses 35 through 43. Listen as I read.

"And it came about as He was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the road begging. Now hearing a multitude going by began to inquire what this might be. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he called out, saying, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.' And those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet. But he crying out all the more. 'Son of David, have mercy on me.' And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He questioned him. 'What do you want Me to do for you?' And he said, 'Lord, I want to regain my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight. Your faith has made you well.' And immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God. And when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God."

The New Testament record of Jesus' miracles began with the wedding in Cana where He turned water into wine. That's how it all began. It ends here...it ends here with Him giving sight to the blind. Although it is a brief incident in which He curses a fig tree while in Jerusalem during His Passion Week. But as far as miracles related to people and public, this is the last one. It all started in Cana in the north of Galilee in an insignificant village in the foothills atop the Sea of Galilee and it all ended in the south of Judea in a historically significant town in the lowlands atop the Dead Sea.

It really is fitting that the first and last miracles of Jesus bracket the land of Israel in between because in between those two miracles, both in time and geography, He filled the land of Israel, the towns, the villages, the hillsides, the valleys with miracles, signs and wonders and mighty deeds as He constantly moved from place to place, preaching and teaching the Kingdom of God and salvation and demonstrating and proving His deity by His miraculous power. This miracle puts the period at the end of the astonishing sentence of His miracles. Through the years since His baptism at the Jordan River, He filled Israel with supernatural power on display, banishing disease, demons and death, demonstrating that He had total authority over the physical world and the spiritual world. Clearly He is the Son of God. Clearly He is the Lord. Clearly He is the Messiah.

There is one more monumental miracle to follow the cross, He will rise from the dead. But for now, it is time for the Servant of Jehovah to become the suffering Servant. It is time for the anointed one to become the rejected one. It is time for the sovereign Lord to become the sacrificial lamb. And He knew it. Last week we looked at verses 31 to 33, didn't we? He took the Twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we're going up to Jerusalem and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished, for He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon. And after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him and the third day He will rise again." Nothing surprised Jesus, not the omniscient Son of God, He knew every detail of His suffering to come. And if you combine Matthew and Mark's account of those very words which are also recorded and put it all together, there are even more details. He says that He knows that He will be betrayed. He knows He will be betrayed into the hands of the chief priests and the scribes, they will condemn Him. Then they will hand Him over to the Gentiles, then He will be mocked, mistreated, spit on, He will be scourged, He will be killed...says Luke...Matthew says crucified...and He will rise again. It is now time for all of this to begin. This is His last time to go up to Jerusalem. He will be crucified because it is the will of His own people that He be crucified. He will be crucified at the hands of the godless Romans, but it will be done for God...for God, because God had ordained that He would be the sacrifice for sin.

Rejection is set. Death is inescapable. The shallow crowd that hails Him on His entry into the city will be the same crowd that a few days later cries for His blood. The great apostasy in Israel has led the Jews to execute their own Lord and Messiah, according to God's predetermined plan, yes, but without escaping the guilt of their crime. And from here on, there are no stories of conversion in Jerusalem during Passion Week, no stories of salvation in the last says, just two at the cross, a thief and a Centurion who was a Roman. But until those two conversions, the days are bleak and filled with suffering. This is the last shining light what happens in Jericho before the darkness of His suffering begins. There is not one joyful note from the time He walks out of Jericho until He is nailed to a cross. Only a few days for Him. For us, I'm afraid, could be a few years because the details must be seen in all their majesty and glory. He is, after all, the Man of Sorrows and for us, we're going to take the sorrowful journey with Him and it will last, I warn you, a long time. But it has to because these final days of Jesus are the reason He came and they are filled with inexhaustible richness and we must drink as deeply as we can the very cup that He drank. But on the way to Jerusalem, before the darkness sets in, there are two wonderfully beautiful salvation stories that Luke gives us. They occur in Jericho. These are two stories that stand in stark contrast to the belief...to the unbelief and the hatred of Israel's leaders. These are two stories that are in contrast to the shallow superficial praise offered by the crowd that was so fickle, two stores if salvation, two prodigals brought home for the joy of God, two outcasts, two hated sinners. And they are the lowest of the low. One, a blind man begging which means he had no one to care for him. The other a tax collector, the most hated and despised of all people in Israel. And the other two trophies of sovereign grace at the cross were also outcasts, a wretched, hated, executed criminal and a despised Roman. This is an indictment of

massive proportions against the nation Israel...a beggar, a tax collector, a thief and a Roman centurion. It is a reminder that the Lord chooses the poor and the lowly for His Kingdom.

