

JESUS THROUGH THE EYES OF – The Blind Beggar

Luke 18:31-43

Sermon for Peace church

March 14, 2010

PURPOSE – In the call of the Cross, a journey to glorify God’s goodness, invite people to pray to see Jesus as its first step!

MAIN IDEA – Before you pray to see the way, pray to see Jesus as your first step.

I. INTRODUCTION

Let’s open our Bibles **to Luke 18:28**.

1. As we make our way through Lent toward the Cross of Christ, I was telling Jenne DeYoung last Sunday that I was feeling for Jesus.

Based on the silhouettes of our series (that she’s cut out), Jesus is not doing too well! Only Mary’s bowed toward Him. Martha’s upbraiding Him for allowing her sister’s inactivity; the Scribes & Pharisees are turned away from Him in self-importance; the Rich Ruler likewise - in sadness.

Today we’re going to get to the Blind Beggar’s encounter with Jesus.

2. But before we get to him, we need to re-enter the tail-end of the Rich Ruler story.

(i) In that story, Jesus is revealed as GOD’S GOODNESS on earth.

How are we made good with God? It’s not by trying.

It is by TREASURING JESUS – who He is ... known in what He’s done.

A. In Romans 3:21, Jesus is described as God's righteousness (goodness) made known on earth – How good is God? Look at Jesus.

In theology this goodness is called an "alien" righteousness = a goodness outside of ourselves ... which has invaded this world (like an alien) to restore us to God. So this goodness we get, not by working at it, but by faith = treasuring Jesus.

(i) That involves 2 things: Renouncing your own sense of goodness & follow Jesus.

3. This was the Rich Ruler's dilemma. He was a man who FELT GOOD about himself. (He wasn't sure if he was good enough for heaven – but he was confident that he was a good guy.) He obeyed God's ways (a right thing to do) – but did it to feel good about himself. He treasured his goodness, valued it, put faith in it. His hopes for a good life & fruitful ministry were in his goodness.

> "I'm a good guy ... hey – we're a good church"

Spiritually, he was full of HIM SELF.

So Jesus says, *"There's no one good, but God alone"*.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven. True life is about discovering, calling upon & glorifying HIS GOODNESS.

3. So Jesus invites this man to FOLLOW HIM – God's goodness on earth!

Sadly, the Ruler rejects that invitation.

A rich man cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

4. **Verse 28** – Even as the ruler turns away from this life, Peter says to Jesus: "We have left all we had to follow you!"

Jesus affirms this & gives this promise: ***Read v. 29***

GOD LOOKS AFTER YOUR NEEDS WHEN YOU GIVE YOUR ALL TO FOLLOW JESUS!

(i) A pastor challenged a young man to start giving regularly and generously to the Lord's work. The young man hesitated, afraid that he couldn't pay his bills if he did. The pastor finally said, "Listen, could you give in the way I've described if I promised to make up the difference each month out of my pocket if you fell short?" The young man thought a moment and then said, "Yes, I guess I could do it if you'd promise to make up the difference."

The pastor replied, "How about that! You'd trust me, a poor pastor with not much in the bank to meet your bills, but you can't trust the Lord who owns the universe to meet your bills if you obey Him by giving generously!"

IF WE TREASURE JESUS ABOVE ALL ELSE, GOD WILL MORE THAN MEET OUR NEEDS!

A. It got me thinking about Karen and my recent trip to the Olympics in Whistler. God provides friends in Christ to stay with, friends in Christ to help us get there, a friend in Christ who even suggested the idea! What an amazing experience, gifted in Christ!!

You can't ever outgive God – and that's just in this age! GOD IS GOOD!
"No one whose left home or wife or brother or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.

HAVE YOU MADE THE DECISION TO KNOW GOD'S GOODNESS BY FOLLOWING JESUS? ... Is He your TREASURE in life (someone you think upon more, would choose for above even ...your wife or brother or parents or children)?! = TOUGH!

- That's the only path to eternal life!

(If you make that decision, you'll never regret it. Peter did. The RYR didn't. Maybe the only reason you're here today is to be faced with that decision. If so – speak to me after the service.)

5. OK – now let's move on in our reading!

Today's passage helps us understand what's involved in FOLLOWING JESUS.

(i) When you think about it, that's a pretty abstract concept – What's it mean to follow Jesus?

It's not like following a car. (I.e. – if there was a newcomer here who you invited for lunch at your home after service, you'd say – follow me – they'd know what that means ... keep an eye on it, turn where it turns)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOLLOW JESUS?

(ii) This passage has in it a DESTINATION and then a PRAYER to answer that question.

