

UP & AGAIN – THE KINGDOM OF NEW BEGINNINGS

SERIES:

Stories for the Heart – a closer look at the words and works of Jesus.

30 March 2025 – Scottsville Community Church, 9 am

READING: Luke 18: 35-43 (Jesus heals a blind beggar) – (**WORKS**)



SERMON OUTLINE

- The setting of mercy
- The Son of Mercy
- The seat of mercy

INTRODUCTION

Moeletsi Mbeki recently said:

There is no fight with the United States that South Africa can win. None!

On the issue of Ebrahim Rasool, his brother **Thabo Mbeki** has made a similar comment:

The post of ambassador has particular restrictions...which govern the behaviour of diplomats...(Ebrahim Rasool) made a mistake and said things about his host president that he should not have said.

If we can't win the faith and the words should not have spoken, then **sanity calls for an apology**.

Did you come to church this morning with fights you know you know you can't win? You are in the right place. In today's story, we meet blind men who were **powerless against their loss of sight** but Jesus' mercy changed their story.

Let's **now take a closer** look at their attempt.

	What the 1 st century audience saw and heard	What we must see and hear in 2025
The setting of mercy	'As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging' Luke 18:35 'And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside.' Mark 10:46 'And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside...' Matthew 20:29 ff <u>Was Jesus going out or from Jericho? How many blind beggars were there – one or two?</u> There were two Jericho's in the days of Jesus, located about 3 km from each other. The smaller one was the Old Testament Jericho invaded and destroyed by God. The new larger city Jericho lay north of the other and was built by Herod the Great around 35 BC. <u>Warren Weirsbe:</u> <i>'Still on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus left the old city of Jericho, now in ruins, and approached the new city build by Herod the Great...'</i> <u>John MacArthur:</u> <i>'Or it may also be that the events are telescoped for us, so that Christ first encountered the blind men on his way into the city, but the healing took place as he was departing... There were two blind men but Bartimaeus was the spokesman of the two...'</i> <i>'And hearing a crowd going by, he enquired what this meant.' Luke 18:36</i> <i>'They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by'.'</i> Luke 18:37 He had never met or seen Jesus but he must have heard about him. He must have believed the little he heard. What he had heard was sufficient to kindle faith for healing in the heart. <u>Warren Weirsbe:</u> <i>'Could Bartimaeus tell that the crowd walking with Jesus was different from the other bands of pilgrims that went by?'</i>	<i>'The blind can hear'</i> Some people in a coma can hear (& those on the verge of dying), and so healthcare practitioners and loved ones talk to them. The contemporary person likes to play victim. There is always a good reason why one need not act. The reality is that we already have some information to act upon. Our pride and laziness wants to magnify the challenge at hand to give others the impression our situation is unique and they don't understand what we are going through. This gives us the authority to decide how our lives should be run. God allows blindness to overtake us. The same God, in his grace, allows the ears of a blind man to work, so that the blind man can bear his condition. <i>'They told him'</i> The friends of this man had no power to change his situation. But they had eyes and knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth. The friends did not need any optical understanding to be of help, just the knowledge of Jesus. This story takes place in the new Jericho when a different crowd led by Jesus passes by and friends help interpret the sound to a blind man. That's the setting of the mercy.

