

What Do You Want?

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About 25 years ago, we had a couple come to our church. Their name was Tom. I mean, Tom. Yep. Tom and Joyce.

Tom and Joyce came a couple weeks and they came up to me after the service, hey, we like your church. We're going to attend this church. Oh, great. That's exciting. But they said, we can't support it financially.

We give heavily to missions, and we just can't work that out with our budget. That's fine. That's no problem. A couple weeks later, I got a call. They said, hey, come on down to our house.

They lived inshore. So I went down, and after a little small talk, Tom says, well, after attending your church another couple weeks, we decided that we are going to support your church. That's great. That's really good. And then he whipped out his checkbook with his pen and he said, how much do you need?

That's an open ended question. A lot of thoughts go through your mind when somebody says, how much do you need? My first thought was, is he talking about me or is he talking about the church? And then if he's talking about me, well, I got a lot of needs. How much do I need?

How much do I ask for? Is that too much? Is that too little? So I gave the only answer I knew. I said, I don't know.

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And he said, well, your transmission went on your car, didn't it? And I said, yeah, how much that costs? It's 2500. He said, you're going to Honduras, aren't you, with your wife? I said, yeah.

How much? That costs about 2500. And he said, will 3000 be okay? I said, yeah, 3000 will be okay. I mention that story because on the way home from California a few weeks ago, I stopped to visit a friend in Salem, and he's got a ministry in a large church with the seniors.

And he said that he had been really meditating on some words of Christ. And those words were, what do you want me to do for you? Several times Christ asked that question to individuals, what do you want me to do for you? Kind of an open ended question, isn't it? And I've been meditating on that.

If I had the opportunity, if Christ asked me, what do you want me to do for you, what would my answer be? And I've been thinking about that. That's an open ended question. And I want you to think about that this morning also. Now we could all say, well, I need healing or I need finances or I need a job or I need relationships restored, or I need this or I need that.

We probably have laundry lists of needs, don't we? And there's nothing wrong there. We're encouraged in the scriptures to ask the Lord to bring your request before him. But what if he only had one gift given? Jesus said, I can only give you one thing.

What would you ask him? What would you ask him? As I mentioned, I've been thinking about that this last two or three weeks. What would I ask for Jesus? For one of the people who was asked this, was this blind Bartimaeus.

In the Bible, Jesus is going through Jericho. He's had lunch with Zacchaeus. He's got another 18 miles to go uphill to Jerusalem that day, to arrive at the Mount of Olives and Palm Sunday to come into Jerusalem, and a large crowd following him. And as they're leaving the city, this man, Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus means son of Timotheus.

Timotheus means highly praised. Here's this man named highly praised, who is a blind beggar on the side of the road. And he hears that Jesus is going through town, and he starts crying out. And Jesus asked him, one of the few people in the Bible, he asked him, what do you want me to do for you? What do you want me to do for you?

And when he mentioned his request, Jesus answered that request. And so, as I meditated on this, well, maybe this blind Bartimaeus has something to say to you and I about what we would ask for and how we could receive that. This story is mentioned in all three gospels. There's a few different details about it. In Matthew, they're coming into the city, and there's two blind beggars, which I believe there were in Luke, same story, one blind beggar going out of the city, but doesn't mention some of the details, but Mark does.

I can't help but believe that Mark met this man later in life and he shared his story with him. And, of course, Mark has recorded it for you and I, and an important story. And so let's take a look at that. What should we ask for? If Jesus says, what can I do for you?

And how, in our response, how would we encourage him to give us what we asked for? What we asked for. We all have needs, what we ask for. So just a few things I want you to see there. First of all, we need to realize that Bartimaeus was a beggar.

He was a beggar because he was blind. We don't know if he was born blind or if he became blind later, but we know he's blind. I believe it was later in life something happened to take away his sight. And as a result of that, he became a beggar. He was in a society that if you had a handicap, you were in trouble.

There was no safety net to take care of you. He was not able to work, not able to do the things that normal people do. And so that reduced him to begging on the side of the road, the road to Jericho. So every day he was led out to that road and maybe had a mat he sat on, and he sat there. And as people walked by, he would reach out alms to the poor, alms of the poor, hoping that somebody would have mercy on him and maybe give a few, the nerd or whatever they gave to help him with his knees.

And so there he was one day, and a large crowd was coming, and he started to ask, who is it? And he found out that it was Jesus of Nazareth.

He realizes he has no right to ask Jesus for anything. He is a beggar. And I would submit that if you're going to receive anything from Christ of any value, you've got to come to that place where you realize that you are nothing but a beggar. You have no right to ask Jesus for anything. He doesn't owe any of us anything.

