

## INTRODUCTION

Most people eat too much over the holidays. That's why the #1 New Year's Resolution each year is to exercise and lose weight. If you think you overate during the holidays, I have some important information for you. Scientists have recently made some revolutionary discoveries about holiday eating and dieting. Here are six of their findings:

1. If no one sees you eat it, it has no calories!
2. If you drink a diet soda with a candy bar, they cancel each other out. (If the soda weighs more than the candy, you actually *lose* calories!)
3. If you eat standing up, it doesn't count.
4. Desserts remove stress! ("STRESSED" is "DESSERTS" spelled backwards!)
5. Foods used for medicinal purposes have no calories. (This includes chocolate, cheesecake and ice cream when eaten for energy.)
6. Cookie pieces contain no calories. (The process of breakage causes calorie leakage.)  
So maybe you feel better about how much you ate!

In this message we are going to examine an encounter with a blind man who felt a *lot* better after He met Jesus. I'm calling this message "What the Blind Man Saw." Let's read about it beginning in Luke 18:35:

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "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 he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

We know from Mark 10 the blind man's name was Bartimaeus, which means "Son of Timaeus." For the sake of simplicity I'll call him Blind Bart. He can teach us a great deal about how we can relate to God. Your problem may not be physical blindness, but you and I need the same thing Bart asked for—mercy. Let's study his story and learn five important things about the Christian life.

### 1. FAITH IS HEARING AND BELIEVING EVEN WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE

Bart was not only blind, he was a beggar. Most blind people today lead productive lives, but in Jesus' time, blind people couldn't work. There was no Americans with Disabilities Act, so blindness was a terrible handicap. Everyday Bart sat beside the road holding out his hand asking for money. Beggars exist today in every major city around the world. You can see some American beggars standing at an intersection holding signs reading, "Will Work for Food." But some American beggars have gotten rather creative. Here are some actual signs beggars in

America have been seen holding: “Why lie? I need some wine.” “Will work for 40K, take my résumé.” “Tell me off. One dollar” “Help me hire a hit man to kill my husband.”

In Jesus time, beggars were at the bottom of the social ladder, only slightly more important than dogs. 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. So in verse 38 he cried out, “Jesus! Son of David, have mercy on me!” The term “Son of David” was one reserved for the coming Messiah, the King. It was a title of Divine power. Bart was confessing Jesus was *more* than a mere teacher—He was the King!

Faith is the first step you must take to receive mercy from God. Faith is not just believing God exists, it is acting on that belief. It is staking your entire eternity on the offer God has extended for you to have a personal relationship with Him.

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 believe He has changed my life. I don’t just believe in the fact of the resurrection, I believe Jesus is alive and living in me!

Like Blind Bart, we are blind until we come to Jesus. There is someone who wants to keep you blind to the truth about God. The Bible calls him the god of this age, which is another title for the devil. 2 Corinthians 4:4 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.”

There’s a saying, “There is none so blind as he who will not see.” Satan wants to keep you from seeing the truth about Jesus. It’s not easy to believe without seeing, but that’s what faith is. Perhaps you are like millions of other people who would believe if they could see some reliable proof. Their motto is, “I’ll believe it when I see it!”

Okay, for all you skeptics, 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!”

Let’s just imagine for a moment God did it. I suspect everyone in this room would be converted to Christ. We couldn’t hold the crowd that would show up tonight, and 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) Catherine Harrison, who is legally blind, has developed a wonderful Bible Study called “Walking by faith; not by sight.” By faith, Bart called out to Jesus for help. Even though you’ve never seen Him, when you hear and believe, you’ll call out for mercy, too.

## 2. YOU MUST RESIST PEOPLE WHO HINDER YOUR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

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 you start getting serious about seeking Jesus, the voice of the crowd will “boo” you down. Our popular culture wants to mold you into being a clone of everyone else—wear the right labels, listen to the right music, and speak the filthy language everyone else uses. It’s okay to be a little religious, but if you become a radical follower of Jesus, you won’t fit in with the pop culture anymore. They will ridicule you and call you a weird religious fanatic.

When you diligently seek to follow Jesus, you’ll face opposition and criticism. Paul wrote, “A great door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.” (1 Corinthians 16:9) Sometimes those who oppose your spiritual progress are members of your family—or even people claiming to be Christians.

Mike Yaconelli wrote: “Threaten others with a loud and boisterous faith, and you will be politely (at first) asked to quiet down; dance your faith instead of sitting still in a pew, and you will be asked to leave; talk about your faith with passion and you will get expressions of concern about the inappropriateness of your emotions.”

