**THOSE WITH REAL FAITH**

**(Matthew 20:29-34)**

When I was younger, there was a societal expectation, and in some cases, obligation, to attend church on Sundays. As a result, there were three categories of attenders any given Sunday. There were believers. There were unbelievers, and there were make-believers. Which one are you?

Today, that expectation and obligation to attend church is quickly disappearing if it hasn’t already totally disappeared. Still yet, there are those who consider themselves to be people of faith even if there is little evidence to support their claims.

Ian Leitch is a preacher and Bible teacher from Scotland. While he makes his home in Scotland, he is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and has traveled widely throughout the U.S. and elsewhere teaching and ministering.

Ian said he was once asked by a businessman to speak to his staff. Ian readily accepted the invitation. After speaking, one of the employees asked if she could talk privately with Ian. Of course, he agreed.

She said, “Ian, when I was 22, I was in a serious car accident, and my boyfriend was killed. I have gone through a lot of surgeries and am now doing well. When that happened, I lost my faith.”

Ian said:

You know, when they built the Queen Mary, the Queen Elizabeth, and the QE2 (large ocean liners), they did not test them in dry dock. They didn’t leave them in dry dock and get big hoses on them to see if they would leak. They got those ships out into the open ocean to put them through sea trials. These trials were not intended to sink the ship. These trials were to prove that the ship was seaworthy. The only way you can know whether your faith is real or not is when the pressures of life come, when you go through trials. Then you know if you are seaworthy or not. Can I ask you honestly, did you lose your faith or did you find you had none?”

She thought a moment and replied, “I guess you are right. I had none.” (Ian Leitch,*Life Before Death! A Restored, Regenerated, and Renewed Life* (Green Acres Press, 2007).

My question to you this morning is, “Is your faith real? Is it authentic? Is it genuine? When it is tested, will it hold up?” You can be certain that life has a way of testing and revealing the reality of our faith.

Today, we come to the last six verses of Matthew 20. We will be looking at Matthew 20:29-34. In this passage, we find two men who are healed by Jesus of their blindness. This is the last healing miracle of Jesus told in the Book of Matthew. The only other healing that Jesus performed that we know about after this one is told by Luke. He tells us that when a crowd came to arrest Jesus, Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Jesus miraculously reattached the ear after it had been severed by a blow from Peter’s sword. It is interesting that all four gospels tell us what Peter did, but only John tells us the man’s name—Malchus—and only Luke tells us that Jesus healed the man. The other three leave the servant unhealed with his ear, presumably, lying on the ground. By the way, Luke and John tell us it was the servant’s right ear which leads us to believe that Peter was likely left-handed.

I am going to spend more time than I normally do talking about the context of this passage. Note, first, that it happens on the outskirts of Jericho. Did you know that Jericho is the oldest city that we know of in the world? Jericho is a very ancient city. Less time has passed from the time that Joshua fought the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down until now than had passed from the time Jericho was first settled until the children of Israel defeated it when they left their wilderness wandering and entered the Promised Land.

Just outside of present-day Jericho there is a tell, a mound under which the original Jericho was built (Tell es Sultan). Archeologists have dug down and found evidence of more than 20 successive civilizations that lived in Jericho.

Not only is it the oldest city in the world, it is also the lowest city in the world. It is more than 800 feet below sea level. It is built in the Great Rift Valley that runs from Syria southward, deep into the interior of Africa. The Jordan River and the Dead Sea are in the Rift Valley. That makes the Dead Sea the lowest body of water in the world and Jericho the lowest city in the world.

Jericho is literally an oasis in the desert fed by a faithful spring. It was and still is a city of palm trees and temperate weather. In the ancient world, people vacationed in Jericho. Herod the Great built a winter palace in that vacation spot.

This one visit, near the end of His ministry, is the only time we are told that Jesus went to Jericho. Matthew doesn’t include the story, but Luke tells us that this was when Jesus met Zacchaeus who had stationed himself in a tree to get a look at Jesus. Jesus invited Himself to Zacchaeus’ house for lunch that day, and that day was the turning point of his life.

Matthew tells us about two men whose lives were also changed that day.

Critics point to this passage and parallel passages in Mark 10 and Luke 18 and maintain that the Bible contradicts itself. Admittedly, there are some differences, which we will deal with, but they are hardly enough to support the notion that the Bible is not a reliable guide.

There are two key differences. Matthew tells us about two blind men, but Mark and Luke only tell us about one. Mark gives his name as Bartimaeus, which means *Son of Timaeus,* while no names are given by either Matthew or Luke.

Matthew and Mark tell us that the event took place when Jesus and the disciples were leaving Jericho, but Luke claims it happened when Jesus was arriving in Jericho.

