

Living Counter-Cultural: God's Power

Matthew 20:29-34

I. People are looking for mercy; 20:29-31.

²⁹ As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. ³⁰ Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" ³¹ The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

The blind men plead with Jesus for mercy. The traditional generosity of Passover season made this a good time for begging. The crowd rebuked the blind men and told them to be quiet. Their needs aggravate the crowds. Their perspective on preference and status parallels the attitude of the disciples and sons of Zebedee's mom. The rebuke simply incites the men to greater outbursts. They are desperate and needy.

People are crying out for help all around us. But if we're like the disciples and focused on status, glory, and getting what we deserve - we will pass right by them or even want them to be quiet. Jesus loves those who annoy and aggravate others with their needs. Instead of being aggravated, wishing they would be quiet - practice putting their needs above your own and share the hope of the gospel of Jesus.

Throw aside your pride and say, maybe for the first time in your life, "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me." You are fully dependent on Jesus' power and kindness. Jesus Christ is your only chance. You must call out to Him in faith, faith in the divine power of Jesus Christ on the cross. As you reach out to Christ obstacles will arise; doubts, set-backs, self-worth challenged, and the feeling of not deserving. Even those closest to you may try to hold you back. Any lasting help will come from Jesus. Jesus still hears the single prayer of a person among the billions on the planet.

II. Jesus responds to the cries for mercy; 20:32-34.

³² Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. ³³ "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." ³⁴ Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

That Jesus stopped among such a large, moving crowd to respond to the request of two individuals illustrates again the counter-cultural values of the kingdom of heaven, in which serving takes precedence, and in which compassion triumphs over the expectations of others. At a time when His mind is expected to be on His arrival in Jerusalem and the fate which awaited Him there, Jesus still takes time to notice and respond to the need of beggars. He is living out the values of the kingdom He has been trying to teach to His followers - servanthood.

They are confronted with an important question. They are physically-disabled, socially-outcasts, and financially-penniless. What do they think Jesus is able to do for them: money, food, clothing, job, friends, or sight? They must decide what they want most. What do they think Jesus can give them? The simple answer, "Lord, we want to see," total faith in Jesus. So, He touches their eyes and heals them. They immediately follow Jesus. They do not go back to begging.

Servanthood ends a ferocious battle of emotional and relational self-centeredness by allowing us to invest ourselves in others to bring about God's blessing in their lives. We're in awe of the goodness of Jesus serving us. We should be even more impressed that His servanthood is the foundation and example for our own servanthood. Jesus deserved all the honor and glory that humanity could give Him, but He thought first of humanity's needs.

Despite whatever rights or status we may claim, we have one primary example-Jesus. He laid aside all the glory of heaven to take up a cross so that He could serve us. Strip away all that you think makes you important and simply consider yourself a servant of Jesus and of each other. Those who put the needs of others first are great in the kingdom of God. We serve in the crises of life, just as Jesus did on His way to the cross.

Many are in the same situation as these men. Maybe not as obvious as blindness, but just as debilitating. Jesus meets you at your point of deepest need and brokenness of sin with His power, mercy, and forgiveness. Cheer up! Jesus is calling you! Will you cry out to Jesus this morning or maybe just cry out inside?

Your root problem is not anyone else, the environment you grew up in, live in, or work in. It is your sin, your pride. You must act on faith and come to Jesus. We can't blame God if we don't accept His offer.

Will you go to the needy around you? Will you hear their cries not as an annoyance but an opportunity to share the real, lasting hope of Jesus Christ?