

INTRODUCTION

Our friend, Paul Baloche, who lived for many years in Lindale, Texas has written or co-written over 120 worship songs. Perhaps his most popular song is "Open the Eyes of my Heart, Lord" which I've borrowed his song title for this message. In the early 90's, when Mike and I had only been here a short time, we invited Paul Baloche to lead worship one Sunday evening and Mike and I received a lot of flak for bringing in this worldly "Christian rock music." I have to smile and thank God we've come a long way, baby.

As we come to the conclusion of Mark 10, we should notice it contains some very important questions. In Mark 10:2 someone asked Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" That's a question people are still asking. In Mark 10:17 the Rich Young Ruler asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life." That's a question we should all be asking. In Mark 10:26 the disciples asked Jesus, "Who then can be saved?" And in our passage today, in Mark 10:51 Jesus asks a blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?" That's a question He's still asking each of us. Do you have an answer?

Jesus and his disciples arrive in Jericho on their way to Jerusalem, where Jesus will be arrested, tortured and crucified, and then three days later God will raise him from the dead.

I've been to Jericho many times. It is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world. It is located near where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea. It is an oasis in the desert. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem is about 15 miles long, but it uphill all the way with the elevation changing by 3,400 feet in that distance.

Jesus' encounter with a blind beggar is described in Mark 10:46-52. "Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' So they called to the blind man, 'Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.' Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. 'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked him. The blind man said, 'Rabbi, I want to see.' 'Go,' said Jesus, 'your faith has healed you.' Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road."

There are about 10 million legally blind people in America. Most of those are visually impaired with correctible vision. But many live in total darkness. Some famous blind Americans include Helen Keller, Fanny Crosby, Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder. But one of my favorite blind Americans was Charley Boswell, who was blinded while fighting in World War II while rescuing a friend from a burning tank. He had always been a great athlete, so after the war he took up golf. He became famous and won 16 National Blind Golfing Championships, usually shooting a score in the low 80s.

In 1958 Charley came to Ft. Worth to receive the coveted Ben Hogan Award. Mr. Hogan agreed to play a round of golf with Charley. Charley said, "Would you like to play for money?" Hogan

said, "That wouldn't be fair!" Charley said, "C'mon, Mr. Hogan, are you afraid to play a blind golfer?" Hogan was really pretty competitive so he said, "Okay, I'll play for money. How much?" Boswell said, "\$1,000 per hole." Hogan said, "That's a lot. How many strokes do you want me to give you?" Boswell said, "No strokes. I'll play you heads up." Hogan said, "Charley, I can't do it. What would people think of me taking advantage of a blind man?" Boswell smiled and said, "Don't worry, Mr. Hogan, our tee time is tonight at midnight!"

Jesus never touched Bartimaeus; He just spoke the word, and Bart believed Him. Jesus said, "Your faith has healed you." Bart is a great example of how to exercise faith. All of us must have faith. The Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for anyone who comes to God must believe that He exists and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV)

Let's notice three truths about faith, and then learn about spiritual blindness.

1. FAITH BELIEVES EVEN WHEN YOU CANNOT SEE

Bart couldn't see Jesus but he heard about Jesus. The Bible says, "When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'" (Mark 10:47)

Bart was not only blind; he was a beggar. Everyday Bart sat beside the road holding out his hand and asking for money. Blind Bart couldn't see, but as with many blind people, he probably had a keen sense of hearing. On the day described in our text, he could tell from the sounds of the crowd something unusual was happening. He turned and asked someone, "What's going on?" Over the mumble of the mob, he heard, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." No doubt, Bart had heard of Jesus. Perhaps he heard about how Jesus healed people, even restored sight to the blind! Even though Bart couldn't see Jesus, based on what he had heard, in that moment, he believed. He didn't just believe Jesus was in his city: he believed Jesus had the power to change his life.

He believed before he saw any proof. Some people want visual proof that God exists. What if I could PROVE to you that God exists? I'm going to give you visual proof God exists. "God, I want everyone to see with their eyes that you are real, so right now, lift the roof off this huge building and twirl it around three times and then gently place it back on top of the building as if it never moved. Okay, please God, do it now!"

Imagine for a moment God did it. I suspect every skeptic here would be converted to Christ. We couldn't hold the crowd that would show up next week. As word would spread around the region, can you imagine how many people would be crowded in this building next Sunday? Talk about parking problems!

But to believe in God because you saw something like that is not faith—it's simply sight. The Bible says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7 KJV)

Like Bart, none of us has ever seen Jesus with our physical eyes. But I've heard about Jesus, and I believe in Him. Faith is not just believing facts about Jesus; it is trusting Him with your life. I

don't just believe He was born in Bethlehem and died on a cross 33 years later. I don't just believe in the fact of the resurrection, I believe Jesus is alive and living in me!

