

Masterwork of the Messiah

Expositional Study Of Matthew's Gospel

A Crisis & A Crown

Written By

©Pastor Marty Baker

March 16, 2014



I remember this little boy. At six years old in 1963, he enjoyed life: playing with friends, learning how to build models, watching the Ed Sullivan show and Lassie on the black and white television ... along with countless great cartoons. Yeah, he enjoyed life, but he didn't like school all that much. He found school challenging, difficult, and hard.

Report cards from the beginning demonstrate how this boy fared when it came to studies. He made many "Ds" and the teachers said he received this grade instead of an "F" because he was, after all, a good kid. But how to do math effectively eluded him. Crafting proper sentences always presented challenges. Spelling? Forget it. By the third grade he would get stuck spelling the simplest words, and at that point some kids did what they do well: they laughed at him.

Between his second and third grade year in school, his father got a promotion and a raise, enabling the family to move across town to a nicer home, in a nicer area, and with a better elementary school nearby. It didn't take long for the new third grade teacher, Mrs. Tippit, to determine that this little boy had learning issues. After reading his prior report cards from his other school, one day she brought the new student up in front of the class and asked him to spell the word "surprise." Grabbing a



piece of chalk, he began to write s-u-r-p-r-i-z-e. Finishing, he placed the chalk in the tray and turned toward the class. At that point the stern Mrs. Tippit sarcastically said, “You misspelled the word. It stands to reason because it says in your transcripts you have trouble spelling this word and others words. You can take your seat.”

To this day, that little boy, who is now a man, pauses when he has to spell surprise. It’s a word which conjures up fear and anxiety. I should know because that little boy was me.

I remember the day the school nurse called me out of Mrs. Tippit’s class to take a special test. Nobody else had to take it ... just me. At first I didn’t know what they were doing, and then it hit me: they think there is something wrong with me, with my ability to learn. Believe

me, that day was a dark day I’ll never forget. I worked hard that year to be a better student, but I just couldn’t better my cognitive abilities. I truly had a crisis I couldn’t fix, a problem I couldn’t overcome no matter how hard I tried.

On Sunday, September 3, 1966, a day before the start of my fourth grade year, I trusted Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. I’ll never forget that day, nor will I forget what happened on September 4th as I sat in class with Mrs. Stephen’s. I cried out to the Lord with a simple faith-filled prayer for God to do the impossible.

EL CENTRO SCHOOL DISTRICT — REPORT TO PARENTS
Grades 3 to 6

KEY TO MARKS
A — Outstanding C — Average
B — Above Average D — Below Average
F — Unsatisfactory
✓ Shows specific areas where improvement is needed.

READING [B] [A] [B] [B]
Understands what he reads _____
Sounds out new words for himself (Phonics) _____
Reads smoothly with reasonable speed _____
Reads for pleasure _____

LANGUAGE [B] [A] [B] [B]
Speaks clearly and distinctly _____
Expresses ideas clearly in written work _____
Uses correct form in oral and written work _____

SPELLING [B] [B] [B] [B]
Learns words in weekly spelling list _____
Spells accurately in written work _____

HANDWRITING [C] [C] [B] [B]
Forms letters accurately and legibly _____
Writes with reasonable speed _____

MATHEMATICS [B] [C] [C] [C]
Knows and uses number facts for his grade _____
Is accurate in his arithmetic work _____
Applies reasoning in problem solving _____

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY (Social Studies) [B] [B] [B] [B]
Participates in oral and written work _____
Understands maps, charts, and graphs _____
Uses reference materials adequately _____

SCIENCE [C] [A] [C] [B]
Understands science _____
Uses scientific approach _____
Has an inquiring mind _____

PROGRESS IN ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS
S — Satisfactory U — Unsatisfactory

ART [S] [S] [S] [S]
MUSIC [S] [S] [S] [S]
PHYSICAL EDUCATION [S] [S] [S] [S]
HEALTH and SAFETY [S] [S] [S] [S]