Here are the last shining lights, the last moments of joy. Oh the hypocritical hoopla on Palm Sunday doesn't break the pain at all. In fact, you'll know that when you get there because you'll feel the hypocrisy, you'll feel the superficiality, you'll feel the shallowness. And in fact, that kind of superficial praise only intensifies the pain because of its hypocrisy. So I say to you this, beloved, cherish these two stories...cherish them because it's going to be a long journey and the pain will be deep and unrelenting until we finally get to the resurrection. So let this be our joy as it certainly is God's joy to share it with us.

Now this journey to Jerusalem began back in chapter 9 verse 51 when Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem. So we've been with Him a long time on this journey. Some of you have been here long enough to remember when we were in Luke 9. I know you do. And I would just remind you that during this wonderful journey in which He went around and around in Judea and took a little foray up into Galilee and down again, during this long time there are four notable miracles recorded for us, one in chapter 13, one in chapter 14, one in chapter 17...this is the fourth and the last.

Matthew also writes about this same miracle, Matthew chapter 20 verse 29 and following. Mark also writes about it, Mark 10 verses 32 and following. So we have Matthew's account and Mark's account to enrich this and that way we get the whole revealed picture and so I'll be drawing from those accounts as we focus on Luke's.

Now the only way I know to tell a story in a way that we can really grab it is to go through the characters in the story. Always that's the key to the story. And there are three characters that we want to look at. There is a blind man. There is the Lord Jesus. There is the crowd. So we're going to look at the sad plight of the blind man, the supernatural power of the Lord, and the spontaneous praise of the crowd. Let's begin with the blind man's sad plight, verse 35.

"It came about that as He was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the road begging." This is a very vivid picture if you start to put the pieces together. Matthew says Jesus was accompanied by a massive crowd, a great multitude. Why? They were all headed for Jerusalem for the Passover and they would be coming flowing down through Jericho because if they came from the Galilee and they came toward the east, they would come down from Galilee, they would cross the Jordan River to go through Peraea so they didn't go through Samaria because the Jews did not go through Samaria, believing it to be cursed. They would then cross the Jordan to go down through Peraea, they would cross the Jordan again down at the south and they would cross just east of Jericho which would be the first city this west side of the Jordan River and they would begin their trek up the hill through Jericho. So there was a steady stream of people flowing south and then up

through Jericho to Jerusalem. But this was greater than the normal, daily flow going to the city, and it was greater because this was a mass of people who had surrounded the Lord Jesus Christ. Three years of ministry, by now He is well known, His power is well known, spread throughout the land. There is tremendous interest in Him. Is He in fact the Messiah? Is He in fact the Lord? Has He come to establish the Kingdom? Will this be the moment? And by the way, having ministered for that last almost year of His ministry in Judea, He has taken a brief foray up into Galilee, done some teaching and preaching there, over in Peraea down some ministry there, now coming back, He, along with the flow of Passover pilgrims, would have crossed the Jordan River very possibly on a ferry because the Jordan, though it's a small river, when the spring comes and the rains begin to fill the river and the snow begins to melt and the level in the mountains can be a serious river and very often they crossed on a ferry and so they cross at Jericho.

Jericho? You've heard that, haven't you? Let me tell you about Jericho a little bit. It was the city of palms, that's what it was called, about a six hour walk and it's straight up. And to go up to Jerusalem you had to go that way, that was the path. Well known, by the way, in New Testament times, south end of the Jordan Valley, six miles north of the Dead Sea. And in those days the city was fed by springs. There were springs all around it. And when they weren't near to the city, the water was piped into reservoirs to use in the city and also used to irrigate and make the area productive and so it was a flourishing area for certain crops. It was filled with date palms, that's how it got its name and fruit trees were everywhere. There was a plant called balsam which was a bush that produced the juice that was used for medicinal applications and found only there. The climate was warm in the winter and really hot in the summer, some of you know. Josephus says if you're going to live in Jericho, you only need linen clothes because even when there's snow fifteen miles up in Jerusalem, it can be very warm in Jericho. Mark tells us that in Jerusalem during Passion Week on the Mount of Olives, Mark says in Mark 11:13, it was not yet the season for figs. But it would have been the season for figs down in Jericho, so they would have been ripening everywhere on those palms. Almonds, by the way, also grew there and flourished there as well as rose plants which are very old in the history of the world, by the way, making it a lovely place, a kind of an agricultural garden. In fact, it was such a magnificent place with the Dead Sea nearby that Marc Antony gave the city to Cleopatra. That's a pretty good gift, according to Josephus. It was also the place that Herod loved, so much he built a fortress there, he built a palace there and he went there to die.