2. FAITH RESISTS ANY BARRIERS TO CHRIST

The Bible says, "Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he SHOUTED [*krazen*] all the more." (Mark 10:48)

When Bart cried out to Jesus, the people surrounding him didn't say, "Good for you, Bart! Jesus can help you. Call out louder." Instead of helping him, they rebuked him and told him to shut up! You'll find when you are bold enough to cry out to Jesus, not everyone is going to be excited for you. In fact, there will be some people who will rebuke you and discourage you.

When these people try to hinder you, do what Bart did: Resist them. Don't let them intimidate you into silence. When they told Blind Bart to be quiet, he wouldn't be silenced. In verse 48 the word translated "shouted all the more" is *krazen*. We get our word crazy from it.

When the crowd told him to be silent, he shouted to the Lord. "Aaaaagh! Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" He yelled so loudly everyone got quiet. In the 1800s Baptists were often called "Shouting Baptists" because they got so excited they would shout, "Glory Hallelujah!" There is still a group of Baptists in Virginia who are known as "the Shouting Baptists." I think part of our problem is we've gotten too dignified to shout. These days, the only shouting Baptists are angry folks in the parking lot after church!

I like to think of Bart as the first shouting Baptist. We are known as the Snoozing Baptists, but not the Shouting Baptists. Some of you want to shout "amen" or "glory" sometime, but you are afraid of what the crowd may think. Bart didn't listen to the crowd, he just shouted to the Lord!

The Bible says in Psalm 98:4 "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth." Psalm 100 says, "Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth." In fact, we're told to shout to the Lord no less than 20 times in the Bible. So, let's try it for a second, on the count of three let's shout, "Glory to God. Hallelujah!"

3. FAITH ADMITS A NEED TO BE CHANGED

The Bible says, "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." (Mark 10:51) When I first read this I was surprised by the question. At first I thought, "What a funny question. Jesus KNOWS Bart is blind!" But then I recalled Jesus asked a similar question to the paralyzed man who lay every day at the Pool of Bethesda. Jesus asked him, "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6) Bart had a pretty simple life. He had grown accustomed to sitting beside the road and accepting handouts. After all, some people like the attention they get from their suffering.

They say, "Beggars can't be choosers" but Jesus gave Bart a choice. He asked him because He wanted Bart to admit his point of need, and to confess he believed Jesus could change his life. After all, when Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" Bart could have said,

"Can you give me the name of a good eye doctor?" If he really didn't believe Jesus could heal him, he could have said something generic like, "Bless me, Lord." But in that one short prayer, Bart expressed his need and demonstrated his belief in the power of Jesus. He cried, "Lord, I want to see!" The best prayers are simple, short, and specific. Bart didn't say, "Lord, I come to thee this warm afternoon, humbly beseeching that thou wouldst if thou couldst help me with my little problem here, it's not a big problem, Lord..."

Jesus stands before you today and asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" You can't pray specifically until you are willing to admit your point of need. God can't help you until you say, "Lord, I'm addicted to alcohol! I want to stay sober!" Or "Lord, I've got a pornography problem, I want to be pure!" Or "Lord, I've got a problem with anger, bitterness, or gossip and I want to be changed!"

4. SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS CAN BE MORE DAMAGING THAN PHYSICAL BLINDNESS

Jesus recognized another kind of blindness besides physical blindness. We have a saying, "There is none so blind as he (or she) who will not see." Jesus reserved some of the harshest words He ever spoke about the Pharisees, who were the ultra-orthodox religious Jews of Him. He said, "Leave them [Pharisees]; they are blind guides. If the blind leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit." (Matthew 15:14)

You may have 20/20 vision and still suffer from spiritual blindness. Let me mention three kinds of spiritual blindness.

A. You may be blind to the truth about Jesus

Have you ever talked to an unbeliever about Jesus or going to church and they say something like, "I just don't see what you Christians get out of going to church." That's true because the Bible says, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

You may be listening to me now and you don't believe Jesus is the human image of the Living God. Satan is actively trying to keep you in blindness. He doesn't want you to see the light of the glory of Jesus. He knows one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord, and he has targeted men, women, boys, and girls around the world to prevent them from confessing this before they die. And the sad thing is the person who is blind to the truth about Jesus doesn't realize they are blind.

The English novelist Samuel Butler said, "A blind man knows he cannot see, and is glad to be led, though it be by a dog; but he that is blind in his understanding, which is the worst blindness of all, believes he sees as the best, and scorns a guide."

That's why we have to work extra hard to lead people to see the truth about Jesus. There is a supernatural power at work to keep them blind.

