

The Gospel According to Mark - Jolly Beggars

Jolly Beggars

Mark 10:46-52

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Good morning church. It is a joy to see everyone. Today, we will be studying Mark 10:46-52 which has turned out to be especially convicting for me as I have prepared to share with you. It is amazing how God will speak to your heart when you study his word. He comforts us, challenges us, convicts us, and changes us as we are “washed in the water of the Word” as the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians.

It is a humbling experience to have the Spirit of God confront you in your sinfulness or your weaknesses and engage your heart in a process of refinement. This has been the case for me. I have wrestled with my own sinfulness, complacency, and lack of compassion as I have studied.

Today we are going to be discovering some basics about “as you are going discipleship.” And while the points may seem basic, living them out, I believe has become one of the greatest struggles for Christians in our culture today. Increasingly, Christians are losing sight of our priority, our work of service as disciples unto the Lord. Maybe you are wondering what this work is. I’m sure you have heard of Jesus’s Great Commission before, and so before read about him in Mark, let us be reminded of his words in Matthew 28:18-20.

Matt. 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Matt. 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Matt. 28:20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

These are the last words that Jesus spoke to his disciples before he left for the splendor of Heaven. And, I want you to hear this:

The last words of Jesus must be the first work of his disciples.

Not just a part of our lives, but it should be our very purpose. Jesus says our life’s priority is to “go,” and make disciples. The word “go” is also translated “as you are going,” make disciples.

And I believe that many of us, in our current culture, have lost sight of this. I think that our culture has become so busy and focused on worldly priorities that our vision has become blurred to the first component of disciple-making—the “as you are going” part.

But in our story today, Jesus shows us how we can reclaim an “as you are going” discipleship focus. So, let’s begin by reading the first part in Mark 10:46-48

Mark 10:46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging.

Mark 10:47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Mark 10:48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Recognize that hurting people are all around us (46-48)

A. On the way (46a)

The first thing that we learn from Jesus as he exemplifies “as you are going” discipleship is that we need to recognize that there hurting people are all around us. And we don’t have to look far to find them. They are often on the way to where we are going. Jesus, his disciples, and a crowd are leaving Jericho and they are heading somewhere. Where are they going?

A few weeks ago, I preached on Palm Sunday and we had skipped ahead in our Mark series to the very next passage in chapter 11. The passage provides the account of the triumphal entry of Christ into the city of Jerusalem where he would spend his final week on earth preparing for his death by crucifixion.

From that message, we learned that Jesus is heading to the city of Jerusalem for the Passover. When he arrived, the crowd waved the palms because they believed Jesus was coming as a national figure, a king to defeat their enemies, free them from bondage, and establish a new kingdom, free from the oppression of foreign empires, which at this time was the Roman government.

We learned that this crowd was open to Jesus, but for all the wrong reasons. Perhaps many of the same people that we see with Jesus on this road in Jericho are the ones who later raised a palm branch as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.

But here is what I want you to see in this first verse: Jesus has a mission. He is leaving the city of Jericho and he is on his way to fulfill his mission, to die for the sins of the world. And, in the wake of his journey, he has disciples and a large crowd that are following him. So, you see, as he has been on his way this whole time, he has been ministering to hurting people.

And in following the example of Christ, I believe it is appropriate for you to ask yourself: If my mission is to make disciples, who do I have following me, and who do I have walking with me as I am on the way, living out my life?

If you cannot think of anyone, perhaps you are not taking the commission of Christ seriously. Or is possible that you have allowed other things to get in the way of what Jesus has called you to accomplish for him?

As you are going about the normal rhythm of your life, could it be that you have misplaced your objectives. As you are going to the ballfield for your kids, do you look to make disciples on the way, or are you only there to make every effort and sacrifice possible to make a travel team.

Do you see the mom who sits next to you who is going through a divorce? Do you see the coach who just lost two family members in one week or are you frustrated that he didn't get you the schedule in time?

As you are going to school, do you prioritize making disciples or are you focusing all of our attention on getting into the best college with the best scholarship. Perhaps you are barely scraping by because you're more concerned about doing what it takes to achieve popularity.

Do you see the young woman sitting next to you in class that wears long sleeves because she cuts herself? Do you see the young man who walks alone in the hallway because he just moved to town?

When you are going to work, is your focus making disciples, or doing whatever it takes to get the promotion? Or, I believe an even deeper struggle could be that you are resigned to just make it through the day so that you can get out of there. But, because you are unsatisfied or complacent, you just keep your head down, get your pay check, and go home.