PROGRESS IN HABITS AND ATTITUDES
Puts forth adequate effort [S] [S] [S] [S]
Is courteous in speech and behavior [S] [S] [S] [S]
Listens to and follows directions [S] [S] [S] [S]
Respects rights and property of others [S] [S] [S] [S]
Participates with group [S] [S] [S] [S]
Accepts responsibility [S] [S] [S] [S]
Completes assignments [S] [S] [S] [S]
Cooperates with teachers and others [S] [S] [S] [S]
Thinks clearly and critically [S] [S] [S] [S]
Attendance [S] [S] [S] [S]
Frequently Absent _____
Frequently Tardy _____

I prayed, “Lord, now that I am yours, I ask just one thing from you. Could you give me a new brain?” As you can see from my report card that year, He answered me. I received my first “A.”

That had never happened before. By the time I finished sixth grade getting an “A” became quite common, during Junior High I was on the school spelling team, by high school I not only excelled in all the departments, but languages, like German became quite easy for a kid who formerly had trouble spelling surprise. College and Grad school shot me in another direction academically altogether, achieving things which still shock me.

Believe me, I, of all people, know there is a God in

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PROGRESS IN HABITS AND ATTITUDES
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heaven who specializes in giving miracles to people of faith, to people who ask big things from Him, because He reached down from heaven in 1967 and radically and lovingly changed my life forever. I give Him all the praise, and I'm still humbled by the fact He listened to that simple, honest prayer from a little boy with a big crisis. He answered my crisis by giving me an academic crown, and I will forever be in awe of Him. I will forever, also, remember, from whence I came.

How mysterious and marvelous are His ways. When He gave me and Liz a special needs son, a son who struggled with learning, I fully understood his predicament and asked for another academic miracle. None came. Why would He help one little boy and not another little boy? Who are we to question His ways? Sometimes He gives you the answer to your bold prayer, and at other times, He says, "No" in order to more strategically fulfill His lofty, eternal purposes. All I can say at this point is this, "Don't be afraid to ask God for something bold, but do be ready and willing to walk with Him no matter what."

I don't know what your crisis is today, but I'm sure you have one. For some it is marital, for others it is financial. For some it is relational, for others it is medical. Of all the crises you can face the most formidable one is not the physical but the spiritual. Two blind men who encountered Jesus on this journey to Jerusalem thought their greatest crisis was physical, but they found out their detrimental spiritual situation far outweighed the former. From the historical account of this event in Matthew 20:29-34, we learn this truth. We also learn this timeless truth, a truth I ran into in 1967.

Christ Desires To Move People From A Crisis To A Crown (Matthew 20:29-34)

Matthew's development of this concept can be broken down into a four-fold movement. First, there is what we might call ...

The Site It Was Providential (Matthew 20:29)

Remembering that day, Matthew writes:

And as they were going out from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him.

First, let's deal with a contextual problem.

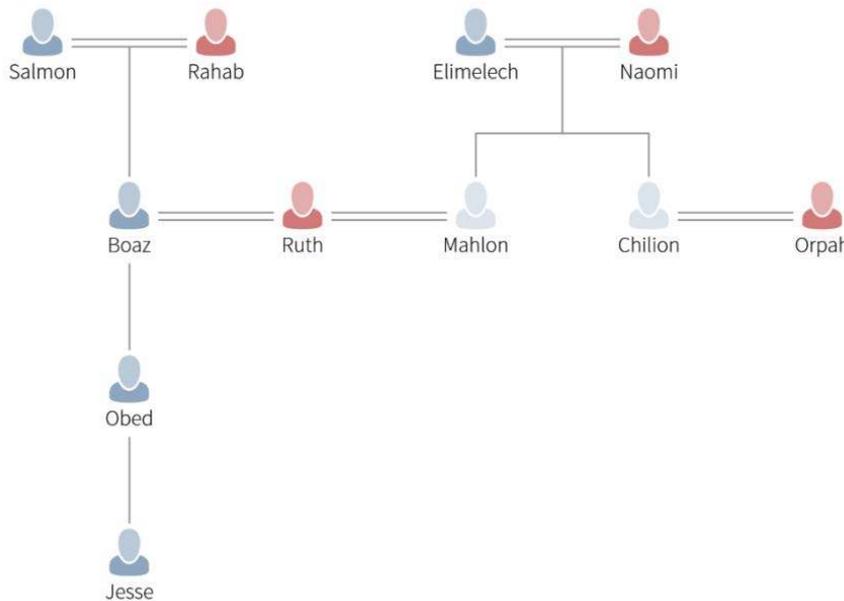
Matthew says Jesus was going out of Jericho with the multitude in tow when He encountered two blind men, while Mark and Luke's parallel accounts says He was going into Jericho (Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43). Does this mean we shouldn't trust the biblical text? Far from it. At the time two Jerichos existed, an ancient one and another a newer one built one mile south of the older one by Herod the Great. Hence, the biblical texts are historically trustworthy. Matthew correctly recounts how Christ ran into the blind me while exiting the old Jericho, and Mark and Luke are correct in saying this occurred as He approached Jericho, or the new Jericho.