The Son of Mercy	<i>‘And he cried out, ‘Jesus, Son of David have mercy (eleeo) on me!’</i> Luke 18:38 <i>‘And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent.’</i> Luke 18:39 <i>‘And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent.’</i> Mark 10:48a <i>‘But he cried all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me’.</i> Luke 18:39 (also Mark 10:48) Son of David In Matthew 22:41-45, Jesus asks the Pharisees who the Messiah is. They correctly say that he is the son of David. By this they meant, he is an earthly king. Then Jesus refers them to Psalm 110:1 – <i>‘The LORD says to my Lord: sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’</i> And then asks, ‘Why did David address the Messiah as Lord if he is his son? The conclusion Jesus wants to draw them to is that the Messiah, the son of David, is also the Son of God. John MacArthur: The title ‘Son of David’ was an ‘affirmation that he recognised Jesus as Messiah and King’. How did this man know that Jesus was the Son of David, God? Surely, he did not read this from a book, he was blind! And why do our contemporary friends seldomly arrive at the same understanding about the identity of Jesus? Have mercy on me! The blind beggar(s) only asked for mercy. He had not come to bargain with Jesus, on the merits of his works and reputation. He was helpless. He asks for eleeo – that Jesus would grant favour to him, an unworthy recipient. In desperation, he cries out, not once but twice, against the voices that call him to keep quiet. He is desperate and honest about his pain. He prays a short simple prayer, ‘Jesu, ngihawukele/ngisize’. This man believed the right things about Jesus – his deity and ancestry. He also acted on that belief by crying to the same for mercy, even against opposition.	‘The identity of Jesus’ Theology matters! Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus to me, to my troubles? Many believe there is a jesus (small letter J). The issue lies with Jesus as God. He is not God in many prayers. He is one of the many ‘sources of help’ people consult and hope for some luck. Then there are those who know Jesus as the Saviour of their sins. But all their references to him are historical. He saved them. In the past they experienced his touch. Today, they have no experience of him as a loving Bridegroom who is preparing a great wedding reception and requires a growing intimate relationship and is expecting to find a bride without spot. Their Jesus is nothing more than a historical figure who expects nothing more from them except to show up on a Sunday to service a routine. Such a Jesus is done with them and is not to be expected to intervene in their affairs today. As such, they handle their challenges the same way all other people handle their problems. ‘have mercy on me’ At conversion, we needed mercy. Somehow we think we needed mercy then but as we continue we can bargain with Jesus on the basis of the years and works we’ve done for him. We constantly need reminders of his Person and his greatness.
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The seat of mercy	<i>‘And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him.’ Luke 18:40</i> <i>‘Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.’ Mark 10:49</i> <i>‘And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.’ Mark 10:50</i> <i>‘What do you want me to do for you?’ Luke 18:41 (Mark 10:51a)</i> <i>‘Lord, let me recover (anablepo) sight.’ Luke 18:41 (Mark 10:51b)</i> <i>‘Recover your sight; your faith has made you well (sozo)’ Luke 18:42</i> <i>‘And immediately he recovered his sight and followed (akaloutheo) him, glorifying God.’ Luke 18:43 (Mark 10:52)</i> <i>‘and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise (ainos) to God.’ Luke 18:43</i> The man asks to recover his sight (anablepo): Ana – up or again Blepo – to see or to look So anablepo means to see again or to look up. While the ‘seeing again’ here refers to sight being restored, the ‘looking up’ implies spiritual awakening. I know that because we are immediately told, he was made well/whole (sozo). In Matthew 1:21, the angel says Jesus will ‘sozo his people from their sin’. The noun is <i>soteria</i> which means salvation. Does this mean this man’s physical healing was accompanied by/led to his salvation from sin? The conclusion is inescapable with the use of words like anablepo and sozo all in one sentence. There is more, the man then immediately followed (akoloutheo) Jesus. The goodness of God does lead to repentance. Mercy does more for this man. It didn’t just help him regain his sight, it took a seat in his life. He was made whole.	‘An awakening’ It is not clear why the man asked Jesus to help him REcover his sight. Was he not born blind? How long had he now been blind? What sort of recovery are you trusting God for today? • A passion for a dying/dead career path? • A love that is growing cold? • A faith that has lost its purpose and zeal? • Joy that has been eroded by troubles? • A sense of direction and purpose in life – the joy of living? • A resuscitation of a marriage that ended in divorce – or is ‘everything NOT possible with God’? • And health! After all this story is about healing! ‘your faith’ Despite the proliferation of teachings and books on ‘faith’, faithlessness among believers abound! We walk by sight and then ‘turn the faith motivation light on’ when we feel a little discomfort that will eventually go away on its own. We must confront our complete lack of trust in the power of God to heal in 2025, to heal without the help of medical science.
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‘sight restored, soul awakened’

Mercy has a seat here. Jesus touches this man deeply to cure even the most terrible sin disease. The man experiences the healing of his soul and jumps, **not only to sing a sweet song of gratitude** but to also commit his entire life to the lifelong journey of following Jesus. His sins are forgiven. **He is at peace with God.** He is filled with indescribable joy. How can he remain silent? ‘Love so amazing, love so divine demands his love, **his life and his all**’.

‘not for Reformers’

This **‘healing combo’** is an eye opener to us, reformed preachers. We want to lead people to Jesus. It is urgent. But here Jesus **heals the body and saves the soul** simultaneously! I teach Discrete Maths to Computer Science students. My mind, **like the western mind**, likes formulas. [Today, we end the series on ‘Stories for the Heart’. Why stories? **I’m preaching to Africans?**] Here is a caution to formula-driven theologies. **God does not live in a box!** His healing was also not through the laying on of hands, Jesus simply said, **‘Recover your sight’**.

In Christ, mercy has a seat. **In our call to worship**, we read:

*‘O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is **plentiful redemption**’ Psalm 130:7*

CONCLUSION

'Hearing a crowd'

Our lives speak, with and without a sound. What do our kids hear when we speak? Based on the verbal and nonverbal 'sounds' our lives make, **do they have a future** as Christians? What sound do the **'blind beggars of Scottsville'** hear in the spaces we occupy?

'They told him'

The blindness of the eyes does not have to lead to the deafness of the ears. At any given time, there is something we can do for ourselves, for our neighbour and for God's kingdom. We can wake up, take a shower, and **chose to be in God's presence**.

'Son of David'

Is Jesus God to you? **How important is his word to you?** Does it really govern your life? Are we already practising servanthood we learnt about last week? **The man in this story acted on the little he knew about Jesus.** It is obedience that will make our lives look different, **church attendance is not enough**.

'Those in front (many!) rebuked him'... 'what do YOU want me to do for you?'

Awukahle wena, **what's gonna change now!** Were those the thoughts in their minds? Do you want to actively listen when people **share their sorrows** (and excitement!) with you? This week, **shelve your judgement** and simply pay attention when people talk. Jesus allowed the man to **state his** request!

'Recover your sight'

The difference Jesus makes, **today!** Jesus is still on the same mission – to turn people around for his glory. He will save, sanctify, **set free and show mercy** where he is called upon. He loves doing that.

'Followed him, glorifying God'

At Impendle, I once invited **Pastor Gamedze from eSwatini**. He then disclosed to me that he and his ageing wife pray and fast on Tuesdays. What better picture of a couple (bride) that is actively pursuing their Bridegroom? **Apart from talking about our love for Jesus**, what practical steps will we take to pursue Him this week?

NEXT SUNDAY: We begin a 2-part Easter series.

Amen.