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. Verse 39 tells us, “he shouted all the more.” Those are interesting words in the original Greek language. In verse 38 when he first called out, Luke used the word *boao* which means “to call out in a loud voice.” But when everyone told him to be quiet, Bart turned up the volume. In verse 39, the word translated “shouted all the more” is *krazo*. It’s an onomatopoeic word meaning “to scream.” An onomatopoeic is pronounced like the sound it describes (like “buzz” or “bang”). You can almost hear a scream in the word *krazo*. One Greek scholar describes it as, “the instinctive shout of ungoverned emotion, a scream, an almost animal cry. The word well shows the utter desperation of the man.” (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 242)

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 Methodists were often called “Shouting Methodists” because they were a lot more emotional in their worship services than the Baptists. Then later, the Baptists got fired up and some were called “Shouting Baptists.” In fact, 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. Oh, we sing, “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be; When we all see Jesus, we’ll sing and shout the victory.” If you aren’t shouting down here what makes you think you’re going to shout up there? 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!

### **3. JESUS IS NEVER TOO BUSY TO PAUSE AND HELP YOU**

Verse 40 says Jesus stood still and instructed the people to bring Bart to Him. By the way, He has instructed us to bring people to Him as well. At this point, Jesus was headed for Jerusalem to die for the sins of the world. Within the next few days He would face betrayal, arrest, torture and crucifixion. He was a man on a Mission, yet He paused to answer the cry of one blind beggar.

Surely there were hundreds of voices in the crowd that day calling out to Jesus, but He was able to distinguish Bart’s cry for mercy from the roar of the crowd. Jesus is still listening for the one voice among the murmur of the crowd. When you call out for Him, He will stop and respond to you.

On another occasion, Jesus was on the way to Jairus’ house because his daughter was sick and dying. As they were passing through a crowd, a single desperate woman reached out and touched the hem of his robe. She had suffered with a blood disorder for many years, and she believed Jesus could help her. Even though Jesus was being jostled by the crowd, He noticed that single touch of faith. He stopped and said, “Who touched me?” The disciples rolled their eyes and said, “Give us a break, Lord, EVERYBODY is touching you.” Jesus said, “No, I felt goodness go out of me—somebody reached out in faith.” He stopped and spoke to the woman and she was healed.

You may think that in the larger scheme of the entire universe you aren’t very important. In comparison to the enormous universe, our planet is just a small rock circling a minor star. And you are just one of 6 billion human beings sharing this rock. In spite of this, you are of such importance to God, that when you call out to Him, He pauses to help you!

The mighty sun burning 93 million miles away provides the gravitational pull that keeps all the planets in orbit, but that same sun will warm your face on a cold day as if it had nothing else to do at that moment. The awesome God who keeps the entire universe running will stop and answer your cry for help as if He had nothing else to do. God isn’t distracted by the millions of other voices. He always has time for you.

On the way to the Cross, Jesus paused and helped Bart. And whatever else He is doing in the universe today, He will pause and help you. The Bible says, “God is our refuge and strength, an EVER-PRESENT help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1) Jesus always meets us at our point of desperation. But it’s not desperation alone, because you can be desperate and never call on God for help. People all around you at work, school, and perhaps in your family may hinder you from crying out to God, but keep shouting even louder like Bart did!

#### **4. YOU MUST ADMIT YOUR NEED IN ORDER TO BE CHANGED**

At first I was surprised by the question Jesus asked Bart in verse 41. He said, “What do you want me to do for you?” 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 everyday 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. It would be like asking someone today who is physically able to work, “Do you really want to get off welfare?”

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!”

Some Christians are reluctant to ask God to heal them, or to heal a loved one. They are afraid if God doesn’t deliver they have injured God’s reputation. If you’re sick there’s a big difference between praying, “Lord, bless me” and “Lord, I’ve got cancer, and I want to live!” Don’t ever be afraid to ask God to do something miraculous.

#### **5. WHEN YOU SEE THE FACE OF JESUS, YOU’LL FOLLOW HIM ANYWHERE**

Without touching him, Bart received his sight. Jesus said, “I see your faith, and that’s enough!” We have several accounts of Jesus healing blind people, and He used a variety of methods. Jesus healed one blind man by touching him. For another man, Jesus touched him once and his sight was blurred, so He touched him again. Still with another man, Jesus spat in the dirt, made clay, patted it on the eyes of man, and told him to go wash it off in the pool of Siloam. For Bart, He just spoke the word but all of them received their sight. That’s a great lesson about how Jesus changes people in a variety of ways. Don’t ever insist that someone else has to have exactly the same experience you’ve had. That’s how different churches and denominations get started—people start insisting there is only one way God does things. Vance Havner used to say if those four blind men were here today, we’d have four churches by Friday: The Word of Faith Church, The Once-Touched church; The Twice Touched Church; and the Spit in the Eye Church!

When Bart opened his eyes, the first thing He saw was the face of Jesus. The last sentence in Chapter 18 says Bart followed Jesus. Jesus was headed for Jerusalem and a cross—and Bart followed him. I wouldn’t be surprised if we get to heaven and find Bartimaeus was a part of the 120 disciples who were praying in an upper room on the Day of Pentecost.