Now, back to the story and our Lord's teaching.

The fact Jesus, the Messiah was in Jericho is divinely providential and theologically significant. Jericho represented the first city the Israelites took as they invaded the land God had promised to give to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12). You will remember how

they assaulted the double-walled fortress. For six days all the men of war, totaling around 600,000 warriors (Numbers 1), circled the fortification one time with the Ark of the Covenant, representing the presence of God leading the way (Joshua 6:3-5). On the seventh day, or Sabbath, they circled the city seven times and then the priest blew their rams horns. With that loud, reverberating noise, the walls of the formidable fortress fell flat, giving Israel their first divinely ordained definitive victory over the forces of evil.

Jericho, therefore, served as an ancient illustration of God's miraculous power to accomplish His divine design of fulfilling His ancient promises to His chosen people to bring



THE Seed (Genesis 3:15) and the Savior. No wonder Christ ascended from this city, because in Jerusalem He, the Messiah, would take on the fortress of sin and death and He would defeat these ancient foes of mankind likewise on the seventh day, or Sabbath. Talk about a victory to remember.

Jericho was also the city of one of the Gentile forerunners of the Messiah. Her name was Rahab. Rahab, the prostitute, married

Salmon, and they, in turn became the parents of Boaz, who married the Gentile Moabitess, Ruth, who, in turn, became the parents of Obed, who became the father of Jesse, who, in turn, became the father of David the king and eventually through this divinely ordained line came Jesus, the Christ. Ah, now you see why Jesus ascended up His final Passover from this ancient city. Jericho represented how God, the Father, had carefully orchestrated His ancient promise to bring the Messiah to mankind through the line of David. Now that Messiah had arrived and was heading to the cross where He would defeat sin, death, and the Devil. In God's scheme of things, nothing, no matter how small or insignificant is without intricate divine purpose to accomplish His plans, be what they may.

Think on these things next time you are in your own Jericho, supposedly no name place in the middle of nowhere. God in His great, complex providence is always working to place us exactly where we need to be to maximize His strategic purposes. Jesus was in Jericho for the purposes just mentioned; however, the Father had also been working in the lives of two blind beggars from this desert town in order to intersect their lives with Christ's life so His deity and messiahship could be seen in even bolder relief. All of this becomes most clear as we investigate the second movement of the passage, a section I'll call ...

The Situation ... It Was Pitiful (Matthew 20:30)

Of all of life's maladies, blindness is one of the most feared. To miss the daily spectacle of the colors of life is beyond tragic and trying. It seems foreboding in so many ways. To never see a sunset exploding on the western horizon; to never watch massive cumulus clouds looming overhead; to never see a tulip open up in the spring; to never see ... well, you can fill in the blank. Here on this road well-traveled by countless Passover worshippers were two blind men.

And behold, two blind men sitting by the road,

The word "behold" is designed by Matthew to grab your attention, to underscore the magnitude of the problem and to then draw us to the Messiah's solution. He has done this before (cf. Matthew 1:20-21, 23; 2:1, 9, 19; 3:16, 17; 4:11; 7:4; 8:2, 24, 29, 32, 34; 9:2-3, 10, 18, 20, 32; 10:16; 11:8, 10, 19; 12:2, 10, 18, 41, 42, 47, 49; 13:3; 15:22; 17:3, 5; 19:16, 27; 20:18). It is as if the inspired author and eyewitness shouts, "Hey! Pay close attention to this story. It will give you the evidence you need to prove to you the deity and messiahship of Jesus." Are you listening?

