

What is the story of blind Bartimaeus?

The story of Blind Bartimaeus occurs in the Gospel of Mark and concerns the healing of a blind beggar called Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. A parallel account mentions two blind men (Matthew 20:30), but Mark focuses on the one who was no doubt familiar to his readers. On his way out of Jericho, Jesus was surrounded by a huge crowd, when, from the roadside, Bartimaeus called out to Him to be healed. The events that follow tell us something profound about God's nature and shed light on the type of faith and prayer that are pleasing to God.

As Jesus was walking by him, Bartimaeus heard who it was that was passing and called out to Him: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47). By calling Jesus the "Son of David," the blind man was affirming his belief that Jesus was the Messiah (see 2 Samuel 7:14-16). The people told Bartimaeus to be quiet, but he kept calling out, even more loudly and persistently than before. This is further proof of his faith. In addition to his proclamation of Jesus' identity as the Messiah, the blind man showed that he believed in Jesus' goodness and deference to the poor and needy. Bartimaeus believed that Jesus was not like the other religious leaders, who believed that an individual's poverty or blindness or bad circumstances were a result of God's judgment. Bartimaeus appealed to Jesus according to the revelation of God's character in the Psalms—a God who cares for the poor and the brokenhearted (e.g., Psalm 34:6, 18).

Jesus responded to Bartimaeus's cries by telling His disciples to call the blind man over. Blind Bartimaeus jumped up and went to Jesus, and Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51). The beggar could have asked for money or for food, but his faith was bigger than that. Bartimaeus said, "Rabbi, I want to see." There is no pretension or religious pride in this interchange between God and man. The blind man had

a desire, and he ran to Jesus with that desire. He did not preface his petition with a list of good works he had done or with any false humility; he simply expressed to Jesus his desire, trusting that Jesus was both willing and able to fulfill it. Jesus said to him, "Go . . . your faith has healed you," and Blind Bartimaeus instantly recovered his sight and followed Jesus (verse 52).

By saying, "Your faith has made you well," Jesus emphasizes the necessity of faith. Blind Bartimaeus had the kind of faith that pleases God—a wholehearted trust in the Healer. Jesus showed once again that God "rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). Blind Bartimaeus understood this truth. He earnestly sought the Lord, and his actions reflected the kind of faith that is pleasing to God.