Read LUKE 18:31-43

(iii) Let's PRAY ...

Here's the point I want to build with you:

TO FOLLOW JESUS IS TO TRAVEL TO THE CROSS – again & again (destination) ... TO SEE THERE THE COMPLETED GOODNESS OF GOD (prayer) ... WHO OVERCOMES SIN ... FOR US ... IN US ... THROUGH US!

II. THE JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

1. Immediately after Peter says, "Lord, we've left everything to follow you", Jesus not only affirms that God will bless him for that decision, He wants to make very clear where the journey of following Him will go – namely, TO THE CROSS!

(i) "We're heading to JERUSALEM", he says to the 12. "And there the Son of Man (Messianic term = "new man" - ... in you) will be mocked, insulted, spit upon, and killed."

> "Glad you're following Me ... God will bless you for it ... but know this, we're heading to the Cross!"

2. WHY?

- Because it is at the Cross that Jesus will become the COMPLETED GOODNESS OF GOD INCARNATE - who overcomes sin.

(i) That's the connection with last week. Jesus is God's goodness on earth. His mission is to reveal the FULL EXTENT of that goodness and make it available for you and me in salvation.

(ii) In order to do so He knows that he must go to the Cross. It's there that God's full goodness in Him will shine in UTMOST GLORY. There it is perfected in its humanity.

He was INSULTED, yet blessed. ... He returned love for hatred.

He was misrepresented, lied to ... yet stood resolute on truth

He was BETRAYED, yet prayed for those who denied him ...

He was arrested & seized, yet healed his abusers

He was mocked & spat upon, yet forgave

He was abandoned (even by God > "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"), yet trusted ("Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit)

= No despair, no revenge, no unbelief ... TRUTH / MERCY / ABSOLUTE HOLINESS – even through the incredible stress & temptation that the experiences of the Cross brought to Him!

"In the darkest night, the light shines brightest!"

HEBREWS 5:7-9 – *"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. And though he was a son, he LEARNED OBEDIENCE from what he suffered and, ONCE MADE PERFECT, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."*

(iii) Jesus' goodness was like those DIMMER LIGHTS – it shone brighter & brighter & brighter – even as he was betrayed, insulted, mocked & killed.

The Cross exposes the wickedness of the human heart, but more than that the ABSOLUTE GOODNESS OF GOD INCARNATE.

A. In our series, we'll eventually get to the Centurion whose standing right beside Jesus at the Cross and, observing Him, declares (can't help but say):

“SURELY THIS IS A RIGHTEOUS MAN!”

B. Wickedness, as whipped up as it was leading to the Crucifixion, cannot permeate the goodness of God in Christ. In fact, it only serves to glorify it!

THAT'S THE MEANING OF THE CROSS!

So followers of Jesus travel to that destination again and again, there to DRINK FROM the goodness of God.

III. THE PRAYER OF THE BLIND

BUT THE DISCIPLES DON'T YET GET THIS!

Verse 34 - *“They don't understand any of this Cross-talk ... they didn't know what Jesus was talking about.”*

1. They yet thought of Jesus as a POLITICAL SAVIOR, not a SUFFERING SAVIOR.

They yet thought that Jesus would bring goodness AROUND THEM – changing their circumstances.

They did not yet understand that Jesus was about bringing goodness WITHIN THEM – changing their hearts! ... by showing them God's goodness WHATEVER THE CIRCUMSTANCE!

SO ... THEY ARE BLIND!

2. ENTER THE BLIND BEGGAR – who gives us the PRAYER of a follower of Jesus.

(i) Jesus is passing by. He is sitting at the roadside in Jericho. He hears what's going on. He calls out: *JESUS, HAVE MERCY ON ME* (part 1)

JESUS, SON OF DAVID HAVE MERCY ON ME!

A. Jesus stops (Hallelujah!) – “*What do you want me to do for you?*”

= He is full of mercy!

(ii) “*I WANT TO SEE ... I WANT TO SEE*” (part 2)

JESUS GIVES THE VISION WE NEED TO FOLLOW HIM TO THE CROSS – TO SEE THE GOODNESS OF GOD – to drink, be saved, & overcome sin!

IV. HOW JESUS OVERCOMES SIN

NOW JESUS' GOODNESS OVERCOMES SIN IN 2 SENSES

He overcomes the PENALTY of sin & the POWER of sin.

The first sense is accomplished by His goodness FOR US ... the second more by His goodness IN US.

1. By dying for us, Jesus' goodness overcame the PENALTY of sin. Justice before God for sin required the payment of a fully obedient life. Jesus paid the penalty. He died for us.