Mark informs us that one of the blind man went by the name Bartimaeus, which is the "son of Timaeus. This exact information is supplied, at the time, for anyone who wanted to check the story out for themselves. Any interviews would simply verify the historicity of what happened, and everyone could have quickly determined if Bartimaeus had been, in fact, blind. Also, by supplying this name, we are directed to a particular person everyone in this desert town would have known, after all, blind people wouldn't have been able to travel very far in this day and time and would have been, pretty much, restricted to their hometown. Hence, when the text says that these two men were blind, everyone knew the evidence supported the conclusion. Who hadn't passed by them as they begged alongside the roadway? Who hadn't dropped a coin in their cups? Who hadn't helped them walk to a good place to beg for a living? Everyone in town knew these two blind beggars.

Theologically speaking, these two blind men easily represent all of those who have never expressed faith in the person and saving work of Jesus, the Christ. As Paul states in his letter to the Corinthians:

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4).

If Christ is not your Savior, you are blind, my friend; blind to the wonder of His gospel, blind to the best arguments His saints can submit to you regarding why He died on Calvary's tree, blind to the proofs He has carefully embedded into the cosmos of His existence, blind to what His Scriptures are really saying, blind to the power of prayer, blind as to why some of your friends have actually turned their lives over to Him, and blind to the fact you will spend an eternity in a place of great torment because of your rejection of Him and His gospel.

Oh, that you might realize, like these two blind men did that they were blind, but that God, in His great providence, had placed them on that particular road, at that place in time, to just happen to bump into His Son, Jesus. In pragmatic terms, you do not sit here among us today by cosmic accident, nor is it a fluke you are here for this particular message. No. You are a blind beggar with a crisis of spiritual proportions and you are about to bump into the person of Jesus Christ as He speaks through the ancient pen of Matthew. And until you recognize and embrace

your spiritual blindness, you will not be in a position to move toward getting new spiritual eyes. So, I pray the Spirit of God is speaking to you clearly and powerfully right now.

For those who recognize their crisis, their hopelessness, their utter inability to help themselves, they, in their brokenness, know their only hope is to move toward Jesus, the Savior, in faith. We see this truth wonderfully displayed in this third rhetorical movement:

The Statement ... It Was Profound (Matthew 20:30-31)

Matthew's words jump off the page with great, heart-pounding emotion:

... hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

Collectively, these two men immediately articulated sound theology concerning Jesus. They called him "Lord" or *kurios* (κύριος) a title of great respect, but one also known in their culture to be a direct reference to God (Revelation 22:20).¹ Interesting. These two blind men who had

¹ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: LORD[Heb YHWH (Gen. 2:4f, 7f, etc.), ^ʿ*dōnāy* (Gen. 15:2, 8; 18:3; etc.), *yāh* (Ps. 68:18 [MT 19]; 77:11 [MT 12]; etc.), ^ʿ*dōn* (e.g., Gen. 19:2), *baʿal*—'master' (Nu. 21:28; Isa. 16:8), ^g*bīr*—'lord, master' (Gen. 27:29, 37), *seren*—'prince, tyrant' (Jgs. 3:3; 16:5; etc.), *śar*—'leader, chief' (Jgs. 16:23; Ezr. 8:25), *śālīš* (2 K. 7:2, 17, 19; see CAPTAIN), ^ʿ*addīr*—'mighty one' (Jer. 25:34–36), (verb) *śālaṭ* (Eccl. 8:9); Aram *mārē*—'lord, master' (Dnl. 2:47; 4:19 [MT 22]), pl *rabr^ʿbānīn*—'nobles, lords' (e.g., Dnl. 4:36 [MT 33]); Gk. *kýrios* (e.g., Mt. 1:22), *despótēs* (Lk. 2:29)]; AV also RULETH (Eccl. 8:9), PRINCIPAL (Jer. 25:34–36); NEB also OFFICER (Ezr. 8:25), NOBLES (Dnl. 4:36), LIEUTENANT (2 K. 7:2, 17, 19), etc. A form of the verb *kyrieúō* ("rule") is generally rendered "lords" in 1 Tim. 6:15. The AV also renders Gk. *megistán* (Mk. 6:21; RSV COURTIER) and *rhabbouí* (Mk. 10:51; Jn. 20:16; RSV MASTER, TEACHER) as "lord."

