



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. (Luke 18:35-43)

I have had the privilege to preach on this event outside Jericho many times, but today, I will expand the meaning to include an aspect we may not have previously considered. Blindness is a terrible affliction. Light is of no use to the physically blind, so, their other senses are often enhanced to compensate for the disability. An extraordinary example of this process is to be found in the most prolific hymn writer in history – Fanny Crosby, who wrote more than 9,000 hymns (enough to fill sixteen hymnals) – and she did it all after the age of fifty-four years of age. But no enhanced sense can fully compensate for loss of sight. It is the sense that is most profound in learning.

There is another blindness that is more devastating than physical blindness, and that is spiritual blindness. This is the most common form of blindness in the world today – even in the great majority of churches. There is a WAY that seems right to the spiritually blind, but he is headed for a calamitous ruin. *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”* Proverbs 14:12 (KJV) Physical death may come upon the physically blind by mishap; but spiritual death that awaits the spiritually blind is eternal.

I will relate an observation by the late Dr. C. S. Robinson: *“In the schoolroom of an American mission in Cairo, I found two persons reading the Bible in Arabic. One was a little girl and she was physically blind; both eyes were covered. But the other was a hard-looking old Mohammedan, hired to teach her to read with her fingers in Braille. She was a Christian child; he was a heathen. This was an instance of the “blind leading the blind” in exact meaning of our Lord in both ways. The old Mohammedan could see with his eyes, but only she could see with her heart, what Jesus had written for them both. And I leave it to all thoughtful Bible study scholars to discern which of the two seemed to be the worst off – which was the blindest?”*

It is quite common for a man or woman to be spiritually blind, but then to be found by Christ just as He finds the physically blind by waysides such as at Jericho. But the process is quite different. Let us compare two different men, both of whom were found by Christ in the same city (Jericho), who were afore times spiritually blind. One was physically blind as well as spiritually so.

First, let us consider the blind man by the wayside outside Jericho. We infer this to be blind Bartimaeus from the Gospel of St. Mark 10. He did not know Christ as Lord and Savior. He had no way of finding the Lord in his debilitated state. But he had HEARD of this man called Jesus who performed many miracles and healings. Bartimaeus realized his only hope for sight remained in this one MAN. His sense of hearing was keen in order to make up for his blindness. He heard every word whispered by passersby – about travels, commerce, and about the MAN Jesus. The bits and pieces of news he had heard about our Lord had kindled the slightest cinder of faith deep within his heart. Many great fires have begun with such a cinder, and this matter was no exception! In effect, since Bartimaeus could not find Jesus by travel, Jesus traveled to his very side to find him!

Our Lord is like that! He will find His elect whether they come to him humbly, or if He must search them out for their blindness. In Blind Bartimaeus' case, the Lord came to him. Let the reader know that this was no mere accidental meeting. Just as in the case of the appointment of Christ with the woman at Jacob's Well, our Lord had seen the many hot and dusty hours Bartimaeus had sat in this very place daily begging for bread. Bartimaeus did not know on the morning he was brought to this place by friends what mighty event would transpire ere he lay down to bed that evening. Hearing the bustle of men's feet, Bartimaeus inquired as to what group was passing. Being told it was Jesus of Nazareth, he latched on to a hope that had lain dormant in his heart from youth. He could not hold his excitement but blurted out, *“Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”* Those closest to Jesus tried to hush his fevered cry just as many in leadership of our churches try to squelch the cry of the needy. But Bartimaeus would have none of it. He persisted in his desperate prayer. He cried once more and persistently, an attitude which our Lord values in our praying.

Our prayers may often stop our Lord in His tracts. Jesus stopped and demanded the man be brought to him. He will always hear the cry for mercy. Bartimaeus knew if he received mercy from the Lord, all else would be provided. He knew, with the little faith of his burning cinder, that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah – the Son of David! The Lord healed Bartimaeus – not only of his blindness but made him every whit whole in body and spirit. Bartimaeus found what he could not have found lest the object of his seeking came to him which the Lord did.

In the same city of Jericho lived a publican of lecherous repute named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was not physically blind, but was certainly spiritually blind. He too, out of mere curiosity perhaps, heard of this man Jesus. He had heard that Jesus was coming to his city and, in fact, coming down the very thoroughfare upon which Zacchaeus was afoot. Urged on by a deeper curiosity that he may not have known or understood, Zacchaeus felt an untamed urge to see this man Jesus. Hearing the commotion of His entourage advancing down the street, Zacchaeus ran to get a glimpse. As was the case with spiritual blindness, Zacchaeus had not been graced with a usual stature – he was, in a word, SHORT! He had some questionable business dealings likely in his profession of chief tax collector for the Roman government. He was generally despised by the people of Jericho.

The crowd surrounding Jesus, again like many churchmen today, would not make way for this short fellow to get close to Christ. Zacchaeus was not lacking in wit. He calculated the direction Jesus was heading and ran beyond and climbed up a sycamore tree for a better view of Jesus passing underneath. But something happened that shocked and surprised Zacchaeus. When Jesus was directly under the tree, again, He stopped. He then embarrassed Zacchaeus by looking up directly at this short pumpkin of a fellow hanging to the bough of the tree. I imagine Zacchaeus did not know what to expect now.

Jesus then did something that caused that ever-so-slight sliver of faith in Zacchaeus to blossom into a burgeoning cloud. He said, *“Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.”* (Luke 19:5) Zacchaeus had never laid eyes upon the Lord before this moment. But something sparked in his heart, and he did not waste any time in coming down.. Once the Lord calls YOUR name, friend, you, too, will come down in humble obedience. Even if you were Lazarus of Bethany lying stone dead in a rocky tomb, you will burst forth into the light of day if our Lord merely calls your name.

We see two different circumstances in these two men and events. The first was blind and unable to seek the Lord out by searching. The second was not physically blind, but sought the Lord out to satisfy a curiosity. In the end, BOTH men were saved! It matters not how we come to Christ – whether brought blind and stumbling; or else running to see Him out of curiosity, it is the Lord who calls us and sets the stage. He may use our infirmities to our profit in waiting for His loving call; or, He may use our senseless curiosity (senseless to us, but not Him) to draw us to where He is. It matters not what means the Lord finds to draw us near as long as we come to Him. He knows us as surely as any shepherd knows his sheep. He knows our ways, our predicament, and the simple measure needed to find and draw His Elect.

Are you blindly stumbling about searching? Be still! The Lord will find you. Are you aimlessly searching the city streets for that which cannot satisfy? Rise above the masses of worldly people and look to His coming. He will stop and call your name. Do not, however, place your trust in the arm of flesh, but God only.

“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” (Matthew 15:14)