All we can do is cry out, Jesus, have mercy on me. And the fact that we're here today means that he has. Whether we're believers or unbelievers, he has had mercy on us to bring us to this place. And so, first of all, we come to a place where we realize our need. We are simply beggars in this world.

We're dependent on the blessings of God, and without that, we have nothing. So he cries out, and in the same way, you and I have to come to that place when we realize I am a beggar, I have no resources of my own, no right. We have to cry out to Jesus. It wouldn't have done any good to cry out to anyone else who was going along that road. They couldn't take care of his knee.

But somehow he had heard about Jesus, and it gave him faith. The Bible says faith comes by hearing. He had heard, even though he was a beggar, on the side of the road. Maybe he just heard people walking by, talking about Jesus. Jesus had just gone to Zacchaeus house to have lunch with him.

I imagine ears were buzzing as people talked about Jesus having lunch with this sinner. And somehow it gave him the faith to believe that Jesus could meet his need. And in my mind, that gives you and I the responsibility to share what Jesus has done. For us. How is someone else going to put their faith in Jesus if they haven't heard that he's the living God, that he has all power, that he cares for us, and he wants to work in our lives, and he wants to give us good gifts.

He heard that. And as a result of that, he cried out to Jesus. People told him, shut up. He's a busy man. He's on his way to Jerusalem.

He's got important things to do there. Big crowd following him. And yet he cries out even the more. And when Jesus hears that, he says, tell him to come. We need to recognize and realize and believe that if we cry out to Jesus, he cares.

He wants to get involved in our life. He wants to meet the real needs of our life. Doesn't mean he's going to answer all your prayers or take care of all your needs, but he wants to meet the real need of your life. And so he calls in, and it says that he jumped up and he took off his cloak. Matthew and Luke, don't mention that the cloak, that cloak was a beggar's cloak.

It's something identified him as a beggar. It was probably dirty. It was probably ratty, and. But when people were walking by, they would realize there's a beggar. They could tell by the coat.

And he took that off. And it made me think, when we come to Jesus, we have to take off the things that we identify ourselves with. We may identify ourselves as, I'm an athlete, or I'm just, or I'm poor. I don't deserve it. You know, no one really cares about me.

And that identity shapes our life. And sometimes it makes us feel unworthy of God really helping us. But if he calls you, you are worthy, and you have to come not with that identity as a beggar, but you come as identity of a person that has a need, a person that Jesus cares about, that he loves, that he wants to interact in your life. And so he comes. And that's when Jesus asked him, what do you want me to do for you?

What do you want me to do for you? And of course, we're not surprised. The blind man said to him, rabbi, let me recover my sight. Let me recover my sight. Which makes me believe that he had lost his sight.

He wasn't worn blind. And of course, Jesus responded, go your way. Your faith has made you well. Go your way. Your faith has made you well.

It's interesting that Jesus did not say, go your way. Recover your sight.

What this man needed more than eyesight was to be made well. That word is a different word than recovering your eyesight. And the word means to save or deliver. Whatever had happened in this life, there had been sin involved. And the thing that he needed more than anything else was salvation.

He needed to be well. We are not well in this life unless we know Jesus Christ. He alone can save us from our sins that would send us to hell. And yes, this man wanted to see, and he did recover his sight. But what he needed more than anything else was to be made well.

It is well with my soul, and he could say that. And so it says after that and immediately after he was made well, immediately he recovered his sight. Can you imagine what that must have been like? A man who had been sitting on the side of the road begging because he was blind, who couldn't see the sun come up or the sun go down, the people passing by on the road, who was completely dependent on others to take care of him because of his blindness. And all of a sudden, his eyes are open, and what is it he sees?

He saw Jesus. He's standing right in front of him, blind, and his eyes are open, and he sees Jesus. We're not told what that was like, but I can just imagine that when he saw Jesus, he looked into his eyes and he saw eyes of love. He saw someone that loved him with all of his heart. And I believe it touched his heart to know that even though he'd been a beggar, downcast, probably people accusing him, you've got to be a sinner.

You wouldn't be blind. No one wanted anything to do with him. Hoping to get a few pennies as they pass by on the road, and he meets the son of God who loves him. What an amazing thing. And it changed his life.

Jesus said, go your way. What way do you go? It says he recovered his sight and followed him on the way. This man who had been sitting on the side of the road begging for we don't know how many years, gets up, gets his recite, and now he's on the road to Jerusalem following Jesus. And I have every belief that this man continued

to be a follower of Jesus.

