

The Merciful Son of David

Lesson Scripture: Luke 18:31-43

Focus Scripture: Luke 18:35-43

Key Verse: Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Luke 18:39

LUKE 18:35-43 (NRSV UE)

35 As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

36 When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening.

37 They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

38 Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

39 Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

40 Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him, and when he came near, he asked him,

41 "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me see again."

42 Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you."

43 Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God, and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

LUKE 18:35-43 (KJV)

35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:

36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him,

41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

KEY TERMS

- **Sacrificial Lamb** – In Judaism, Israel sacrificed lambs in rituals to gain forgiveness for sin. God chose Jesus as the (human) lamb who would die once for all our sins.
- **Contiguous** – The ability or tendency to spread from one person to another.
- **Catalyst** – A person or thing that starts a process or reaction.
- **Insignificant Person** – A person without a recognized name/title/status, or significant resources (money or property).

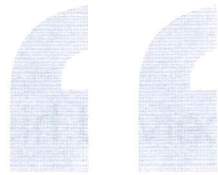
INTRODUCTION

In all generations, we find people with disabling illnesses and injuries. Naturally, the question arises about God's love for people with serious disabilities. Our Christian love should move us to assist those persons when and where we can. But the set text shows a case where a person with a serious physical disability reached out to Jesus and received the healing he desired. But note in this text two crucial supporting

planks. The beggar was clear and firm on the identity of Jesus and in his response to Jesus' query.

A question to ponder is what would have happened if the blind beggar had not reached out to Jesus. We can only speculate, but we are glad the man made the effort to stop and engage the Lord. Even when others tried to dissuade him, he persisted. Look beyond the usual

superficial reading of the text and see the powerful messages his determined effort still shouts to us. Also, look at the ripple effect that flowed into the community when one insignificant person reached out in faith to the Lord through whom all things are possible.



The set text is rich with profound revelations about Christ and his ministry.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The set text is rich with profound revelations about Christ and his ministry. We take it in two parts: verses 18:31-34 and verses 18:35-43. In the first portion, we find Jesus in a private teaching session with the disciples. He was sharing details with them about the culminating focal point of his ministry. Jesus was known

for his profound spiritual teachings and miracles. However, those activities were peripheral to the main purpose of his physical stay on earth. He came to sacrifice his life to redeem the sin-soaked souls of humanity. The prophets had foretold this for years. Yet not even the experts in religious matters (scribes and Pharisees) could recognize that Jesus was the promised sacrificial lamb. Up to this point, the disciples, the people closest to Jesus in ministry, could not accept the revelation that the teacher they had grown to love was about to be sacrificed.


Verse 34 is challenging. The language suggests that something blocked the disciples' understanding so they could not grasp (or accept) what Jesus explained. One

explanation is that the disciples were still locked on the concept of an earthly kingdom where they would have privileged positions. Their picture certainly did not involve the murder of their (rabbi) master.

Another explanation is that the teachings in Judaism had blocked them. The Jewish rabbis could not enlighten the Jews about

an event that the rabbis themselves did not understand. Whatever the reason, even after Jesus' private teaching, the disciples could not understand his pending death and resurrection.

In the second section (18:35-43), we have two insightful disclosures. The nameless man who was blind recognized Jesus as the Son of David. This man lacked physical sight but had great spiritual



Having received his sight, the man followed Jesus and glorified God. His response to Jesus' gift of healing spurred others to praise God.

insight. He knew that Jesus was the promised Messiah: the God-Man with unlimited authority to heal, resurrect, and save. Sometimes Christians overlook this truth in the rush to make this section a simple story of Jesus healing a man who was blind.

Now focus on verse 43. Having received his sight, the man followed

Jesus and glorified God. His response to Jesus' gift of healing spurred others to praise God. Remember this chain reaction. This is one good reason we cannot keep silent when God does a work in our lives. This is the route that opens the salvation door to others. Evangelists take note.

The healing of the beggar who was blind has greater implications than we normally recognize. In the first century, people saw blindness as a judgment from God for sins committed (for example, John 9:2). Therefore, when the beggar received his sight, onlookers interpreted it as a reversal of God's judgment. That was an occasion for rejoicing.


In verse 42 Jesus noted that the man's faith made him well. What was Jesus saying? It is a statement that Bible students often misunderstand. Jesus meant that the man's belief in Jesus' ability/authority to restore his sight was intact. That declaration must never mean that believers have the power to compel Jesus to do what they want.

Whatever our level of faith, we must respect the sovereignty of God to decide the appropriate answer to each situation. Matthew 8:2 properly expresses this sentiment.

SANKOFA

A posting on the Christianpost.com

website carried a story (August 25, 2023) about a court ruling in northern Nigeria. That court order protected an 18-year-old Christian convert from threats to her life by family members. The significance of this ruling was that it emphasized that Nigerians had a fundamental right to change religions. In that case, the change was from Islam to Christianity.



Whatever our level of faith, we must respect the sovereignty of God to decide the appropriate answer to each situation.

Although this and related stories pointed to the risk of being a Christian in northern Nigeria, they also have relevance to the text in this lesson. Like the disciples in Luke 18, timid believers cannot face the reality of the risk associated with following Christ. Scholars like Raymond Brown suggest the disciples in Luke 18:31-34 could not grasp

Jesus' teaching because they could not embrace what it implied: the dangers of standing firm for faith in Jesus without Jesus' physical presence.