Do you see the co-worker who just found out that his wife has cancer? Do you see the teacher across the hall who is crying during her lunch break? Do you recognize the needs?

I'm not saying that educational pursuits, job promotions, or goals in sports are bad, but if objectives other than making disciples become your life's purpose, then they are misplaced. If you are blind to the needs of others around you while you are on the way to meeting your daily objectives, then perhaps you need to slow down enough to look around at those in your path and consider your main objective.

Church let us not forget that we have a life mission to make disciples and it begins by recognizing that hurting people are all around us on the way. But there are also hurting people out of the way.

Recognize that hurting people are all around us (46-48)

A. On the way (46a)

B. Out of the way (46b)

Mark 10:46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging.

Jesus had his disciples following him and a crowd walking with him on the way to fulfill his mission, and on the way, he hears the sound of a beggar crying out to him. He was off the road, on the side, out of the way.

Bartimaeus is a blind beggar. I want to ask everyone to do something for me, just close your eyes your eyes for a moment. Imagine that this darkness is all you have ever seen—never the leaves of a tree blowing in the wind, never a sunrise, never a child playing with friends, never the faces of your family, just darkness.

Imagine what this darkness means for your present situation and your ability to care you're your needs. What about your future, and your ability to work to provide money for yourself and your family. This is the plight of Bartimaeus. Put yourself in his shoes. He is a beggar—which is someone who is totally reliant on others to meet their needs.

Beggar – totally reliant on others to meet his/her needs.

Every day, Bartimaeus, because of his blindness find a spot in town or on the side of the road to get some money from others. But, on this particular time of the year, he knows that many people are traveling to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. The roads are busy and he has great opportunity to make more money during this season than possibly for the rest of the year combined.

So, he positions himself on the side of the road leaving Jericho to beg people on the final leg of their journey to Jerusalem. For the travelers, he is on their way to the destination, but he is also out of the way, on the side of the road.

My friends, there are hurting people that are out the way that we don't normally see in our daily routine. There are those who are on our way that we encounter, but there are others who are just enough out the way that we don't often recognize it.

Obviously, we have our own homeless population. But, what about your co-worker's mom who is a shut-in? Your friend's dad who just became a widower? Your hairstylist's whose son is a drug addict? The lady off to the side in Starbucks who makes your drink whose mother just passed away?

There are people all around that are close enough if we just look. Our story today is a great example for us that we also need to see those who are out of the way. In the last part of recognizing that there are hurting people all around us, there are those who are in the way.

Recognize that hurting people are all around us (46-48)

- A. On the way (46a)
- B. Out of the way (46b)
- C. In the way (47-48)

Let's look at the next two verses in Mark 10:47-48:

Mark 10:47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Mark 10:48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

For whatever reason, even though Bartimaeus was on the side the road begging, he was in the way of crowd. Perhaps his cries for mercy annoyed them. Perhaps Jesus was teaching them as they walked, and they thought that he was being rude. But, what if they were ashamed that they had not taken care of Bartimaeus and didn't want Jesus to notice?

Can you think of those people in your life, or a certain kind of person whose needs get in the way? Maybe it is someone that you never think would come to Christ, or a person who is so messed up that you don't want to even try. Or a person who you feel doesn't do enough to help themselves. I think if we think about it, we all have people that just get in the way.

This past winter, we had a homeless man come to the front door of the church. I remember that day was especially cold, so without hesitation I invited him in and gave him a cup of coffee in the café.

As I sat down to speak to him, I was hit with probably the foulest odor that I have ever smelled. At once, the smell of urine, vomit, sweat, garbage, and just extreme body odor hit my nostrils and it made my eyes start to water. I found out he had been sleeping in an abandoned shed in the woods for a few weeks.

Later, while this man went to use our bathroom, Jay walked in and that smell hit him. It was like he ran into a brick wall. He stopped in his tracks and looked at me as if I were responsible. Have you ever answered

someone in song lyrics? I was like, “It ain’t me, it ain’t me, it’s that dude in bathroom!” It was so bad that we had to throw the chair away that he sat on.

When our friend came back, I was already trying to figure out an escape plan. I tried to keep the conversation as short as possible. I gave him a list of resources that are available to him off-site. I offered to leave to go get him some food. I even told about the Giving Hope Retreat where he could go and be a part of their one year discipleship retreat free of charge.

Surprisingly, very few people take us up on that option. But that day, I rolled the dice with the option. To my surprise, though, this homeless man said, “I want to go there. Could you take me now?” I said, “It’s in Lacombe, 20 minutes away, are you sure you want to do this?” He said, “That sounds like the place I need to be. I would love for you to take me there.”

