A BLIND MAN’S LEAP OF FAITH

1. A hop for help
2. A jump for joy

There was a fire in an apartment complex. A little girl was trapped on the second floor. Her only way of escape was a window. Down below a fireman told her to jump – he would catch her. The crowd that had gathered urged the girl to jump. The girl trusted the fireman and jumped and was saved.

You could say that was a leap of faith. She believed the fireman when he said he would catch her. To stay in the apartment would have meant death. To trust the fireman would mean life. So she jumped, trusting the fireman would not miss.

We find something similar in text today. Some disagree by saying it’s not a matter of life or death with Bartimaeus – he was just blind. But the blind man’s eternal future rested on this incident. Like the girl in the burning building, the blind man needed faith. What we see is A BLIND MAN’S LEAP OF FAITH. It began with a hop for help and ended with a jump for joy.

This incident took place in Jericho. This was the place where Jesus met the short tax-collector name Zacchaeus and spend some time at his house. While there, a large crowd gather to hear Jesus.

The large crowd then followed Jesus as he was making his way out of town. As they were leaving, told: A blind man, Bartimaeus the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road begging. The tragic condition of blindness in that society almost invariably left one a beggar.

The commotion caused by the parade of people accompanying Jesus did not go unnoticed by blind Bartimaeus. When he learned that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by, he hopped at the chance for help. So he cried out: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

Bartimaeus had heard about Jesus. The reports of Jesus’ miraculous signs and wise teachings had enabled even this blind man to recognize Jesus as the Promised Messiah. That is why he called Jesus Son of David – a title used for the Promised Messiah.

Bartimaeus called out: Have mercy on me. That is a plea for help, not from just anyone, but help from the Lord. He wanted Jesus to have compassion on him and help him. Bartimaeus knew Jesus was Promised Messiah - one who could help him in his time of need.

But the crowd did not urge Bartimaeus as the crowd did with the little girl in burning building. Instead we are told: Many told him to be quiet. We are not sure why the crowd tried to silence him. Maybe they were annoyed by this disturbance. Or perhaps they regarded this beggar as unworthy of the great Prophet. Whatever the case, Bartimaeus would not be silenced. They told him to be quiet, But he kept shouting all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me!

Bartimaeus hopped for help. He did not care what the crowd thought. He knew who Jesus was and what he could do. So he raised his voice even louder to get the attention of the Son of David. He was not going to miss this opportunity for help. He was not going to let it slip by.

We can learn from the blind man here. Nothing was going to stop him from seeing Jesus. His leap of faith began with this hop for help. Do we do the same thing? Do we hop at the chance to see, hear or learn of Jesus. Do we say with the Psalmist: I rejoiced with those who said to me, Let us go the house of Lord? Or do we let things or people hinder us running to Jesus for help? Do we follow the urging of family and friends who try to quiet us about out faith in Jesus? Do the cover-ups of pet sins, the burdens of material possessions, the smokescreen of self-righteous pride – prevent us hopping at the chance to receive...
blessings from the Lord?

Like Bartimaeus, we know who Jesus is. He is the Son of David – he is the Promised Messiah. He is the one who has the power to heal and save. We believe Jesus is our Savior from sin.

But that is something we would never know on our own. Like Bartimaeus, we too were blind – spiritually blind. Being spiritually blind, there is nothing we could do to make ourselves see the light Jesus has to offer. God’s Holy Spirit brought us to faith. He led us to see Jesus as he really is: as Son of David and our Savior. We joyfully acknowledge him as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Then take the leap of faith as Bartimaeus did. Go to the Lord. That is not taking a chance. He has the power to help. Why, don’t we confess with the Psalmist: My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Doesn’t God himself urge us: Call on me in the day of distress. I will deliver you, and you will honor me.

But often people say we are to ask God for help only in spiritual matters. But none of those passages just mentioned limits it to just spiritual things. They can and do include physical problems in our lives: whether it is problems at work, school, with car, house, physical ailment – whatever. We can pray for whatever we want. Take that leap of faith. Take your problems, cares and worries to the one who really cares about you – to one who can help you in your time of need. Lay them at these feet and leave them there.

Go to God in prayer for all your physical problems and also for your spiritual problems. Perhaps you are bothered by and feel bad about some sin you have committed. It is making your life miserable. Then cry out as Bartimaeus did: Have mercy on me. God assures you for Jesus’ sake your sin is forgiven. Then don’t let it trouble you. God has thrown your sin away – as far as east is from the west. Because of Jesus, your slate’s been wiped clean and Jesus not only removed the sin, but he also died for the guilt of sins too. As we plead for God’s mercy, our Savior assures us: Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven. Go and sin no more.

God wants and expects us to come to him for help, no matter what the problem may be. Don’t let pride or pet sins or low opinion of yourself keep you from hopping to the Lord for help. Take a leap of faith. Trust that the Lord can and will help.

Bartimaeus would not let the crowd silence him as he cried out to Jesus. He wanted Jesus’ attention and he succeeded. We are told: Jesus stopped and said, Call him. They called the blind man, saying, Cheer up! Get up. He is calling you!

Imagine how Bartimaeus felt. His persistent prayer paid off. Jesus stopped the procession and summoned the blind man to himself. Obviously no one was too insignificant for Jesus. Mark informs us that the by-standers suddenly encouraged Bartimaeus: Cheer up! Get up! How quickly their attitude changed.

Taking the leap of faith, Bartimaeus then jumped for joy. We are told: He tossed aside his outer garment, jumped up, and went to Jesus. In his excitement, Bartimaeus threw his outer garment aside. For a person like Bartimaeus to throw aside his cloak was unheard of. It was probably his only possession. It served as the roof over his head and the bed for his body on many a cold night. Leaping from the ground, he threw that cloak aside and he rushed over to Jesus as fast as the parting crowd and directing hands allowed. This was the moment he had been waiting for.

Jesus then asked him: What do you want me to do for you? The blind man replied, Rabboni, I want to see again. At first it may seem like a strange question to ask a blind man. But some in the crowd probably did not know this man was blind. But Jesus also asked this so the blind man would know what Jesus was about to do for him.
Jesus then healed Bartimaeus’s blindness and told him: **Go. Your faith has made you well.** Jesus answered his pray with a **Yes.** Now Bartimaeus could see where he was going.

Now some get the wrong impression that it was the man’s faith that healed him. Jesus did the healing. Jesus offered him the gift of sight. Bartimaeus accepted the gift by faith. He trusted Jesus to help. It is like the example of the little girl jumping from the burning building. Her faith did not save her – the fireman did. And here, as with any miracle, it is the grace of God, not the degree of man’s conviction, that brings about the miracle.

Mark tells us what happened after the miracle: **Immediately he received his sight and began following Jesus on the road.** He asked for **mercy** and was granted **mercy.** Now, the one who once was blind but now could see, joyfully and thankfully followed Jesus down the road – a road which led to Jerusalem, the place of Jesus’ death. But that road also lead to the triumphant empty tomb.

When we think of all the problems God has taken care of for us – whether at home, work, school or physical ailment – be like Bartimaeus and jump for joy and be thankful for God having mercy on us. We can be thankful in all things.

When we get down to it, there is no reason why God would do anything at all for us. We are just rebellious children who slap God in the face every time we sin - and we sin a lot. Why should God listen to us when we do not listen to him? We do not deserve to have God do anything for us, except to send us to hell for our disobedience.

But in his amazing grace God forgives our sins and grants our prayers according to his good and gracious will. That is why we can jump for joy.

We can jump for joy because the one in whom we trust is Jesus Christ and he has the power to heal and save us. So look to him for all things. Follow him throughout life, just as Bartimaeus did. Trust Jesus to guide us safely to our home in heaven where we will see him face to face.

As we call out to the Lord, be like Bartimaeus and do not let the crowds silence you. Do not let things or people keep you from running to Jesus for help.

So take the leap of faith. Recognize Jesus as your Savior. Make the best of the opportunities the Lord has placed before you. Refuse to be silenced by others in talking to the Lord or about the Lord. Set aside whatever hindrances that may be keeping you from taking the leap of faith.

To not trust in Jesus is death. To trust in him means life. So take the leap of faith. Follow him. Trust Jesus to guide you safely to your home in heaven. Amen.

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