Let’s start with the second problem. Was Jesus coming or going? The answer is yes. In that day, there was ancient Jericho and the new Jericho built close by, and people lived in both places. Likely, this event took place between the two. From Matthew and Marks’ perspective, Jesus was leaving Jericho. From Luke’s perspective, Jesus was entering Jericho. It would make sense that Zacchaeus lived in the new Jericho because after the healing, Jesus enters the new Jericho and encounters the chief tax collector. Problem solved.

Neither Mark nor Luke claim that only one man was healed. They only mention one. Mark likely named him because some of his readers would have known the Son of Timaeus or would have known his family. That would have been of interest to his original readers, not the other unnamed guy that nobody knew. It could have been that Luke was telling a different story than either Matthew or Mark. It could have been that Jesus healed a blind man coming into Jericho and then two men as He was leaving Jericho, but personally, I think all three are telling the same story and Matthew adds another detail the others did not that there was a second man. We have no reason to doubt Matthew. He was the only one of the three that would have certainly been there that day.

As we examine this passage, we are going to learn three truths that are shared by those who have real faith.

1. **THOSE WITH REAL FAITH CALL ON JESUS’ MERCY.**

Twice, Matthew reports exactly what those two men said when they heard that Jesus was passing by (20:30, 31). You might wonder, “Why were they sitting by the road?” The answer is obvious. They were begging. They had no disability income, and as blind men, no one would hire them. Their only recourse was to beg. Since Passover was coming soon, there would be a lot of travelers passing through Jericho on the way to Jerusalem. Jericho would have been a good town for these two men to live in. There were a lot of rich people who lived in or at least visited Jericho.

Since these two men couldn’t see, they had to rely on their hearing, and they heard encouraging news, “Jesus is coming.” They had heard about Jesus. They heard how He healed people, how he had raised people from the dead, how He had done miracle after miracle. They knew He was far more than just a Teacher. No teacher had done the things Jesus had done. The knew the Jewish faith taught the Messiah, the Son of David would come. They believed that this Jesus was that Son of David.

They listened closely, and as the heard the crowd get louder and the crowd get closer, they began to cry out, “Lord, have mercy on us!” Their cry for mercy teaches us how we should call out to Jesus.

1. *Let Our Cry Be Desperate.*

These men were not worried about decorum. This was no time to be timid or polite. They were desperate men. The doctors could do nothing for them. There was no social safety net to take care of them. They needed a miracle, and the only miracle worker they knew of was about to pass by them. As far as we know, Jesus had never been there before, and we know what they didn’t know—He wasn’t coming back. This was their only chance to meet the only man who could help them, and they weren’t going to let that chance slip by them.

These men yelled louder than fans at a bedlam football game. Their cry was desperate.

Have you ever cried out to God in desperation? When you pray a desperate prayer, you are not worried about the wording of your prayer. You are not concerned about your grammar. Your concern is not to be polite and respectful. You don’t care who is there and who hears. You want to get God’s attention, and you are desperate for His help because there is no one else. If He doesn’t help you, no one else can or will.

Catholics, Anglicans, Episcopalians, and those who worship in what we would call high church worship services sing a beautiful song. They sing or chant two words. The words are Latin, but they are transliterated straight from Greek, and they come right out of our text. The words are *Kyrie Eliasson.* That is what these two men said, “Kyrie, eliasson hamas, uios David” (*Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David*).

While *kyrie eliasson* sounds beautiful in a worship service sung to music by either a choir or a congregation, I don’t think it sounded beautiful to the crowd that day. All they heard was two miserable men making a nuisance of themselves. With their unseeing eyes staring off into space, they cried “Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.”

Have you prayed that recently and done so in desperation? That is not a prayer that comes from the lips of self-satisfied people. It is not prayed by those who labor under the delusion that they are self-made people.

It is the cry of those who know that without Him they are nothing. Without Him they are lost. Without Him they are without hope. It is a desperate cry.

1. *Let Our Cry Be Determined.*

The people in the crowd wanted these men to cease and desist. Put simply, they wanted them to shut up. These men were like 3-year-olds calling out, “Mommy, mommy, mommy . . .” They weren’t going to quit until they got the attention of the One to whom they most desperately wanted to talk. They were not going to give in, give up, or give out.

Don’t you either. Keep praying. Keep calling. Keep banging on heaven’s door. Jesus taught us to be persistent. He said, “Ask and keep on asking because when you do that, you will receive.” He promised, “Seek and keep on seeking because when you do that, you will find.” He taught, “Knock and keep on knocking because when you do that, the door will be opened.”

Don’t let anyone dissuade you or intimidate you or silence you. Call upon His mercy with determination.

1. *Let Our Cry Be Defined.*

Glory! Hallelujah! Their plan worked. They got Jesus’ attention. Jesus stopped. So, the crowd stopped. Jesus spoke. So, the crowd fell silent. Looking upon men who could not see Him, Jesus addressed those blind men. He asked simply, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

Those men heard the voice of the Master. They knew the question was directed to them. Here is their chance. What would they say? Do you think they held up their beggar’s cup and said, “Would you make a donation, please?” Do you think one of them said, “Jesus, I hear you are good at multiplying bread and fish. Would you please give me a happy meal?”