So New Testament Jericho had a large population and was flourishing. But most of us remember Old Testament Jericho, don't we? The other Jericho, the Joshua 6 Jericho. You remember Jericho, the children of Israel marched around the walls for seven days and on the seventh time on the seventh day the walls fell down. We all sang that song growing up in Sunday School. This was God's amazing destruction of Jericho as the children of Israel coming out of 40 years of wandering out of the wilderness entered in to possess the land of Canaan and this was God's demonstration that it would fall to them because it was promised to Abraham and to his seed. So even when Jesus was

there, there were actually two Jerichos. There was the old Jericho, the ruins of the Old Testament Jericho, a little bit east and north, I've been there, I've seen down at the bottom of the archeological digs what they say are the original walls of Jericho fallen outward...just as the Bible indicates. So there was that city two-thousand years ago, the ruins would have been more readily seen then they are today. And then there was the new Jericho. So there really were two Jerichos, that's kind of an interesting thing because Luke says He was approaching Jericho. Matthew and Mark say He was leaving Jericho. That's possible. You could be approaching the new Jericho leaving the old Jericho. It is also possible that Luke's words are not to be taken in the way they're translated, He was approaching, but rather the literal is "In the to come near," it's an infinitive clause, that it simply means in the vicinity. Others say He was going out but when He heard the cry of the blind man He went back in. Well, in any case He was around Jericho.

One more thing to think about. If you've been to Jericho, you look up and you see this massive, massive rock mountain that casts its shadow every night over Jericho as the sun goes down. Archeologists, including George Alan Smith, have called it the devastation. It wouldn't be a place you'd want to get lost...severe cliffs, severe drops, severe valleys, rugged, barren land. Some believe it, very likely, was the place where Jesus was tempted by the devil. Jesus surely would have remembered that. Couldn't have approached Jericho without crossing the Jordan, remembering His baptism three years before, couldn't have come to Jericho without looking up and realizing that He had been there in conflict when it all began with Satan. So Jericho had to be filled with all kinds of sights, all kinds of sounds, all kinds of memories, including the dusty commotion of a huge crowd following Him, kicking up dirt everywhere. And when He got to Jericho, all the people came down out of their houses, out of their fields, and they lined the streets, swelling this massive group of curious people. Some, the pilgrims moving, the rest lining the roadway. Passover excitement everywhere. The wonder drew the huge crowd to follow Jesus. Is He the King? Is He going to bring the Kingdom? This kind of anticipation, this kind of pent-up desire and longing really is what erupted when He finally got there on Palm Sunday.

And there's something else to put in the mix here. As He comes to Jericho, Jericho is very aware of an event that happened just a few miles up the hill in a little village called Bethany and it only happened a few weeks before. And Jesus went there and raised a man named Lazarus from the dead, and everybody knew he was dead because he had been dead for four days and he was in the tomb. And the word of His resurrection of Lazarus had spread up to Jerusalem and to all the leaders who wanted to kill Jesus for that, and surely down the hill to the people in Jericho. So He was the focus of immense attention, immense interest, to put it mildly. The whole city must have been just chaotic as He came through with this mass of people.

By the way, He was there for two days because He spent one night in the house of the tax collector which would have been by all Jewish standards about THE most defiling thing a Jew could do. But

the next day, the tax collector started paying everybody back what he owed them four fold and so being with the tax collector hadn't made Jesus unclean, in fact it made the tax collector clean. So He's there for a couple of days. He may have...He may have actually healed this blind man on the way out so that the crowd was not only buzzing about Jesus, but they were buzzing about what in the world happened to Zacchaeus as he was giving people their due and four fold. So a lot going on.