In salvation, this is JUSTIFICATION – we are justified. The guilt of sin is removed from us. “There is no condemnation for us who are in Christ” – His goodness, dying for us, paid the just penalty!

2. Rising again, Jesus goodness overcomes the POWER of sin – as His Spirit lives IN US! This is SANCTIFICATION.

This is the reason we go AGAIN & AGAIN & AGAIN & AGAIN to the Cross ... this is the reason we have LENT in the Christian year ... to see the completed goodness of God in Jesus ... and be filled with HIS SPIRIT, through faith (which is love) to overcome sin in our life and in this world!

(i) Hebrews 12 puts it this way:

Let us throw of everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us (you have a race, I have a race, we have a race).

How do we persevere in obedience & fruitfulness? *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the Cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

3. This is the OTHER REASON why – in our Scripture reading - Jesus brings us the subject of the Cross immediately after Peter & the 12 affirm their life of following Him.

- He doesn't want you to have illusions about following Him. It will lead to the Cross. Associated with Jesus, they can expect to share in this suffering!

This is what Jesus means when, foretelling his death at other times, He'd add, "You must take up your Cross to follow me."

4. Because the disciples yet thought of Jesus as a POLITICAL SAVIOR, not a SUFFERING SAVIOR, they thought he came to make their life EASIER. So He was always trying to correct them in this.

(i) Following Jesus does not make life easier.

It makes life BETTER ... more joyful ... more LOVE-FILLED ... more MEANINGFUL / HOPEFUL / ADVENTUROUS ... more ABUNDANT / ETERNAL... but not easier.

A. It means, LIKE JESUS, that we FACE the temptations, trials, difficulties, persecutions that come our way – so that Christ - THE GOODNESS OF GOD – would grow in us!

To follow Jesus to the Cross is to take up the HARD OBEDIENCE that life brings.

(ii) My favorite quote from the Purpose-Drive Life: *“God develops the fruit of the Spirit in your life by allowing you to experience circumstances in which you’re tempted to express the exact opposite quality!*

God teaches us to love by putting some unlovely people around us ... God teaches us real joy in the midst of sorrow ... real peace, not by making things go the way we plan, but by allowing times of chaos & confusion ... patience – when we’re forced to wait and are tempted to be angry or have a short fuse.”

(iii) TO FOLLOW JESUS IS NOT TO:

- Just cut those unlovely people out of your life
- Just move away from a changed community – avoiding the pain of learning to love a new people group!
- Just medicate to handle sorrow ... Just avoid problems ... just go around them, not through them!
- ... Just give into temptations (who’ll know about that internet site?)
- Why make changes? It’s comfortable doing things around here the way we’ve done them.

COMFORT IS THE WAY OF THE WORLD. It is the PROCLIVITY OF OUR FALLEN NATURE. That’s why we’re blind!

A. The way of the Cross is not to go AROUND sin & trial & difficulty – but THROUGH THEM, not in our own strength, but by seeing Christ crucified.

That's how we persevere

That's how we overcome sin in our lives

That's how we overcome trials.

JESUS GIVES THE VISION WE NEED AT THE CROSS TO OVERCOME SIN & GROW IN GOD'S GOODNESS

IV. CONCLUSION

So let's conclude with the witness of this blind beggar's prayer FOR THAT VISION.
WHERE IS OBEDIENCE HARD FOR YOU RIGHT NOW?

1. The man PERSEVERED in prayer. People were telling him to be quiet.

HE KEPT ON! ... *Jesus is passing by.*

DON'T SETTLE, don't cave in.

(i) Your help is in seeing Jesus.

He was faithful where you need to be! He is God's goodness for us.

2. This man prayed BOLDLY. He not only persevered when other told him to be quiet, he shouted all the more! He turned up the volume! He wanted to see. He wanted to see Jesus.

(i) What does that mean for us as a church?

Leaders, we have said that the rebirth of Peace Church will be centered in prayer. This man here is our example.

PRAYING FOR MERCY ... for Jesus' help ... praying to see Him among us.

A. Now – Lenten Prayer Chain

After Easter – Global Day of Prayer

3. This man prayed in TRUST. He trusted that Jesus could give him the vision he needed.

Jesus said to him, “Your FAITH has healed you”.

Yes, Jesus is the SOURCE of his healing, but FAITH is the AGENCY!

He went to Jesus BELIEVING that He would see!

Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God!

JESUS IS PASSING BY ... on the way to Jerusalem ...on the way to the Cross.

To follow Him is to TRAVEL TO THE CROSS

- NOT EVERYONE DOES (silhouettes)

But those who will seek Him are given eyes to see, behold completed goodness of God ... which overcomes sin! = OUR SALVATION

AMEN!