So, now I’m thinking about my car and how this is going to work. So, I remembered that I have a seat cover I could put down. And, it was so cold, and this man didn’t have a jacket, I figured I could help him, and my car, if I were able to find a jacket in the warehouse. Which I did. I came back and put it on him and finally got him in the car.

I’m going to tell you the rest of the story in just a moment, but up to this point, I was not really concerned with recognizing this man’s needs. I was really focused on how much he was in the way of my schedule, my car, my comfort. It wasn’t about him at all. In this moment, I was like the crowd in our story, trying to shut the man down as quickly as possible.

What about you? Are there people in your life who you recognize as hurting, but their hurt just gets in your way? Maybe you have a person that you avoid because their struggle would cause you to act? Maybe you avoid someone because you are afraid that you just simply won’t know how to help them.

Perhaps you feel like you don’t know how to counsel someone through a difficult situation so you say nothing instead of something. Perhaps you are like me in my example and helping someone would affect your daily life and you are own comfort so you try to avoid them. They are in the way.

But Jesus shows us that a person who may be in our way still needs to be seen. They still need to be noticed. But he goes even further, and Jesus acts. He does something that goes against the way of the crowd. Let’s look at verses 49-52.

Mark 10:49 Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So, they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.”

Mark 10:50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

Mark 10:51 “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

Mark 10:52 “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Jesus does the exact opposite of the crowd. When they are trying to shut him down and pass him by on the road, Jesus stops for the Bartimaeus. And he shows by example that we too should stop for hurting people. By stopping, he first show that we should give them our attention.

Stop for hurting people (49-52)

A. Give them your attention (49-50)

Jesus is on the way to die for the sins of the world and he stops dead in his tracks and he gives a poor blind man his attention. He says to the crowd “call him” over here. This shows us the heart of our savior that he would take time to stop and serve those in desperate need of him.

And, now the same crowd that was telling him to be quiet is responding to Jesus request by calling him over. “Get up bro!” “Cheer up man!” “He’s calling you.” All attention is now on Bartimaeus. When you recognize hurting people around you, do you stop? Do you give them your attention.

I think it is intentional that is the only time in Mark’s gospel that a recipient of this kind of miracle has his name given. Maybe it is so that other people reading could actually go and see Bartimaeus so he could give an account of the miracle.

But, I believe the Lord prompted Mark to include it to remind us that even those that hurt the most among us have a name and need our attention. The have a name and when we see their need, we can call them over,

and find out who they are, learn their name so they know they are not invisible and have value.

Stop for hurting people (49-52)

A. Give them your attention (49-50)

B. Listen to their needs (51)

So, when you stop for hurting people, give them your attention, and secondly, listen to their needs. Jesus asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" Just last week, we learned that James and John asked Jesus to do for them whatever they ask. And Jesus asked the same question, "What do you want me to do for you?"

So, they ask Jesus for the best seats in the kingdom. What a difference Bartimaeus' answer is: "I want to see." James Edwards says it well...

The Sons of Thunder asked for extraordinary glory, and Bartimeaus asked only for ordinary health.

Even though Jesus knew what this man needed, he asked a question. He wanted to hear him. He wanted to understand his plight. Perhaps he wanted to reinforce that while others have avoiding him and telling him to shut up, that he wants to listen.

When we stop for hurting people we should give them our attention, learn their names, let them know they have value, but we should also learn of their need by asking them and listening to what they have to say. Finally, when we stop, we should try our best to meet their need as the Holy Spirit leads us.

Stop for hurting people (49-52)

A. Give them your attention (49-50)

B. Listen to their needs (51)

C. Meet their need (52)

Jesus listened to his request to see and then he met his need

Mark 10:52 "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

I want us to try and put ourselves in this moment. I want you to visualize the moment that the light hits Bartimaeus' eyes. He squints because it is like waking up out of a dead sleep and the lights get turned on. For the first time, he sees brilliant colors that he has never seen before.

And his eyes start welling up with tears because he realizes what has just happened to him. And he looks up at the man who just stopped for him, gave him attention, listened to his need, valued him, and met his need. And when all this comes this comes together in that moment, he sees the face of Jesus, light of the world, standing before him.

As I was the homeless man to Giving Hope Retreat, I was so overwhelmed by his smell and hardly able to breathe, but the Holy Spirit started to convict my heart heavily. In that moment, He reminded of a story I read in college in the book Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire by Jim Cymbala, the pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle.