And so, Luke in the wonderful inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in the middle of this melee and chaos of sights and sounds and people, takes the spotlight of divine revelation and brings it down and magnifies the image and goes right down and finds a beggar. Beggars were everywhere. He goes right down to this beggar and shines the spotlight of divine revelation on his sightless face. A lot of blind people in Israel...a lot of blind people. Jesus healed them all the time. Blindness was a major issue in the gospel record. In fact it was so common that Jesus used blindness as an illustration of what it was to be ignorant of God, it was to be blind. The Old Testament prophet talked about that. Physical blindness came...it came with birth defects. Physical blindness also came very frequently from birth itself called othelmianianatorum(???), gonorrhea of the eyes. A lot of venereal disease and little babies passing through the birth canal with conjunctive in their eyes pick up the infection and it would cause them to be blind. Infantile blindness was a very serious issue.

And then poverty produced its own blindness in a myriad of ways...unsanitary conditions, blowing sand, accidents, crimes, fights, infectious organisms. And the blind were inevitably reduced to begging because the idea was if you're blind, you're blind because you're sinful, right? Remember what they said in John 9 about the blind man. Who sinned? The blind man or his parents. The assumption was this was the judgment of God, and so you want to leave that man to suffer the judgment of God. So there on the roadside begging is a blind man...a lowly, lowly, lowly blind man. In fact, the blind were believed to be below the normal riff-raff, below the normally unclean sinners. And the only people who were below the blind were tax collectors. And by the way, Matthew says there was another blind man, but this blind man had a buddy. They helped each other. Well, not as much as having a guy who could see as your buddy would help. But misery loves company, doesn't it? And together they were better as two then they would be as one, so Matthew tells us there were actually two of them. But Luke focuses on one and Mark tells us the name of the one. His name is Bartimaeus, which means bar...son of Timaeus. Why does Mark get his name and why does Luke focus on this one who has a name? Well it is very possible that he was known to the readers of the gospel. When the gospels were written at a later time, he may well have become a well-known person in the church so that Mark wrote using a name that everybody knew and this would be a recounting in the gospel record of the conversion of this man. And so Luke focuses on him and so will we.

Verse 36, "Hearing a multitude going by," different than the normal flow of constant pilgrims, "He began to inquire what this might be. And they told Him...verse 37...that Jesus of Nazareth was

passing by." Jesus of Nazareth, huh? That's basically how you would identify anybody, right? Bill from Toledo. That's a human thing, isn't it? Jesus of Nazareth. That's how you identified people, by their town. He was well known far from His town. But in the popular perception, He was a man named Jesus from a town named Nazareth. That's important because the blind man who couldn't see anything physically saw a whole lot more than that in Jesus. And verse 38, "The blind man, he called out saying, 'Jesus,'" not Jesus of Nazareth, but Jesus...what? "'...Son of David, have mercy on me,'" and here the seeing can't see what the blind see. And by the way, "called out," *bawao*(??), to literally call out loud, Matthew uses *krazo*which means to scream. This verb, *krazo*, used by Matthew, is used of the insane of epileptics, of demon-possessed people and women in childbirth in the Bible. We're talking about really yelling...very strong word.

Now that's understandable, wouldn't you think? Massive crowd, chaos everywhere, buzz going on, thousands of conversations happening, and in the middle of this, he wants to be heard. This is anguish. This is desperation. But it's not just that, it is clearly faith. He does not say, "Jesus of Nazareth," though that is who has been identified to him. He says, "Jesus, Son of David," not are you...but Son of David. Is that important? It is important cause that is a Messianic title. He is confirming his faith that Jesus is the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel and God's anointed King. Trying to be heard over the din, trying to be heard over the noise of the crowd, trying to be heard in his obscurity and his isolation crushed down in the middle of the crowd somewhere with all that's going on, he shouts at the top of his voice, "Jesus, Son of David," that's His title as the heir to the messianic throne. That's His title as the one who has the right to fulfill the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7:12 to 14 where God promises David's going to have a greater Son who is going to reign and who is going to have an everlasting Kingdom. Who is David's greater Son? They all knew that that greater Son was not Solomon, they all knew that that there was a greater Son than Solomon. There was a coming Son who would have an eternal Kingdom. Solomon didn't have a very successful kingdom at all. In fact, out of him comes a divided kingdom. They all knew that there was coming another king in David's line, that's why it's so important when the New Testament opens up, it gives a genealogy of Jesus right back through Joseph to David. And in Luke it gives a genealogy of Jesus right back through Mary to David. Mary was in the line of David, and so was Joseph. He was fully by fatherly right and by blood a heir to David's throne. More than that, He was God's choice.