B. You may be blind to the God-given potential in others

How many of you ever saw the 2009 YouTube video of Susan Boyle singing on "Britain's Got Talent?" The video has had 173 million views. Of course, about half of those were when I was watching it over and over. This slightly overweight, frumpy lady shuffled in from off stage. Immediately the audience started smirking and laughing at her appearance. The camera focuses on a teenager girl who rolls her eyes as if to say, "How dare this unattractive, untalented woman come out and waste my time." Simon Cowell begins to interview her and patronizes her. "What's your name darling?" She says, "Susan Boyle." He says, "Alright, sweetie, how old are you?" She says, "I'm forty-nine, and that's just the outside." Already people are making fun of her. When he asks where she's from, she stumbles over her words in a thick Scottish accent. He says, "What are you going to sing?" She says, "I'm going to sing I Dreamed a Dream from Les Miserables." The three judges cut their eyes at each other as if to say, "Why did she choose such a difficult song?"

The introduction begins and she begins to sing. And this voice of an angel starts coming out of her mouth. She sings the first line, "I dreamed a dream in time gone by..." and the audience is shocked and stunned. They start cheering so loud you can hardly hear her. She sings the second line and her voice gets stronger. The judges look at each other as if to say, "This is unbelievable." And then it happens. Sour Simon actually breaks out in a huge smile. That's when the earth tilted on its axis. By the end of the song, the audience gives her a standing ovation. The first few times I watched it cried like a 10-year-old girl at a One Direction Concert. When she walked out, everyone was blind to her talent.

Look around you. There are people here who are gifted by God, but sometimes we miss the great potential and gifts in other people because we are blind.

In his book, *The Weight of Glory*, C.S. Lewis wrote; "It is a serious thing to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship... There are no 'ordinary' people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilisations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. (*The Weight of Glory*, pp. 45-46)

C. You may be blind to God's purpose for your life

You have eyes in your head, but did you also know you have eyes in your heart? Ephesians 1:18 inspired Paul Baloché to write "Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord. In this verse Paul prays, "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you." (Ephesians 1:18)

Up until the 1940s, all architectural drawings were called blueprints because of the chemical process used to reproduce them. Today, we still call them blueprints even though they are whiteprints. God has a blueprint for your life. Have you discovered it?

Do you know why God created you? It wasn't so you could go to school and get a job and make a lot of money and then retire and then wait to die. God created you to have a personal

relationship with Him and to enjoy Him forever. He has called you to a different kind of life. And He keeps on calling you away from the values and priorities of this crazy world. He keeps calling you back to the only thing that will give you HOPE—knowing Him and living for Him.

God's purpose for your life is to know Him and to make Him known to others. There are blind people all around us who need to see Jesus. Will you help them to the light?

Many of you know I'm colorblind; the correct term is color vision deficiency. For instance, I can't tell green from brown. When I was a young preacher I once wore a brown sock and a green one. After the service someone came up and said, "Did you know you have on a brown sock and a green one?" I realized what I had done so I said, "Sure, and I have another pair just like these at home." I can see a rainbow, and I've been told there are seven basic colors there, but I can only see a couple of shades. I can see a sunset, and it's still beautiful, but I can only see two or three different shades.

There is no treatment or cure for colorblindness. What if someone invented a pair of glasses that allowed the colorblind like me to see all the colors? It would be life-changing. Imagine I'm watching a sunset at the beach and for the first time I can see all the different shades and hues of colors instead of two or three? And a guy walks by and I say, "Wow, can you see the pink, purple, orange, and gold in that sunset?" He says, "No I can't. I'm color-blind." What am I going to do? Am I going to say, "Tough luck, dude?" No, I'm going to say, "Hey I used to be colorblind, but now I have a cure. Try these glasses on."

That's why we need to help people who are blind to Jesus to see the truth. They need someone to help them to Jesus because they are spiritually blind.

CONCLUSION

Jesus gave Bart a new purpose for living. When Jesus called him, the Bible says he cast his cloak aside and jumped to his feet. That was a beggar's cloak that would often had pockets on the inside so the beggar could hide the food and money given to him, so it would appear he had nothing. That was his security blanket. It was his identity. But he tossed away his past and ran to Jesus. The only thing he brought to Jesus was his need. There's a line in an old song that says, "Nothing in my hand I bring. Only to the cross I cling." What is your security blanket today? Are you ready for a new start? Admit your need and faith can make a difference. Bart was instantly healed and followed Jesus toward Jerusalem, and toward a cross and an empty tomb. In Acts 2 there are 120 people praying on the day of Pentecost. I won't be surprised if we get to heaven and discover Bart was one of those who were the charter members of the First Baptist Church of Jerusalem.

OUTLINE

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"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you." *Ephesians 1:18*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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