A number of the words may be applied to any person who possesses and exercises authority, from the owner of cattle (Isa. 1:3, *baʿal*) to "the Lord of all the earth" (Josh. 3:11; Ps. 97:5; Mic. 4:13, ^ʿ*dōn*). Lordship may vary from the legitimate use of rightful authority (e.g., Lk. 20:15f) to the arbitrary exercise of assumed power (e.g., Mk. 10:42).

I. IMPORTANT OT TERMS

- A. ^ʿ*ADŌN*
- B. *YHWH*
- C. ^ʿ*ADŌNĀY*

II. NT TERMS

- A. *KÝRIOS*
- B. *DESPŌTĒS*

I. Important OT Terms

A. ^ʿ*dōn* Basically denoting the right to command, this honorific title (found more than 300 times) was used: (1) as a courteous form of address ("Sir," e.g., 2 S. 1:10); (2) when a subordinate addressed a person of superior rank, such as God (Ps. 97:5; Isa. 1:24), a king (Isa. 26:13), a master (Gen. 24:18), a father (31:35), or a husband (18:12). The form ^ʿ*dōnī* ("my lord") (pl ^ʿ*dōnāy*), a royal title (1 S. 29:8), is to be carefully distinguished from the divine title ^ʿ*dōnāy* ("my Lord," "Lord," or "O Lord"), used over 130 times of Yahweh, especially in the Psalms and Isaiah (see I.C below).

B. *YHWH* These four consonants, which form the so-called tetragrammaton, are usually vocalized *Yahweh*. This form has been explained in various ways: (1) as a substantive from the root *hwh* (an old form of *hyh*, "be, become") with the preformative *y*, meaning "the self-existent One"; (2) as an archaic imperfect *qal* form of *hwh* (equivalent to

yihyeh), meaning “He exists” and alluding to the divine self-existence; (3) as the imperfect hiphil of this same root, meaning either “He who brings into existence” (a reference to the creative activity of God) or “He who causes to come to pass” (a reference to the divine providence); (4) as an abbreviation of *yahweh* ^ʿ*sir yihyeh* (cf. Ex. 3:14), “He brings into being whatever exists.”

Unlike ^ʿ*lōhīm*, a common or generic noun which is the general name for deity, *Yahweh* is a proper noun, the personal name of Israel’s God, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 3:15). Ex. 6:3 implies, not that the patriarchs did not call God “Yahweh,” but that, knowing Him as ^ʿ*ēl šadday* (Gen. 17:1), they lacked knowledge of His character or nature as expressed by the name *Yahweh*.

C. ^ʿ*dōnāy* Like ^ʿ*lōhīm*, this form is often explained as a plural of majesty, excellence, or intensity (lit “my Lords,” the special plural form distinguishing it from ^ʿ*dōnay*, “my lords”). Others interpret ^ʿ*dōnāy* as meaning “Lord of all” (e.g., Eissfeldt). In either case the form highlights the power and sovereignty of *Yahweh* as “Lord.”

The postexilic Jewish practice of substituting ^ʿ*dōnāy* (or ^ʿ*lōhīm*) for *Yahweh* in the public reading or reciting of the Scriptures may have arisen from Lev. 24:16, interpreted (erroneously) to mean that the simple utterance of the sacred tetragrammaton was a capital offense, or from the fear that to pronounce the divine name would be to reduce God to the status of a pagan deity who was addressed by a personal name.