The pastor recalls an Easter Sunday night when a young church member gave her testimony. At the end, the pastor was sitting on the front of the stage, exhausted after a long day, and a few people were coming to him for prayer.

One of those people was a homeless man named David who had waited for the pastor for a few minutes. Finally, when it was turn, he came up to the pastor, who was met with a similar smell. He said it took his breath away. He had to look to the side to breathe and then return to center to speak.

Pastor Jim said, "David, how long have you been homeless, and where did you sleep last night? David replied, "I've been homeless for six years and I slept in an abandoned truck." So, the pastor had heard enough and took out his money clip to give it over with as quickly as possible.

But, to his surprise, David stopped him and said, "You don't understand, I don't want your money. I'm going to die out there. I want the Jesus that red-haired girl just talked about.

When the Lord reminded me of this story, I just said "Lord, forgive me. I am minister of your gospel and I just wanted to get rid of this man when he was crying out for the help of Christ that I preach about. I

resonate with what Pastor Jim in his own moment of conviction when he wrote,

“The Lord seemed to say to me in that instant, Jim, if you and your wife have any value to me, if you have any purpose in my work—it has to do with this odor. This is the smell of the world I died for.”

The homeless man in Jim’s church went to a rehabilitation facility, and afterward came back and started serving in the church. He ended up getting married and having children. Now, he is on the church staff and leads ministries to help people who have similar needs.

I don’t know what has happened to the man I dropped off at Giving Hope. I made sure he got settled at the retreat, that he got a shower and a meal, but I’m not sure what happened after he went to the New Orleans mission. But I do know that in the last fifteen minutes I had with him in my car, I did my best to listen to him, and introduce him to the light of the world who changed my life.

We need to do our best to meet the needs of those around us. Sometimes the need is too great and we will need others to join us and help. Sometimes we just rely on God and he will supply where we cannot. But, don’t ever forget that the greatest way to meet someone’s need is to introduce them to Jesus.

Today, I titled the message, Jolly Beggars, which is a thought that comes from C.S. Lewis. He wrote,

Grace substitutes a full, childlike and delighted acceptance of our need, a joy in total dependence. We become “jolly beggars.”

That is exactly what Bartimaeus became that day. All his days prior, he was a beggar totally dependent upon others for his need, but on this day, he became a jolly beggar, having joy in total dependence on Jesus.

When we think about “as you are going” discipleship, we should remember that we are jolly beggars as well. And because we have joy in total dependence on Jesus, we also should recognize the needs of others and stop for them like Jesus stopped for us.

It is appropriate for us to view this passage as an example for us on how we are to help the Bartimaeuses of our world “as we are going.” But, it is often the case that Jesus helps us to see that we are Bartimaeus, and in a spiritual sense, this story represents a type of healing of our spiritual blindness.

You see, like Bartimaeus, we are spiritually blind, and we need to recognize our need for Jesus. And while we are in the gutter, on the side of the road, living in the mud and mire of our sinfulness, we have to cry out to Jesus as our savior just like Bartimaeus:

Mark 10:47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

He cried out calling Jesus, Son of David which is a term that means Messiah. He called out to Jesus, recognizing him as the messiah, and asked for mercy. And Jesus stops for him just like he stops for all of those living in sin who call upon his name for mercy. And there is an important detail that I don’t want you to miss. When Jesus called him over, it says,

Mark 10:50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

The cloak was everything for the blind beggar. In the heat of the day, it was his shade. In the cold, it was his covering for warmth. When he was begging, he also would lay it on the ground to collect the money that people would throw down to him.

In doing some further background study on the cloak, I also discovered that in the ancient world, the government would issue these cloaks to beggars as a permit allowing them to beg and to show their legitimacy as a beggar.

So, this cloak was a beggar’s livelihood, his source of survival, everything. And what does he do when Jesus calls him. He throws it aside, showing that he is fully trusting in Jesus to heal him. He throws it in the crowd not caring if he’ll find it again.

Are you spiritually blind today? If so, that is the decision that you have to make to follow Jesus. What are you depending on? What are you trusting in for your salvation? Do you recognize Jesus is the only one who can save you from your sin? Are you willing to throw that aside and come to Jesus? Or will you let the Son of David, the Messiah, the savior of the world, pass you by?

Mark 10:52 “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

If you accept him, he will give you sight. If you beg Jesus for salvation today recognizing that you are totally dependent upon him for mercy, he will open the eyes of your heart, and the light of Christ will shine on the darkness of sin in your life. And you will be filled with joy.

And when he tells you to go, you too will come off the side of the road and follow him as a disciple, a jolly beggar, whose life mission is to go and make other disciples.