There were many descendants of David, He was God's choice to be the Messiah and the King. And in the beginning chapter of Luke, do you remember verse 32? When Gabriel comes to Mary and tells her who the child that she will bear will be, He will be great, He will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father, David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and His Kingdom will have no end. And Zacharias, the Old Testament high priest, the Old Testament priest I should say, he was the father of John the Baptist, he understood what the coming of the Messiah meant in his benedictus at the end of chapter 1 in verse 69, he says, "God has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David, His servant, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old. If you follow it into the book of Acts, the preachers of the early gospel

are preaching that Jesus Christ is the Son of David. If you follow it all the way into the book of Revelation when He comes to establish the Kingdom, He is the Son of David.

They knew it. Everybody knew that the Messiah was to be the Son of David. In the twenty-first chapter of Matthew, we get a bit of a glimpse of Jesus' entry into the city which shall come in a few days after these events, and I'll just give you a couple of looks at this. Chapter 21 and verse 9, "After the multitudes were going before Him and those who were following Him were crying out, saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.'" That was simply a messianic tribute, everybody understood that. In verse 15, again, "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things He had done, the children were crying out in the temple...children now...saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.'" Which means the parents had taught their children that the Messiah would be the Son of David. They all understood the Davidic Covenant. They all understood the Messiah would come to fulfill it and establish the Kingdom. In chapter 22 and verse 41, "The Pharisees were gathered together. Jesus asked them a question saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Who's son is He?'" What do you Pharisees think? Now we've talked about the population in general, we've talked about the children what they know, what do you guys know? They said to Him, "The Son of David." Everybody understood that. Here you have a blind man, we don't know how through what means who has come to know and believe and be confident that Jesus is THE promised Son of David, the Messiah, the one whose come to be their Redeemer and the King of Israel. And He knows all that's bound up in messianic prophecy which extends not only to Israel but through Israel to the world. He sees it the way it really is. This is an expression of faith in Jesus as the Messiah of promise and His power has proven it and His teaching. And he says, "Have mercy on me," which means he confesses his pitiable condition. There is a measure...a measure of repentance of this for sure. He recognizes no merit, he can offer nothing.

By the way, a typical cry "have mercy on me" for afflicted people, you see it throughout the Psalms...Psalm 4, Psalm 6, Psalm 9, Psalm 25, on and on through the Psalms, people saying, "Have mercy on me, have pity on me." This is a penitent heart. Here is a man who has faith in the person of Jesus Christ as his deliverer and the one sent from God to be His anointed King. Here is a man who knows his plight and it is not possible for him to remedy it. And so he cries to the only one who can help. It's a beautiful, beautiful moment. And you won't hear any of this from now on...till the thief says, "Remember me when You come into Your Kingdom."

And Jesus in verse 40 stopped. He heard that one voice out of the cacophony and He commanded that he be brought to Him. But before that happened, I want you to notice how the crowd reacted. Verse 39, "Those who led the way...people in charge, crowd control people...were sternly telling him to be quiet. But he kept crying out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me.'" this is desperate faith. This is the stuff that God desires. The man could not be brow-beaten back. He could not have his passion crushed. He could not be silenced.

Why would they tell him to be quiet? Nuisance, disdain for a beggar, he's an outcast. It had absolutely no effect on him, however, cause he's a true believer, may be despised by the people, rejected by the people and he's totally rejected, nobody is taking care of him. His family has rejected him. That's why he's begging. And he couldn't see anything so he couldn't see the dusty stranger coming down the road. He couldn't see that he was not clothed in royal robes. He couldn't see that he was not carrying a scepter, he was not attended by a royal entourage, he wasn't riding in a mobile throne, he couldn't see any of that, but he knew who He was. Somehow in some way the truth had come home to his heart and he had embraced it. And he refused to be beaten back into silence. His faith has frankly risen to the full height of possibility. He believed everything there was to believe, that He was the King and He was the one he needed and the only one who could give him mercy. His heart had seen the light before his eyes ever did. So we see this beggar's sad plight.