This customary substitution of ^ʿ*dōnāy* (“Lord”) for *Yahweh*, due to the reverential avoidance of the ineffable name of the God of Israel, explains: (1) why Greek-speaking Jews in the 1st cent. A.D. (and probably before) regularly used *Kýrios* (“Lord”), the Greek equivalent of ^ʿ*dōnāy*, to refer to God; (2) why the Masoretes in the 7th cent. A.D. vocalized the consonants *YHWH* with the vowels of ^ʿ*dōnāy* (which in turn produced the hybrid English form “Jehovah”); (3) why English Bibles commonly use “LORD” for *Yahweh* and Latin versions use *Dominus*. (Where the Hebrew is ^ʿ*dōnāy Yahweh* [e.g., Gen. 15:2, 8], the AV, RSV, and NEB have “Lord GOD” [the ASV has “Lord Jehovah”] to avoid the repetition of “Lord.”)

II. NT Terms

A. *Kýrios* Originally an adjective (with the sense “having power”), *kýrios* serves only as a noun in the NT, occurring in every NT book except Titus and 1, 2, and 3 John. It means “sir,” “owner,” “master,” “lord,” or “Lord,” being used of a man as an owner (Mt. 20:8), master (Lk. 13:8), father (Mt. 21:30), or one worthy of respect (“Sir,” Jn. 4:11); of an angel (Acts 10:4); of Jesus, both during His ministry (Lk. 9:54) and after His resurrection (Eph. 6:5–10); and of God (Lk. 1:6; Acts 7:33; Jas. 1:7).

Although in the first-century pagan world *kýrios* was not a proper name but a title added to a deity’s name (e.g., “the lord Serapis”), it became a personal name by which Christians referred to Jesus as shown by the Aramaic phrase *Māranā’ īā* (“Our Lord, come!”) in 1 Cor. 16:22. Indeed, Christians are described as “those who call upon the name of the Lord” (Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; Rom. 10:13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:22; cf. Joel 3:5, LXX), whether in baptism, prayer, or exorcism.

Scholars offer various explanations for the Christian application of the title *Kýrios* to Christ. (1) The pre-Pauline Hellenistic churches derived the term from the religious terminology of oriental Hellenism (cf. 1 Cor. 8:5f); “at the very outset the un-modified expression ‘the Lord’ is unthinkable in Jewish usage” (R. Bultmann, *Theology of the NT*, I [Eng. tr. 1952], 51; cf. pp. 124f, following W. Bousset, pp. 119–152). (2) In the confession “Jesus (Christ) is Lord” (Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:11), Christian worshippers V 3, p 158 registered a silent protest (cf. Jude 4) against the contemporary use of the term to refer to pagan deities or to apotheosize human rulers in the cult of the Caesar (DeissLAE, pp. 349–362). (3) Considered in the light of Christ’s sharing of *Yahweh*’s authority and functions and exercise of *Yahweh*’s rights (note, e.g., the use of Ps. 34:8 [MT 9] in 1 Pet. 2:3, or Isa. 8:12f in 1 Pet. 3:14f), the LXX rendering of *YHWH* by *kýrios* may have prompted the Christians to adopt the name to designate Jesus (see Baudissin, II, 236–241; III, 697–710). Later discoveries, however, show that in the LXX the divine name *YHWH* probably was not rendered by *kýrios* but was written out in Aramaic or paleo-Hebraic letters or was transliterated into Greek letters, e.g., *IAŌ* (see G. Howard, *JBL*, 96 [1977], 63–83). (4) God’s vindication of Christ by His resurrection and elevation to universal recognition and cosmic dominion as Lord, recalled in Christian worship (Phil. 2:9–11), invested the *kýrios* title with its full significance (see Cullmann, pp. 195–237).

