

THREE WISHES

The reading we have been doing this past week, at least in connection with our New Testament Study, has brought us several very interesting accounts of healings. By my count, there were 7 specific persons healed:

- (Ch. 5) There was the Gerasene Demoniac, out of whom was cast a legion of demons.
- (Ch. 5) There was the woman with the issue of blood who touched Jesus when he was on his way to the home of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue because his daughter was critically sick.
- (Ch. 7) There was the Gentile woman of the region around Tyre and Sidon, from whose little daughter Jesus cast out a demon
- (Ch. 7) the deaf man in the region of Decapolis
- (Ch. 8) the blind man at Bethsaida
- (Ch. 9) another young boy out of whom Jesus cast a demon
- (Ch. 10) the blind beggar named Bartimaeus

There were all of those, in addition to many others such as you have generally reported on in passages like 6:54ff. Earlier in that same 6th chapter, Mark tells us that Jesus was only able to heal a few sick people in his hometown of Nazareth.

In addition to all of those healings, you also have the case of Jesus raising one person from the dead, Jairus' daughter who died before Jesus could get there—Ch. 5:40ff.

So between casting out demons, healing the sick and raising the dead, Jesus stayed pretty busy. Nevertheless, he still found time to have 5000 people for dinner one time, and 4000 people on another occasion. He walks on water, takes time to get away to the coast of Phoenicia, go up on the mountain for a little summit meeting with Moses and Elijah, two persons who had been dead and gone for hundreds and hundreds of years, and he still had the energy and presence of mind to discuss the finer points of law concerning marriage and divorce.

I was really fascinated with the numerous healings that Jesus did. There were some unusual ones, weren't there? Take for example that man who was deaf and had a speech impediment that Mark tells about in chapter 7. That was interesting, wasn't it! The guy is deaf; some friends bring him to Jesus to be healed. Jesus takes him aside, puts his fingers in the guy's ears, then spits, and then touches the man's tongue. **Verse 34** says, "*Then looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said, "Ephphata," which meant, "be opened."*" **Verse 35** says, "*And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.*" What was all of that touching and spitting about? Your guess is as good as mine!

Or, how about the blind man who was given his sight back at Bethsaida? This man too was brought by some people to Jesus, and Jesus took this man aside also, but this time, he spit in both of the guy's eyes and then laid his hands on him. When Jesus asked him, "*do you see anything?*", the man said, "*I see men, but they look like trees walking.*" So Jesus touched him

again, and then the man opened his eyes and could see clearly. Isn't that interesting? Why did Jesus have to touch this man twice? Your guess is as good as mine!

But the case that really caught my attention is the one involving the blind beggar named Bartimaeus, and it is his case that serves as the inspiration for the lesson this morning, one that I am calling "Three Wishes."

Before we look at that text together—which is **chapter 10, verses 46-52**; I want you to consider this statement as we go along this morning. "The problem with most people is not that they desire too much, but that they are satisfied with too little." I think we will see that idea illustrated for us in this passage. Let's read this together, beginning in **verse 46**:

And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. 47) And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48) And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49) And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." 50) And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51) And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." 52) And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

Now we notice some things about this man immediately. Number one, he is a beggar; a blind beggar, which is probably the reason why he was reduced to begging for a living. Some people live poorly because of laziness or because they have made unwise and ungodly choices. But sometimes, people live poorly because of circumstances that are pretty much beyond their control, and we have to be careful about the opinions we have of people when we really do not know them.

This man probably wanders the streets each day, or is possibly led to places where he hopes to be where there will be a lot of people passing by. This day, he is on the road going out of Jericho, and it is no doubt the road that heads for Jerusalem. And he sits there, in whatever weather comes, hoping to receive even a few coins, or perhaps a little bit of food to eat.

Now he hears noise; the noise of a crowd of people coming his way. He hears many voices and his sensitive hearing tells him that it is a number of people. Someone nearby exclaims that the person coming is Jesus of Nazareth. By now this name and the wonders attached to it have become widely known. Some people believe that this Jesus is the long awaited Messiah, or Christ. The blind beggar immediately recognizes that this may be his lucky day. Maybe this man, this Son of David, will take notice of him, and surely he will do something more than just toss him a few Roman or Jewish coins. And so he begins to cry out. Here in Oklahoma, we would say he began to holler! He says, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*"

And of course, this embarrasses some of the people there, and they try to shut him up, but Bartimaeus is not going to let this opportunity slip away, regardless of what others think about him. And so he cries out all the more, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*" And Jesus heard him, just as he hears you when you lift up your voice and cry out to him in prayer. And suddenly Jesus stops, and looks back and says, "*call him!*" And so throwing off the cloak he has covering him, he comes to where Jesus is, and Jesus says, "*What do you want me to do for you?*"

This was a very real version of that bit of fantasy that I am sure we all engaged in at some time in our lives: "*If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?*" In our youthful imaginations we would wish for lots of money, and maybe an endless supply of our favorite foods. It didn't take me very long to figure out that I always wanted my third wish to be for three more wishes!