We turn now to the dominant character in the story, the Lord, and we see the Savior's supernatural power. "And Jesus stopped," one final time, one last time He will confirm His deity publicly, one last time. One last time to demonstrate divine compassion. By the way, Matthew 20:34 even says, "He had compassion on him." And He commanded that he be brought to him. Now you have to look at what Mark says at this point. In Mark chapter 10, Jesus commands that he be brought to Him. Mark chapter 10 verse 49, "Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him here.'" Listen to this. "And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take courage, cheer up, arise, He's calling for you.'" Stunning, shocking, listen to this response. "And casting aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus." I love that. Is there any other way to come? This is faith, there was nothing to contemplate, there was nothing to think about. He just threw off his beggar's cloak. That's pretty significant because very likely that's all he had in this world, kept him warm when the nights did get cold, provided a bed for him to lie on. He threw it aside. This is great faith, this is eager faith. This is faith that says, "I don't have much, but what I have I gladly discard." This is faith that says, "I don't think I have any use any more for the stuff that has made my life a measure comfortable." He left everything he had behind. He came as fast as a blind man could come.

And when he came near, verse 40, "Jesus questioned him," I love this, verse 41, "What do you want Me to do for you?" It's just stunning. The high King of heaven, the Creator God of the universe, the sovereign wants to be the servant of this lowly outcast. "What do you want Me to do for you?" This is mercy. This is grace. And he said, "Lord," he said what? Lord? Now his theology is starting to fill out a little bit here. *Kuria*, deity, Lord, Messiah, one who dispenses mercy, and He comes to serve the blind man. And the blind man said, "I want to regain my sight," it may indicate that he once had it and lost it, that verb. And Jesus said to him in verse 42, "Receive your sight." I love the simplicity of that, don't you? It's so understated. It doesn't say the earth shook and the clouds moved and angels began to sing, and somebody cranked up the organ. Jesus threw His arms out and just said, "Receive your sight." Free dispensing of miracle power without any diminishing of the

supply...receive your sight.

When Jesus healed people, sometimes He did it with just a word. Sometimes He touched them. Matthew 20, same text of Matthew's account, he said, "He touched their eyes." Why? Because Matthew says that his buddy was also healed. Sometimes Jesus used spit, sometimes He used clay, sometimes He put His finger in people's ears. But no matter what gestures accompanied His healing and no matter whether people had faith or didn't have faith, and there are healings of people who had faith and people who had no faith, always His healings were total, instantaneous, verifiable and inexplicable any other way than divine intervention. And it's really hard to fake healing blind people. You can fake healing low back pain, but try faking healing a blind person. One final messianic display, one final divine act, one final preview of the coming Kingdom, one final indictment of apostate Israel and its leadership, one final rescue of the lowly and the rejected. But it wasn't just a healing for this man or his blind pal because verse 43 says, "And immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, and glorifying God." That means something else also happened, and if you back up in to verse 42, we look a little deeper in to the text. "Your faith has made you well." The verb there is not *iaomai*which means to heal, it is *sozo*, it is the only New Testament word for save. "Your faith has saved you. Your faith has saved you." We've seen it repeatedly throughout Luke, haven't we? Your faith has saved you...your faith has saved you...your faith has saved you. Faith is not necessary for healing, faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. This very statement made in Luke 5 verse 20, chapter 7 verses 48 to 50, chapter 8:46 to 48, chapter 17:17 to 19, this man was saved. And the evidence is there that tells us what Jesus meant by what He said in verse 42, in that he followed Him...he followed Him. That's the mark of true conversion, isn't it? Matthew 20:34 makes that point, says, "They followed Him." The two of them. Mark 10:52, "He followed Jesus on the road." He was on the way with Jesus.

He must have been there at the triumphal entry. All he had in the world was a cloak, threw that off, followed Jesus. Can you imagine going up the Jericho road to Jerusalem and seeing? Talk about a transformed life in an instant. He had gone from being a despised despicable, rejected beggar on the side of the road, to being the companion of God in a moment. And he's walking with Jesus. You can imagine that when they got to Jerusalem and they got in, all that he experienced in the hallelujahs that were being heaped on Jesus, you wonder, "Hey, maybe everybody feels like I do." Then as the week went on, he must have been around when the trial started, must have been around when Jesus was executed. But must have been around when Jesus was raised from the dead. Guess what? He may have been one of the 120 in the Upper Room. It doesn't say that. Let's put him there, okay? And if we get to heaven and we're wrong, we'll never know it because nothing's wrong in heaven. Okay? So for the moment, and maybe that's why Mark gives his name because everybody did know who he was. Talk about a life transforming day, but isn't that how conversion always works? Always an outcast, always rejected, always despised, no loving family. Now so much has changed you can say that 18:29 and 30 is true of him. "Truly I say to you, there's no one who has left house or wife or

brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God who shall not receive many times as much at this time and the age to come eternal life." He just stepped in to a new family both here among the followers and lovers of Jesus Christ and the eternal family of heaven. He's one of those who will walk with God when God walks with us in the New Jerusalem.