never traveled very far in their lives, whose daily regime consisted of sitting and begging in the dust as busy people walked by them, they, of all people knew to call Jesus, Lord. And beyond this, they also were privy to His identity enough to shout that He was, in fact, the “son of David,” thereby attesting to the fact they knew the prophecies of the Messiah who would descend from this divinely anointed line (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89:3, 27-37; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-2; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15-17; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Amos 9:11). Obviously, they had spent quality time in the local synagogue. Obviously, they had been exposed to the prophetic teachings about the coming One from God, the great, powerful, and eternal King of Kings. That is why they collectively screamed and called Jesus, “Lord” and “son of David.” Obviously, from the countless travelers from the Galilean region, who had dropped money in their cups, they had heard the stories of Jesus. How could they have not heard about the leper who got new skin (Matthew 8:1-4), or the Centurion’s paralyzed servant who got a new, functional body (Matthew 8:5-13), about the boy raised from the dead during his funeral procession (Luke 7:11-17), or of the two other blind men who got new eyes from Jesus (Matthew 9:27-31)? Yes, how could they not have heard these faith stories from eyewitnesses and not have drawn to logical conclusion that based on the prophecies of the Messiah doing these things (Isaiah 29:9, 18; 35:5; 42:7, 16), that Jesus is the Lord and the messianic son of David. I say this to say this: the faith statement they screamed that day didn’t come out of thin air. God had been speaking to these two blind men for years, through every synagogue reading of the Torah and the Prophets, through every frustrating day as they thought of quality of life in the Messiah’s future kingdom as articulated in the prophets, and through all the impassioned words of countless travelers who had seen and heard Jesus. And now God brought all those theological threads together in one moment, in a moment when they heard that Jesus was passing by. How could they not have screamed what they screamed? How could they not have been heard by the Master?

Think of yourself. Jesus is passing by you today. I’m sure he has passed by you before, but you have let Him keep walking. People who share the evidences of what He has done to move them from a spiritual crisis to an eternal crown have spoken on more than one occasion as you sat along the path of life. You’ve heard of the transformative power of His gospel when you went to Sunday School as a child, and now as an adult that same Savior is passing by you one more time. Will you recognize your spiritual blindness and call out to Him, or will you let Him

Certainly *kýrios* is the distinctive NT title signifying the resurrected and ascended Jesus (2 Cor. 5:6, 8; 1 Thess. 4:15f) as universal sovereign and head of the Church, although the concept of His being “Lord” doubtless arose during His earthly life as a consequence of His authoritative teaching and divine power (see Mk. 11:3; 12:35-37, citing Ps. 110:1; cf. Jn. 13:13f.). That is, the preresurrectional historical experience of the lordship of Jesus foreshadowed the postresurrectional theological confession of Jesus as Lord.

Whenever worshipping Christians repeated the Church’s earliest confession of faith, “Jesus is Lord,” they were: (1) implying that the Christ of faith was none other than the Jesus of history (Acts 2:34-36); (2) acknowledging the deity of Christ (Jn. 20:28; Phil. 2:6, 9-11); (3) admitting the Lord’s personal rights to absolute supremacy in the universe, the Church, and individual lives (Acts 10:36; Rom. 10:12; 14:8; 1 Cor. 8:6; Jas. 4:15); (4) affirming the triumph of Christ over death and hostile cosmic powers when God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 10:9; 14:9; Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 2:10, 15), and therefore also the Christian’s hope of resurrection (1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14); (5) epitomizing the Christian message (*kérygma*, cf. Rom. 10:8f.; 2 Cor. 4:5) and defining the basis of the teaching (*didaché*, cf. Col. 2:6f); (6) declaring everyone’s accountability to the Lord, the righteous judge (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8); (7) making a personal and public declaration of faith (Rom. 10:9), which testified to their being led by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3); (8) repudiating their former allegiance to many pagan “lords” and reaffirming their loyalty to the one Lord through and in whom they existed (8:5f.; 1 Tim. 6:15).

keep moving on up the hill? Will you drop your old argument against Him at His feet, or will you cling tightly to them? Be careful what you decided to do, because just as this would be last time the Savior would pass by Bartimaeus and his blind buddy, this may be the last time He walks your way.

These two blind men could see quite well spiritually speaking. They knew exactly who Jesus was and that is why they screamed, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us." Mercy. That is what they wanted and they asked for it from the hand of the God-man whose heart was and always is focused on mercy for the downtrodden, the needy, and the desperate (Exodus 25:21-22; Leviticus 16:2; Deuteronomy 4:31; 7:9; Psalm 62:12). Whenever a blind sinner weds a true and heartfelt theological statement to the mercy of God as he stands before God, he, my friend, shall find the mercy he seeks. Let me say it another way. Silence didn't help these men with their physical and spiritual crisis. Speaking truth and making a bold request to Jesus brought the miracle of restoration, at all levels, to their formerly destitute lives. More on that in a moment.