In your own country, you may not face death for following Christ. However, in our modern societies, believers still face serious risks when they try to live

traditional Christian values. The threats range from social ostracizing to physical death. Sadly, the AME Church annals carry heartbreaking evidence of this risk.

Celebrity preachers often try to downplay this risk of following Christ by diverting viewers to the more “pleasant” side of Christianity. One skillful way ministers do this is to preach a sanitized gospel where they peddle only blessings and prosperity. The risks of being a Christian, swimming upstream against popular secular values, they deliberately ignore or deny. Crafty preachers take this course because they think their audience cannot, or do not want, to face the risks of being identified too closely with Jesus and traditional Christianity. This is a suitable time to consider the extent to which we embrace the full Christian message, which includes the risks of rejection and persecution by persons who do not share our Christian perspective.

CASE STUDY

“Praise allows us to get out of our self-centeredness to focus on others. So,

the next time you appreciate someone’s kindness, a job well done, or a positive quality, try to make your mark with praise. That person will receive it in a much more positive way than you think and you can even make his or her day.”

The above quote was an outlier for an article on Psychology.com about praising. We shared the idea at the end of the last sentence. When we praise people, we help them to frame their days in brighter colors.

In the text (Luke 18:43), the healed man’s praises to God sparked a chain reaction of praise. This confirms that praising is contagious. Our praises to God can influence other people to praise God. This is one reason Christians must share with non-Christians their positive testimonies about their experiences with God. Positive praise begets

more positive praise. People in the entertainment world know this and use it effectively to promote secular concerts and shows.

But the reverse is equally true. Complaints and lamenting spur more negative sentiments. And the effects of the

This is a suitable time to consider the extent to which we embrace the full Christian message, which includes the risks of rejection and persecution by persons who do not share our Christian perspective.

negative comments we initiate can last longer and do more damage than we had imagined when we started to complain. What do these observations teach us?

The first lesson is that even when we do not recognize it, our words and actions can influence people around us. We can be the catalysts that spark either joy or gloom in other people's lives. Before he started thanking God for his healing, the nameless blind beggar was a nobody. But his praises to God were enough to turn other people's attention to God. Soberly consider this. Even without a title or a formal position in your church or community, you have in your mouth the power to frame other peoples' days, even their life paths.

LIFE APPLICATION

We have already hinted at this point: despite his physical handicap, the beggar who was blind had a clear and accurate picture of who Jesus was. In the privacy of your meditation, consider your view of Jesus. Based on your firsthand experiences, can you convincingly share with others that you know the Jesus Christ of the scriptures? If you are sure you do, follow the beggar's example, and thank the Lord. If you have doubts, make this a

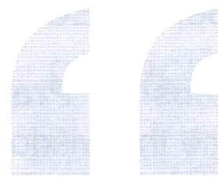
matter of prayer, and meditation. Also, consult with others who you think may be able to help you to sharpen your image of Jesus Christ.

Apply the story of the beggar's healing to your own life. In real terms, all believers were at the beggarly point of sinful living until Jesus passed by. Walk back to your beggarly point in life. Stop a while to consider the truths you could not see at that point. Then walk forward to where

you are in Christ today. That mental retracing of your spiritual healing should awaken in you the same emotions it stirred in the healed beggar. Your heart should overflow with praise for the savior who lovingly stopped to answer your plea for spiritual sight.

Jesus told the beggar who was blind that it was the beggar's own faith that sparked the

healing. Consider the implications of this for your life. The beggar who was blind saw the impossible being possible. Consider any need or desire in your life which now seems outside the limits of possibility. In thinking about this, remember that the beggar who was blind had no money and no special connections to influential people. He had no name recognition and



We can be the catalysts that spark either joy or gloom in other people's lives.

no title in the church or community. All he had was a faith that recognized Jesus as the Messiah. What about you? Can your faith draw what you desire within the range of reality?

Verses 36 and 37 give a lesson you will miss if you are not wearing your spiritual glasses. The beggar was aware of what was happening around him. There is a school of thought that Christians must shut themselves off from the world. If the beggar had done that, he would have missed Jesus and the opportunity for his healing. Take time to think about your level of awareness about the happenings and trends in your community and the world at large.

QUESTIONS

1. The title Son of David was a powerful personal reference for the beggar. What name or title of God/Jesus is most powerful to you?

2. How do you consider the faithfulness of persons with disabilities who may not experience physical healing?
3. How seriously have you considered the risks of being a Christian?
4. Can you identify times when your praise or complaint spurred others to do the same?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: "Take My Life, and Let It Be," *AMEC Hymnal* #292

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, grant me the wisdom and strength to embrace all aspects of the Christian life. In the good times, remind me to praise you; in the troubled times, remind me to look for you as the blind man did. With your strength and guidance, I know I can be all you have called me to be. Thank you, Lord! Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 30–January 5

Monday	Revelation 11:14-19 (The Kingdom Belongs to the Messiah)
Tuesday	Psalm 9:1-9 (A Heart Full of Thanks)
Wednesday	Psalm 9:10-20 (A Plea to God for Grace)
Thursday	1 Timothy 1:12-17 (Immortal, Invisible)
Friday	1 Timothy 6:11-16 (The Life of Faith)
Saturday	Psalm 10:1-11 (God's Judgments Are True)
Sunday	Psalm 10:12-18 (God Will Arise and Hear Us)