Here’s the lesson: When you see the face of Jesus, you’ll follow Him, too. You may be thinking, “Wait! I thought *faith* is believing without seeing! And now you say I need to *see* the face of Jesus? Make up your mind!”

You can see Him with eyes of faith. When you cry out to Jesus and trust Him to change you, you WILL see Him. His light will shine into the darkness of your heart. The Bible describes it this way, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6) (“Our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful.” *The Message*)

You don’t need physical eyesight to see Jesus. In fact, people who are physically blind can often see spiritual truths more clearly than those of us who have sight. Fanny Crosby was blind, yet she was one of the most prolific hymn writers in America history. She wrote over 8,500 poems and hymns. Imagine a stack of 15 hymn books piled on top of each other—it would take that many to contain all the songs Fanny Crosby wrote. Some of her more familiar hymns included, “To God Be the Glory,” “Blessed Assurance” and “Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross.”

Fanny wasn’t born blind. When she was six weeks old, she developed a cold. A man posing as a doctor put hot poultices soaked with powerful medicine over her eyes. This treatment damaged her eyes, and she became blind. But Fanny refused be bitter or angry about her blindness. At the age of eight, she wrote a poem reflecting her positive attitude: Oh what a happy soul am I / Although I cannot see, / I am resolved that in this world / Contended I will be.

Fanny Crosby could see things most of us can’t. She glimpsed the glory and greatness of God, and she looked forward to the time when she would see Jesus. Some of her best lyrics include: In the cross, in the cross, / Be my glory ever. / ‘Till my raptured (ransomed) soul shall find / Rest beyond the river.

Some music editors changed a few of Fanny’s original words so the songs don’t offend people who don’t believe in the rapture. But Fanny was looking forward to the time when Jesus would return and rapture the church and we’ll be transported out of here.

Another familiar lyric written by Fanny is from “To God Be the Glory”: Great things he hath taught us/ great things he has done / And great our rejoicing through Jesus, the Son / But purer and higher and greater will be / Our wonder our transport (victory) when Jesus we see! The editors changed “transport” to “victory.” But no matter what word is on the screen or in the book, I always smile and sing “transport” instead of “victory” because, like Fanny Crosby, I believe we’ll be transported out of here when Jesus returns!

Fanny had wonderful insight because of her blindness. An interviewer once commented to her, "I think it is a great pity that God did not give you sight when He showered so many other gifts upon you." Fanny replied, "Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I should be born blind?" "Why?" asked the surprised interviewer. "Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior!"

As she reflected on that conversation, she wrote these powerful words, "When my lifework is ended and I cross the swelling tide, / When the bright and glorious morning I shall see, / I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side, / And His smile will be the first to welcome me.

## CONCLUSION

The title of this message is "What the Blind Man Saw." Even before he was healed, Blind Bart saw at least two important things. First, he saw his need: do you? Next, he saw an opportunity passing in front of him. The bystanders told him, "Jesus is passing by." This is a powerful example of how great opportunities pass in front of us. Bart was faced with a split-second decision. If he remained still and silent, his opportunity for healing would be gone. Perhaps he thought, "There's a crowd here today, maybe I'll catch Jesus the next time He comes through Jericho." Some of you need to do business with Jesus, and you are hesitating, "oh, there's too big a crowd here in church today. I'll do it after the first of the year." What Bart didn't know was that *Jesus never passed through Jericho again*. He went straight from Jericho to the cross. Jesus is passing by right now, what are you going to do? "I'll catch Him next time I come to church." What makes you think there will be a next time?

This encounter teaches us about the critical importance of seizing the opportunity. *Carpe diem* is a Latin term meaning "seize the day!" Today, you have the opportunity to cry out for mercy. Will you do it?

This idea of Jesus "passing by" Bartimaeus inspired the words of a beautiful old invitation hymn. The words say: "Pass me not O gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry; While on others you are calling, Do not pass me by." Want to guess who wrote those words? Fanny Crosby.

Today, Jesus is passing by. You may not have another opportunity like this one. I encourage you to call out to Him, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" If you'll do that, upon authority of the God's Word I can promise you that "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!" (Romans 10:13)

## OUTLINE

### 1. FAITH IS HEARING AND BELIEVING EVEN WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE

"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*

### 2. YOU MUST RESIST PEOPLE WHO HINDER YOUR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

"A great door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me." *1 Corinthians 16:9*

### 3. JESUS IS NEVER TOO BUSY TO PAUSE AND HELP YOU

"God is our refuge and strength, and EVER-PRESENT help in trouble." *Psalms 46:1*

### 4. YOU MUST ADMIT YOUR NEED IN ORDER TO BE CHANGED

### 5. WHEN YOU SEE THE FACE OF JESUS, YOU'LL FOLLOW HIM ANYWHERE

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." *2 Corinthians 4:6*

"Our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful."  
*The Message*





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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes