



“Eyes of Faith”
Luke 18:31-43

Idea: Believing is seeing.

Intro: A salesman was far away from home, driving down an unfamiliar country highway. Suddenly, he came upon a barn which had a huge bull’s-eye painted in the middle of it. He could hardly believe his eyes. There in the middle of the bull’s-eye were hundreds of arrows, and every arrow was inside the bull’s-eye. As he drove on down the highway, his curiosity got the best of him. He turned his car around and drove back to take another look. He spotted a farmhouse nearby, so he drove to where it was and met the farmer. After they got acquainted, he said, “Say, could you tell me who the excellent marksman is who shot all those arrows inside the bull’s-eye”? The farmer almost laughed out loud, then he explained, “That was the work of the village idiot. He had shot all those arrows at the side of the barn, then he climbed up there and painted a bull’s-eye around all the arrows to create the false impression he was a great marksman.” The salesman responded with a disappointed smirk.

Stories and experiences like this give the impression that things are not what they seem to be. They cause pessimism and foster a cynical disposition. Subsequently, when a story is told or claim made that seems too good to be true, many times we think, “I will believe it when I see it.” Unfortunately, as a fan of the Arkansas Razorbacks, I know all about overhyping. This past fall, the football team was supposedly returning the top quarterback in the conference and a better defense, so they were finally going to be able to compete with Alabama. Well, that hype turned into a disappointing 4-8 season, so I looked to basketball for better news. The talking-heads had spent months praising the coaching staff for the high-ranking transfers they had added. The team was said to be loaded with talent and ready to make a run at the final four or even a national championship. So far, that hype has produced a dismal record and no real hope to make the tournament this season. Therefore, you can only imagine my hesitancy to get excited about Arkansas baseball and their preseason top five ranking. I want to believe, but I will believe it when I see it.

Disappointing failures create a hesitant outlook. Even a trustworthy person is often doubted. In such a situation, the person wanting to believe the best will in essence say, “I believe that you believe, but I will only believe what you believe when I see it take place.” This disposition is understandable and even reasonable for Razorback fans, but, as we shall see, it has no place when it comes to Jesus and the gospel.

In the passage we are examining today, the Lord and His disciples are continuing their journey toward Jerusalem. As they travel, Jesus describes the events that will take place there. Sadly, the disciples could not understand how those things would happen. Jesus being arrested, mocked, beaten, killed, and resurrected did not fit their perspective of the Messiah. They could not see Jesus going through those things, so they did not

believe Him. On the flipside, outside of Jericho sat a blind man who believed Jesus before he ever saw Him. What I want us to discover today is that when it comes to faith, believing is seeing.

Read Luke 18:31-43.

Inquiry: Luke orders this section intentionally. In the first set of verses (vs. 31-34), the Lord meets privately with His disciples to relate the events about to take place in Jerusalem. He spoke prophetically about His passion and resurrection, but the disciples did not understand any of it. It was as if they were blind. In contrast, the blind beggar whose name was Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46) heard Jesus and the crowd who followed Him approaching, so he called out in faith for mercy, believing Jesus could and would give him sight.

As Jesus instructed the disciples about what was awaiting Him in Jerusalem, He referred to Himself as *“the Son of Man”* (vs. 31). This title is used often in the New Testament for Jesus. John employs it thirteen times in His Gospel, and it is found sixty-six times in the other Gospels. It is not a title that others gave to Jesus, but one He gave to Himself. It is derived from Daniel 7, which records the prophet’s vision of judgment being presided over by the Ancient of Days. This vision concludes with the Ancient of Days giving dominion, glory, and a kingdom to the son of man (Dan 7:13-14). As Jesus used this title to describe Himself to the disciples, He was declaring that He was the eternal, sovereign King. Therefore, it is Jesus who is responsible for the high Christology of the New Testament.

Sadly, the disciples did not understand the title or what it meant. They had been with Jesus for nearly three years, hearing His teaching on the Kingdom and seeing His ministry day-after-day. Now, they are approaching Passion Week, and they could not believe what He was describing. They had no room in their concept of the Messiah for one who suffered and died.

Bartimaeus’ sightless faith stands in dramatic contrast to the lack of faith by the disciples. He lived on the outskirts of Jericho, “the City of Roses.” His day had begun like any other. He woke up and went to his normal place along the road, close to the city gate. As he sat there, he listened to the city come alive. He could hear donkeys pulling carts loaded down with produce. He could hear women chatting around the corner and the clomp of camels’ hooves. Suddenly, his blind-sensitive ears heard the rumbling of a great crowd of people approaching the city. As the people got closer, he began to ask about who was coming and heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth. Bartimaeus had never met Jesus before, but he had obviously heard about Him and His ministry. It is likely that he had met people whom Jesus had healed and fed. The word on the street was that Jesus was possibly the long-awaited Messiah. Speculation about Messianic prophecy was high in first century Jewish culture. Therefore, in faith, the blind beggar called out to Jesus, placing on Him the title, *“Son of David.”*

This title Bartimaeus gives to Jesus was theological rather than geographical. It was a calculated and brazen messianic assertion. This is the only reference of it that is found in Luke’s Gospel. God had promised King David that His throne would be established, and his monarchy would have no end (2 Sam 7). Sadly, the miseries of the Greek and Roman domination over Israel’s territory had all but dashed the Jews’ hope in the promise of the ultimate Son of David. Bartimaeus, however, believed all the stories he had heard about Jesus. Adding them up, he believed they correctly revealed Jesus to be more than a man from Nazareth; instead, He was the Son of David. He was Israel’s true King and Messiah.

Luke’s calculated contrast between the disciples’ blindness and the beggar’s sight reveals two principles about faith that we need to hear and heed.

Two Principles:

- 1) Proximity to Jesus does not equate to faith in Jesus.

The disciples were with Jesus every single day. They ate, ministered, and traveled with Him, but in many ways refused to believe some very important aspects of what He taught and claimed about Himself. Their lack of faith in His messianic identity hindered their relationship with Jesus.

Today, it is very possible to be close to the things of God but miss them completely. You can be heavily involved in the life and ministry of the church but not be part of the Kingdom of God (Matt 7:21-23).

2) Faith in Jesus does equate to proximity with Jesus.

Bartimaeus had never met Jesus. He had not had the privilege of traveling with Him or participating in the work of the ministry. The day he met Jesus outside of Jericho was his first encounter, but through eyes of faith, he was brought near and welcomed into the Kingdom of God (vs. 42-43). It was faith in His messianic identity that brought Him into relationship with Jesus.

Today, you are not required to have a history with the church before coming into relationship with Jesus. Thankfully, you are not required to clean yourself up before coming to Him. The truth is you cannot do so. All that is required are eyes of faith. We all must approach the Lord with eyes of faith.

This calculated contrast between the disciples' blindness and the beggar's sight reveals the spiritual goal we should seek for ourselves. It is to be in Christ rather than simply around Christ, which requires eyes of faith. There are three things we need to know about eyes of faith:

1. See one's need.

Bartimaeus recognized and owned his blindness. He knew there was no cure for it. Therefore, as he heard Jesus approaching, he did not work hard to make himself appear less broken to be more attractive. Conventional wisdom tells us that we must clean up our lives before coming to Jesus, but the Bible never does. Bartimaeus sat there along the roadside in his blindness and called out to Jesus. He recognized that his need far exceeded anything he could do on his own, and the same is true for every person today. Eyes of faith see one's need for what it is and refuse to make excuses or paint a better picture. When Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted, he did not shy away from his blindness. I asked for the ability to see.

Today, if you are spiritually dead in your sins and trespasses (Eph 2:1), then do not hide it from the Lord or from yourself. With eyes of faith, see your need for what it is...the need for Jesus' forgiveness and redemption.

2. Know who Jesus is.

When Bartimaeus asked who was approaching, he was told it was Jesus of Nazareth, but when he called out to Jesus, he used the title "*Son of David*." Obviously, it was not wrong for people to refer to Jesus as being from Nazareth. It was in fact His home. For us, looking back on it with the full canon of Scripture at our disposal, we recognize its fulfillment of prophecy (Matt 2:23). This might not have been the case for most people during the life and ministry of the Lord. Therefore, the theological title that Bartimaeus gave to Him clarified his convictions about the Lord's identity. Bartimaeus believed Him to be much more than a teacher, healer, miracle worker, and civic leader. He was declaring Jesus, as the Son of David, to be the long-awaited Savior King.

Today, if you want to look on Jesus with eyes of faith, then it will require you to know who He is. He is God the Savior. You might feel like a lost cause without any hope in this world. You might feel like you are drowning in your sin, and it seems like no one can pull you to safety. I bet you that is just how this blind man felt. On one level, you are correct. In your sin, you are without hope, but Jesus the

Savior King can and desires to turn your spiritual blindness into sight. It will require you to know and believe who He is.

3. Cry out for mercy.

I love how Luke describes this encounter. As soon as Bartimaeus hears that it is Jesus who is approaching, he cries out through the crowd in front of him, *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*” (vs. 38). Then those in front of him turn and rebuke him for being so loud, but their words did not deter his attempt to get the Lord’s attention. Bartimaeus was on a mission. He needed and wanted the Lord’s mercy, so he cried out even louder. At that moment, Jesus stopped and called the man over to Him. When Bartimaeus heard the Lord’s invitation, he stopped shouting and threw off his cloak (Mark 10:50), which was an act of faith. No blind person would have ever wanted to be out of reach of his or her cloak for fear of not finding it again. Leaving the cloak behind, he walked over to Jesus to receive His mercy.

Today, if you are going to look on Jesus with eyes of faith, then it will require a cry for mercy. Like this blind man, Jesus asks of us what we need (vs. 41). Do you know what your need is? You need the mercy of God.

Read Ephesians 2:1-5.

Paul, speaking to believers in Ephesus, describes how their spiritual condition was changed by the grace and mercy of Jesus. They were once dead in sin and under the just wrath of Holy God, but God’s mercy made them alive to God through Jesus. This redemption took place as they cried out for mercy.

Conclusion: What is your proximity to Jesus? Are you in Christ or simply around the things of Christ? Most people want the life change and blessing He promises to give, but they want to receive them on their own. Like the village idiot, they would prefer to shoot their own arrows and then draw the bull’s eye around where they landed. The reality, however, is that every person has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). The biblical word for sin carries the idea of shooting an arrow and missing the mark or bull’s eye. The missing of the mark, however, is not accidental but intentional. Sin is you doing your best to pull back the bow and shoot in a way that intentionally causes the arrow to fall short of God’s standard of holiness. It is you shooting in a different direction.

If you are going to look on Jesus with eyes of faith, then you will have to see your need for forgiveness of sin, know Jesus can and will forgive, and cry out for His mercy in your life. Have you approached the Lord with these eyes? In not, then why not?