As a sidelight, we must stop and ask, why did the crowd respond the way they did?

And the multitude sternly told them to be quiet ... (Matthew 20:31).

Rabbis typically talked as they walked, therefore, with two men screaming like this it would make listening to Jesus difficult. The multitude, which hung on every word of every Bible study and analysis of Jesus, had little or no time for the likes of the two raggedy and smelly blind men. They sought to silence them so they, the spiritual ones, could get back to the study of the Torah.

I pray we do not see ourselves in this cold, crude clause. How easily and quickly we can get caught up with good, never-heard-before biblical teaching, we can lose sight of the fact that Jesus has called us to be servants to others. Servants don't see blind people as a bother and a nuisance. Servants don't look past needs, they seek to meet them. Servants do not push the needy to the side, but they stop to help the needy. In this one little statement we, as disciples, are giving a word of warning from the Spirit. From what we see of the lives of the disciples post-resurrection, they understood how Jesus wanted them to live toward desperate people.

Did the request for the blind men to "shut up and be quiet" work? No. It only made these desperate men scream that much louder.

"Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matthew 20:31).

Every ounce of energy was wrapped up in this collective scream. Every muscle tightened to give them the best projection. Every hand must have been raised and waving violently as they sought to arrest the gaze of the passing Savior. Sinner in crisis ... please take note here. You don't move from crisis to crown unless you speak up and out, unless you call His name, unless you get His attention with your bold faith. As we read in Acts chapter two from Peter:

And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved
(Acts 2:21).

Jesus will always hear the voice of the one who calls, in their despair, out to Him. Your voice will never be lost among the noise of the masses. Despite how many people are surrounding you, or how thick the crowd is, Jesus's ears are always trained for those cries of desperate, blind sinners who look to Him in faith. So, go ahead, ask Him to do something great for you. Ask Him to give

you new spiritual eyes, really a new spiritual life, and He will immediately. But you must ask, you must courageously sit up and make a sound theological statement coupled with a heavy dose of mercy. Do this and He shall hear you.

The final and fourth movement of the passage serves as the fitting climax. I label the closing verses ...

The Solution ... It Was Perfect (Matthew 20:32-34)

Read on and you'll see what I mean:

³² And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" ³³ They said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened." ³⁴ And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

Jesus knew what these men wanted, but He wanted to test them and hear it from them. They asked Him for something off the charts. They wanted new eyes. How bold! How courageous! How logical!

Verse 34 shows us the true heart of Jesus. Compassion for their sad predicament washed over Him and moved Him to immediately grant them their simple request. All of this should stop you as a disciple and ask yourself: Does compassion ever wash over my soul for the needy about me? Does the blind state of so many I see every day ever move my heart to true compassion for them, or do I smugly stay holed up in my fortress of theological silence? Let the example of our Lord be one we follow ever so closely, especially in our narcissistic, self-consumed world.

Matthew's account is shorter than Mark's, which means Mark gives us some added insight here and there. This is really true regarding why these two blind men received new eyes. Mark gives us the word:

⁵² And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road (Mark 10).

Faith in the person and work of Jesus moved these two men from physical and spiritual blindness. Faith in Jesus moved these men from a temporal and physical and eternal spiritual crisis to becoming inheritors of the crown of life, a crown which will be given to all saints (James 1:12). What about you? Will the story of the two blind men become your story?

Forty-seven years ago, the story of the blind men became my story. And just as Jesus gave them new eyes, He gave me those too. He also showed me, straightaway, the power of prayer of faith from the lips of little boy. And God's answer to that prayer will forever remind me that I, too, experienced the compassion of Jesus as He passed this beggar.

Let me ask you, when you have tasted of His rich, moving compassion, how can it not change you forever? How can it not humble you? How can it not move you to share the gospel with other beggars?

The dusty road up to Jerusalem is stretched out in front of us, and it is an arduous hike up some 3,500 vertical feet. The road is also jam packed with other travelers/worshippers. Look

around you. Many of them are blind and in need of the Savior. Nothing is more important in life than stopping to hear their cries and to give them words of eternal light and life.