They knew exactly what they would say. They had probably rehearsed it, and now that they had the chance, they said it clearly and boldly. “Lord, let our eyes be opened!”

Spiritually, I believe their eyes already were open. Even though they were blind that saw spiritual reality so much more clearly than the religious leaders. The Pharisees and Sadducees were already blinded by their opposition and even hatred of Jesus. These men, however, saw clearly that Jesus was the Promised One, and seeing Him for who He was, they asked for physical sight to match their spiritual perception.

If Jesus came to you and said, “Here’s a blank check. What do you want?”, what would you say? How would you answer Him? Do you know what you want Jesus to do for you? Or would you fumble around for an answer?

Every now and then I come across someone who says, “I never pray for myself.” I guess they think that comes across as selfless or spiritual.” The next time someone says to me, “I never pray for myself,” I want to say to them, “Are you proud or just stupid?”

You don’t have to wait for Jesus to give you a blank check, He already has. It was Jesus who said:

* And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it (John 14:13-14).
* If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you (John 15:7).
* Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:23-24).

We need to believe what Jesus has promised and act upon it. Let God put on your heart what He wants for you. Then, ask Him for it, and ask Him boldly.

What is it that those with real faith do? The first thing is that they call on Jesus’ mercy.

1. **THOSE WITH REAL FAITH RECEIVE JESUS’ POWER.**

What did Jesus say to those two men? Did He say, “No, that’s too big of an ask”? Did He say, “No, you haven’t earned that big of a favor yet”? Matthew doesn’t tell us what Jesus said, but he does tell us what Jesus did. He touched the eyes of those men, and immediately, they received their sight.

When you cry out to Jesus in faith, you can be certain that He is going to touch you at the precise place where your problem lies. Where do you need Jesus to touch you?

* Does He need to touch your marriage? Does He need to touch your job situation?
* Does He need to touch your view of yourself?
* Does He need to touch the hurt of your past?
* Does He need to touch your relationship with your kids?
* Does He need to touch your heart because your heart has grown cold or maybe you have set your heart on things rather than on Him.

Call out to Him, and let Him touch you where you most need His loving and powerful touch.

The Gaither’s have a song that I love. Maybe you remember it, too.

Shackled by a [heavy](https://www.definitions.net/definition/heavy) burden,

'Neath a load of [guilt](https://www.definitions.net/definition/guilt) and shame.

Then the hand of [Jesus](https://www.definitions.net/definition/Jesus) touched me,

And now I am no [longer](https://www.definitions.net/definition/longer) the same.

He [touched](https://www.definitions.net/definition/touched) me, Oh He [touched](https://www.definitions.net/definition/touched) me,

And, oh, the joy that [floods](https://www.definitions.net/definition/floods) my soul!

Something [happened](https://www.definitions.net/definition/happened), and now I know,

He [touched](https://www.definitions.net/definition/touched) me and made me whole.

Since I met this [blessed](https://www.definitions.net/definition/blessed) Savior,

Since He [cleansed](https://www.definitions.net/definition/cleansed) and made me whole,

I will [never](https://www.definitions.net/definition/never) cease to [praise](https://www.definitions.net/definition/praise) Him,

I'll [shout](https://www.definitions.net/definition/shout) it [while](https://www.definitions.net/definition/while) eternity rolls.

He [touched](https://www.definitions.net/definition/touched) me, Oh He [touched](https://www.definitions.net/definition/touched) me,

And, oh, the joy that [floods](https://www.definitions.net/definition/floods) my soul!

Something [happened](https://www.definitions.net/definition/happened) and now I know

He [touched](https://www.definitions.net/definition/touched) me and made me whole.

We come to one final truth . . .

1. **THOSE WITH REAL FAITH FOLLOW JESUS’ LEADING.**

Mark tells us that Jesus did speak. He said, “Go your way; your faith has made you well” (Mark 10:52). Apparently, these men decided their way was wherever Jesus went. Look at the last words of v. 34.

If Jesus’ touches you, heals you, and says to you, “Go your way,” what way are you going to go? I believe you are going to go with Jesus. That is what people with real faith do. If you go your own way and your own way is in a different direction than the way Jesus is going, that is a good indication that the faith you have isn’t real, that it isn’t authentic.

Real faith in Jesus isn’t just warm feelings about Jesus. It is not just bland acceptance that Jesus is an important religious figure. Real faith is more than simply agreeing that He is the Savior sent from heaven. Real faith causes you to follow Him, and if you have no desire to follow Him, then you have something other than real faith.

We come to a time of invitation. What do you want to ask Jesus to do for you? Cry out to Him. Let Him touch you. Then follow Him as He leads you through this life.