

Where the Least Are Greatest

Part 3 of Sermon Series: *The Upside-Down Kingdom*

a sermon based on

Mark 10:46-52

(with reference to Job 42:1-6, 10-17)

and delivered on

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Occasionally, I've been known to follow a rabbit trail while leading a Bible study or when I'm preaching without a manuscript. I see some thing; and I start pursuing that. It can happen when I look up some word in the dictionary. The next thing I know I'll have been reading the dictionary for an hour.

It happened again this week as I was trying to prepare for my sermon. Here, we have two texts – Job and Mark – in which a man receives restoration: Job his fortunes and Bartimaeus his eyesight; but I got hung up on four words: “Bartimaeus son of Timaeus.” Allow me to explain. In Hebrew, *bar* at the beginning of a name means “son of”. Therefore, the name *Bartimaeus* literally means “son of Timaeus,” sort of like the surname Johnson or Erickson means “the son of John” or “the son of Erick.”

So, why does Mark think it's important to tell us that Bartimaeus was the son of Timaeus when his name says it all? The Gospel of Mark was written for Gentile Christians, and he does take time to explain various Hebrew expressions. But here's the thing. When he does, Mark always says, “which means.” He doesn't do that here, but he wants us to know that Bartimaeus is the son of Timaeus. Why? It's the shortest Gospel. He doesn't waste words. This eats at scholars because no one can figure out why he makes such a point of it here.

Maybe it has something to do with Timaeus name? In Hebrew, *Timaeus* means *honor*. But Mark didn't explain that. So what is it?

Bear with me, please, because what I'm about to offer comes from less than a week of research, and I don't have anything more than a gut feeling to back it up. *Timaeus* is also the title of a book by Plato – a Greek Gentile; (Remember whom Mark was writing for.) and he's also the title character in that book.

Without going into a long discussion of philosophy, I'm going to try to sum up Timaeus position really quickly: There are two natures to the cosmos, the physical world and eternal world. “The physical one is the world which changes and perishes: therefore it is the object of opinion and unreasoned sensation. The eternal one never changes: therefore it is apprehended by reason (28a)” “Timaeus suggests that since nothing ‘becomes or changes’ without cause, then the cause of the universe must be ... a god, a figure Timaeus refers to as the father and maker of the universe. And since the universe is fair, the (god) must have looked to the eternal model to make it, and not to the perishable one (29a)..¹”

Let me put it another way: The world can change and be changed and perishes, but God's intention never does.

So what does this have to do with Bartimaeus being the son of Timaeus? Maybe Mark was trying to draw attention to the other Timaeus as it related to Bartimaeus. {sort of a tongue twister}.

Bartimaeus “when he heard that it was Jesus” (Mk 10:47a) shouted for him; but the crowd and the disciples told him to be quiet. In effect they were telling him to be content with his blindness and to accept his life as a beggar. But Bartimaeus would have none of it. He shouted louder, “Son of David (the messianic designation) have mercy on me.” (Mk 10:47b) Bartimaeus wasn't willing to accept that he would always remain blind. So when Jesus asks, “What do you want from me?” (He was a beggar after all. He could have wanted a handout. People come to churches and ministers for that all the time.) He says, “let me see again.” Jesus speaks the word and immediately he regains his sight and then follows Jesus. (Mk 10:51-52)

Remember that rich man a couple of weeks ago? The one who said, “Good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life?” But when told that he should sell what he had and give it to the poor - and then to follow Jesus. He was invited by the man – but he went away sad. (Mk 10:17-22) Why? Because he didn't want his world to change. He liked it the way it was even though he could tell there was something missing. He'd followed all the rules, but he had this sense that his

life wasn't aligned with heaven. He could look around and see the trees, the people, the buildings; but he was blind. He couldn't see that the kingdom of heaven had come into his midst in Jesus, and he wasn't willing to give up his vision for Jesus' vision of holy living.

Bartimaeus – saw. Yes, he saw the trees, the people, and the buildings after Jesus restored his sight; but before that he saw – like Timaeus he saw that the eternal plan rested not with “a god” but with “the God” – “Son of David.” He refused to be satisfied or content with a broken world and a broken life where he was reduced to begging.

Then there's Job. Throughout the book, his friends try to convince him that his brokenness is God's doing because he must have done something to deserve it. Job complains that no he hasn't deserved it and refuses to accept their counsel, and he borders on blaming God. Still he remains faithful, and as an example to the others, God restores Job's fortunes which Satan had stripped from him trying to prove that he would turn from God's eternal plan.

How have we been blinded to God's intention? Maybe, you had your fortune stripped away in the 2007 recession, (I know that my pension investments took a hit.) Maybe you or others you love were out of work for a long time. Maybe, you're worried that the world has changed from when you were a kid and things seemed so good, and wish you could just turn back the calendars. The world says, “Be angry. Cast blame.” Other times we think we're just supposed to accept it because it will be better when we get to heaven. That's what slave owners told their slaves to hold them back. It's how they rationalized a way of living that really didn't match with God's intention.

But here's the good news. That same God who restored Bartimaeus' eyesight that same God restored Job's fortunes, because Satan's destruction wasn't in his plan – has an eternal plan and a plan for eternity for each one of you. It's a plan for hope and holiness. It's a plan – that through Jesus – we are privileged to see.

But we have to follow him. When we do, he reveals what the kingdom of God should look like – and how this world should look like it. Then he invites us to join him in that vision. He invites us to reject the anger and blame – and to claim for ourselves what he has in store for us – and not only “in store for us” but in store for the world through us.

That rich man was satisfied with what he had and refused to follow Jesus even when he knew something was missing. Bartimaeus saw. Bartimaeus saw Jesus for who he was. Bartimaeus saw Jesus as the answer for everything that was broken in his life and he followed. He saw hope and promise.

Through Jesus, we to can find hope, promise, and life. AMEN.

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timaeus_\(dialogue\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timaeus_(dialogue))