And the idea of following is the picture of obedience. And the idea of glorifying God is the picture of worship. That's how you live your life, isn't it? As a believer you obey and you worship. Jesus went to the bottom, the bottom of Israel, geographically. Went to the bottom of the social ladder to claim a beggar, oh two beggars, two blind beggars and to throw in a tax collector. As beautiful as it is, as stunning as it is, it is a horrific indictment of Israel because when He gets to Jerusalem, nobody's saved until two more despised men at the cross.

But it was so stunning a miracle, so obvious, that we do have to look at the crowd's spontaneous praise. End of verse 43, "When all the people saw it, they gave praise to God." It doesn't mean they believed in Christ. They just knew it was miraculous. They gave praise to God. Surely this did begin the mounting praise, especially in the light of the raising of Lazarus from the dead which they would have known about, to the burst that came when He finally walked through the gate of Jerusalem and the triumphal entry took place. It all exploded like popping the cork on the champaign bottle when He got there. But it was so superficial for the crowd, so shallow.

So what are the lessons in the story? Well there are a lot of lessons. The Lord doesn't ignore the cry of those who call upon Him truly, that's a lesson, isn't it? Another lesson, the Lord is profoundly compassionate. Another lesson, the Lord has power over all ailments. Another lesson, the Lord came to do far more than to heal your body, He came to forgive and to save and to produce someone who obeys Him and praises Him. But I think the real application for us is simply to ask you a question. In the story, who...who are your people here? Who are your people? Who do you belong to? Are you part of the curious crowd? Are you willing to go to the point where you'll recognize that God's doing certain things and put on a power display? Are you lining the church aisles here, or are you just sitting along the edge as Jesus passes by Sunday after Sunday after Sunday after Sunday in all His glory and His majesty and you see His miracle power and you hear His profound teaching and you think it's nice and it's good and it's interesting and it might be compelling? And maybe you rise to sing the hymn and to celebrate. But when it comes down to reality, you're really on the side of the crucifiers because you will not give Him your life. Is that your people? Or are the two blind guys your people? Are those your people? Do you identify with people who threw off everything, whether all it was was a cloak or whether it was all that the world had to offer, whether it was riches incalculable? Do you understand the self-denial, the taking up of the cross, the following Jesus? Are you one of the followers and one of the worshipers? Are the blind guys your people? This is a most important thing you'll ever determine. Are you going to be with the many or the few? Who are your people?

I know well that there are many of you who align the streets. You sit here and you watch Jesus go by and He's on display in all His majesty and wonder and attractiveness, and you admire it, but in the end, you're going to spend an eternity in hell in a far more severer hell because you knew He was worthy of praise but you never gave Him your life. That's a severer judgment. But I pray that your people are the blind guys. They're my people. We follow and we truly worship the one for whom we would gladly forsake everything. Pray with me.

Father, it is the truth of Your Word that always penetrates to our hearts. Lord, I don't know who here standing with the curious crowd, walking along kicking up dust somewhere in the approximate area where Jesus moves, I don't know who it is that admires Jesus and yet has never given Him his life. O God, You know and I pray right now that You would be gracious, that You would be merciful, that You would hear the crying heart of some who are here like the blind beggars and saying, "I've been a part of the curious crowd, now I want mercy and grace and forgiveness and salvation." We thank You that only a few days after the blind men were healed and saved You paid in full the price for their sins and You've done it for all those of us who know we're blind and we come to You that we might see spiritually. We thank You for the sacrifice of Christ, the necessary sacrifice for our salvation. Lord, save people here from being doomed and damned in the curious crowd, close but not redeemed, close but not forgiven, and of greater condemnation for having know Jesus was worthy of praise but not worthy to be confessed as Lord and Savior. Do Your work in hearts, Lord, we pray.

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