Well, we are not surprised at what this man wanted. He said, "*Rabbi, let me receive my sight.*" I mean, if you just have one shot at it, you go for the gold, right? Did he know what he was asking for? Perhaps he had heard of some of the miracles Jesus had performed, but never in a thousand years did he imagine that he might receive one of those miracles. But here that man is, and he is asking what I want him to do for me. And so, he asks for the impossible, "*Let me receive my sight.*" **Verse 52** says, "*And Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.*"

Now, that is a beautiful story; a story of Jesus' compassion and of His power but it is also a story illustrating something else. It shows how shortsighted and shallow men can be. Now again, we are not surprised at this man's choice. It is completely understandable and we would have been surprised had he asked for anything else, but think for a moment of what he might have asked for?

If he had heard of Christ, which is more than implied by the text, what had he heard about him? No doubt he had heard of his miraculous powers and the healings of many people of various kinds of diseases and problems. But surely too, he must have also heard that this man was proclaiming the coming of God's kingdom, and of the need to repent. Surely too, he must have heard that this man was pronouncing the forgiveness of some people's sins. He called him "Rabbi" so he must have heard that Jesus was a great teacher and that many people were becoming his disciples.

But he neither asked about or for any of those things; only the one thing that most concerned him at that moment, and that was for his sight. But his blindness that day was not limited to the eyes in his head. He appears to have been blind of heart as well. Had he but seen, he would have asked, not just for his eyes to be opened, but for his heart as well. He would have asked this Son of David to receive him into his kingdom, to cleanse him of his sins, to make him one of his disciples. Now, to his credit, verse 52 does tell us that following this time, he did begin to follow Jesus, and so in this case, it worked out that he probably did become one of

Jesus' disciples and receive forgiveness of his sins. But how many times is that which is spiritual in nature overshadowed completely by that which is physical and temporal?

I think about another of Christ's miracles told about earlier in Mark's gospel, in chapter 2. In verses 3-12 we have that story about the paralytic who was brought to the house in Capernaum where Jesus was staying and the friends carrying the man could not get in because of crowd blocking the door. So they went upon the roof and opened some of tiles and let the man down through the roof. **Verse 5** says Jesus said, "*My son, your sins are forgiven.*" And of course as soon as he said that, some of the Jews just about had a heart attack that someone would say something like that. At least in their hearts they thought Jesus was blasphemous to pronounce something that only God could do. So Jesus asked them, "*Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Take up your bed and walk?'*"

Well, of course, neither one is easier or harder to say than the other, but Jesus was trying to get them to realize that he not only had power to heal someone, he also had the power, or authority to forgive their sins, which is far more critical and important to us. And in order to demonstrate that Jesus had that power, he did what he knew would impress those people the most—he healed the man before their eyes.

Recall another story, the one we read when we worked our way through Luke's gospel, the story of the ten lepers that Jesus healed. This is related for us in [Luke 17](#), and there were ten people who had leprosy. They were together because they were not allowed to associate with others. Like Bartimaeus, they begged for Jesus' mercy, and when Jesus showed it to them and told them to go and show themselves to the priests, they were cleansed on their way. Even so, only one of the ten returned to thank Jesus, and Luke tells us that that one was a Samaritan.

Why is it that the spiritual and eternal gets minimized while the physical and temporal things receive most of the attention and emphasis? In **1 Timothy 4, verses 7-9**, Paul urges Timothy to train himself for godliness. He says, "*for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*" And then he says, "*for this saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.*"

Notice Paul doesn't say that physical exercise is useless. He says it has some value. He doesn't discount the importance or value of that completely, but then he tells us what the world doesn't seem to understand, that there is something far more important than that.

He reminds us of that in yet another passage—beginning in **2 Corinthians 4, and verse 16**. After speaking about some of the suffering that he and other apostles and evangelists had endured, he writes,

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17) For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18) as we look not to the things that

are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

And then going on to **chapter 5**, Paul says:

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2) For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3) if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4) For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened--not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5) He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6) So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7) for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8) Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

I said at the beginning of this lesson that “The problem with most people is not that they desire too much, but that they are satisfied with too little.” It is understandable that the blind man desired his sight, but if that is all that he had received that day, was he really all that blessed? How about those nine lepers who were cleansed but failed to return to thank the Lord, were they really all that blessed? Isn’t it amazing that it takes so little to make some people happy? All they want—maybe all they know to want—is just a few more crumbs that fall from the master’s table!

Back in the days of Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament era, God’s people had begun to fudge on their tithing. They were bringing a part, but not the entire tithe and so consequently, Malachi says, they were robbing God. They were robbing God, but the reality is, they were hurting themselves the most. Not only were they injuring their relationship with God, they were also blocking God’s desire to bless them richly. **Malachi 3:9, 10** says:

“You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. 10) Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.”

So if God says to you, “What do you want me to do for you?” Think about that, will you? Do you just want him to heal your body, or do you want him to heal your soul? Do you want him to bless you in this life, or do you want him to bless you with eternal life? Do you want to see better, or do you want to see what is better? Do you want to hold on to what you have, or do you want God to open to you the windows of heaven and pour down a blessing on you to where you absolutely feel no more need?

Think about it, if you had three wishes, and God would make them come true for you, **WHAT WOULD YOU ASK?**