Like I said, I believe that his name is mentioned here because Mark knew him, because he was also a disciple. It changed his life. And I had an experience like this myself. And I won't go into the details. I shared it before, but after a year in the ministry, very discouraged.

All I want to do is quit. I can't do this. God. An opportunity to go to Billy Graham Crusade up in Calgary, Alberta, in 1981. And somehow I believed that God was going to give me the message I needed, and he did that first night.

And afterwards, I went back to my room and I was praying. I was on my knees and I was crying out to God, oh, God, I can't. I can't do this on my own without you. I'm hopeless. I'm helpless.

And I prayed for quite a while. And then I thought, well, I've got to get up early. I better go to bed. So I got in bed and I started thinking, no, I haven't got through to God. And I started praying some more.

And then all of a sudden, and it wasn't a real event, but in my mind's eye, all of a sudden, I was a baby, and I was in the arms of Jesus, and he was rocking me back and forth, and he was looking into my eyes and I was looking into his eyes and he was telling me, I love you, I love you, I love you. And the feeling just overwhelmed my heart. I can't even to this day describe what that feeling was like. And you know what? After that, nothing changed.

Ministry was still difficult. There were still problems, all the things that you deal with in life. But one thing did change. And what changed was that no matter what I went through, I know that Jesus loved me, and that sustained me now for the last 42 years, no matter what I'm going through. And there's difficulties in life, and we are beggars in so many ways, but I don't care what I go through, I know that Jesus loves me.

He can work things out for my good if I will just submit to him and come before him crying out for mercy. God, I don't deserve you to do one thing in my life. I haven't

earned anything. I can't always share. Work hard that trying to be okay for God and never really felt that way, now we have to realize that it's because he is a loving God.

He loves us no matter what we do, and we need to come to that place where we see that, that we see the love of Christ. And so I've been thinking about this. As I said, if I were to ask for even one thing, what would I ask for? And I think it would be what this blind Bartimaeus said, I want to see. I want you to recover my sight.

I want to see Jesus. You see, if you see him in that intimate kind of way, that means you're going to know him. And the more you know him, the more secure in this life you're going to be because you trust him to do the work that he's going to do in your life. And that doesn't mean that you won't face problems, discouragements, failures, sins, all the things that we deal with all the time. But it does mean that we're going to have the confidence to go on because he loves me and because he loves me, he's going to give me the ability to follow him.

That's why Paul, at the end of his life, a man who probably knew Christ, he saw Christ, by the way, after the resurrection, after he came to Christ and the one who given us most of the New Testament. At the end of his life, he says, I want to know Christ. And we think, wait a second, Paul, does anybody know Christ better than you? Probably not. He's given us much of what we know about Christ in the New Testament, but he's still at that place.

I want to know Christ, he says later, not that I have achieved all of these things, but I keep pressing on for the high mark of following Jesus Christ. And then he asks, I want to experience your power. The more we know him, the more his power is going to be at work in our lives and the power to follow after Christ Jesus. And then he said, even the willingness to share in his sufferings, if that's what it takes, I want that kind of relationship to be a partner with him. So somehow to attain the resurrection of the dead.

And that's the goal, the resurrection, to stand before Jesus. We see him through a mirror darkly. Now we're getting kind of a picture, and hopefully you're growing,

getting a clear vision of what he's like. But none of us will see him perfectly down here. But there's going to be that day when we step through that door we call death.

Unless he comes back first. We'll step through that. We'll step on the other side. Our eyes are going to be opened fully, completely, and we will see Jesus face to face, and we'll see a love that we can hardly even comprehend today. And that's worth it.

I'm not discouraging you to ask for things. We have needs and we're told to ask for them. But I am encouraging you, ask for what's really important, mess and no Christmas, to see him as he is. Those other things will be added in your life and we'll glorify him for it. But ultimately, what really matters and what's really going to meet the need of our soul is to see Jesus Christ.

I pray that that would be what God puts that desire into your heart and that he would answer that prayer for each one of us. That's great, Father. We just thank you again for this account of this man, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar who had the privilege of seeing Jesus. I didn't mention this, Father, but this is the last miracle that Jesus did.

Other than the fig tree going barren, there's one that I believe that he wants us to see the truth in this. That's the goal of life. To see Jesus Christ. I pray that you would help each one of us to have that hunger, that desire, that thirst to see Christ in our lives. Open our eyes, that we might see Jesus.

Pray in Christ's name. Amen.