

Jesus Passeth By

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 April 1985

Preacher: Alex J MacDonald

- [0 : 0 0] Now I want to turn back to that passage that we read with the children, that's in Luke chapter 18 and verses 35 to 43. Especially we may just select verse 37.
- They told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Now, here in this passage we have one of those very striking events when someone had a unique opportunity to meet Jesus.
- And it's no accident that these accounts are given to us in the Gospels. They're not only revealing to us the Lord's power to be able to heal physical diseases, but they're there as a lasting reminder to us of the necessity of seizing the opportunity we have of meeting Jesus.
- After all, we're told here quite specifically that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And it was very true, very solemn, that Jesus was not going to be passing through Jericho again.
- He was on his way up to Jerusalem. And there he was going to die. And as far as his physical presence in this world was concerned, he was not going to be passing that way again.
- [1 : 5 3] And so we have here a tremendous reminder to us of the necessity of grasping the opportunity that we have today.
- Because Jesus is here amongst us, passing through. First then, let's look at the condition of this man when Jesus was passing by.
- Well, it's very obvious and well known. He was blind, but he was also a beggar. Now, we've thought with the children a little bit about what was involved in being blind.
- But I want to think with you, especially, of what the Bible says concerning our spiritual blindness.
- It's not just a case of taking these words relating here to this blind man and saying, oh, well, we'll spiritualize that and we'll apply it to our own spiritual blindness.
- [2 : 5 6] The Bible itself does that very same thing. In Revelation chapter 3, where the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking to the church in Laodicea, and he's talking of their own appreciation of themselves and how they thought they were rich, that prospered, needed nothing.
- One of the things he lays to their charge is that they were blind. They were wretched, pitiful, blind, and naked.
- Now, of course, the blind and the naked were not meant in any literal, physical sense, but rather they were meant spiritually.
- They thought that they were getting on fine. They thought that there was nothing wrong with them. As a church, they were prospering, they thought, just like the community in which they lived.
- But Jesus said, that is not so. You are blind. You are not seeing things as they really are. Now, of course, that same metaphor is applied in many different ways in Scripture to people spiritually or morally, that we may be just as blind, in fact, more devastatingly blind than merely physically blind.

[4 : 32] Because if we don't see the things that God teaches us, if we don't see the truth of God, then we are blind indeed. The Lord Jesus Christ, in speaking to the Pharisees and others like them, applied this kind of language to them, calling them those who are blind.

He called them blind guides. And he said that if the light in them was darkness, then how great was that darkness.

That kind of language applied time and time again in Scripture. So what we're doing here as we look at these words and at this account of this man's meeting with Jesus is not something that we need to feel ashamed about at all.

The Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ himself applies this metaphor of blindness to us spiritually as well as its literal physical meaning.

But then also the man here was begging. Now that reminds us of really the extreme of his condition in those days.

[5 : 45] You see, perhaps for us today, blindness, ordinary physical blindness, may have lost some of its terrors because of the great provision that's made, and in many ways for blind people.

None of these provisions can make up for the loss of sight, but they can help the invention of Braille to enable a blind person to read. Guide dogs, as we mentioned to the children, and so on, so many things.

There are other, more advanced electronic developments now that can help blind people. But there were none of those things in those days. There was only the kindness of people who might help them, to lead them by the hand, or to give them something to eat, or with some money with which to buy something.

This man was there, he was begging for help. And if people weren't moved with compassion on him, if there were many beggars like him around, and people were getting cynical with regard to them, well, of course, he suffered.

Now that reminds us of, really, the desperate condition in which we're in. It's not only true that we are blind in all those senses we thought about with the children, but our condition is spiritually as bad as that of this man was physically.

[7 : 11] It's like what Jesus said concerning the prodigal son. You see, it wasn't just that he was disobedient. It wasn't just that he wasted all his father's inheritance that had been given to him.

But when he reached this position of emptiness, of ruin financially, he really had to become a beggar, in a sense.

He had to go around begging for someone to give him some work, even though it wasn't paid work. He had to do that, even just to get something to eat.

And that reminds us again of the desperate condition that we're in as sinners. You see, it's not only that we're blind, but we're needy in every kind of way.

And sin, the Bible assures us, ruins us in every kind of way. Now, in this life, we may not be able to see it completely.

[8 : 22] We may be able to see some of it. We may be able to see the ruin that sin, even one sin, may bring upon a person. Sometimes we see that kind of thing in maybe an extreme way.

We see how drunkenness followed to an extreme brings ruin upon a person's life. We see how sexual immorality followed in an extreme way can bring ruin to a person's life.

We see many examples of those kind of things. But the Bible assures us that every sin and every kind of sin and every degree of sin ultimately brings ruin.

Those extreme examples are what we may call the tip of the iceberg that are so obvious perhaps to everyone. But there is a huge, hidden, underbody of the iceberg, and it's all the same thing.

It is all sin, and it all leads to the same disastrous and ruinous conclusion. So in those days, as people saw those blind and crippled people begging by the side of the road, they had a constant reminder to them of their own sinfulness and their own beggarly condition in the eyes of God that they had nothing to present to God, to persuade Him that they were good.

[9 : 58] Rather, they had to come as beggars just like those at the side of the road. Of course, many people were blind to that conclusion. Many people, as they looked at those blind people and beggars, they would just have thought, oh, that person must have been very bad.

He must have committed some terrible sin to end up like that, but me, I'm good, and I'm prospering, so I'm all right. You see how twisted the human heart is. And perhaps that same kind of thought lingers in our hearts sometimes when we think about the misfortunes of others.

We may think, oh, well, I'm glad I haven't ended up like that, but then, of course, it's that person's own fault because of the way his life was going. We don't see that that is a reminder to every one of us that sin of whatever shade, whatever hue, whatever degree, it leads to ruin.

We must come to God as a beggar, empty hands, asking for help. Then secondly, we want to look at the chance that this man got.

Verse 37, we read there that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Now, the man, of course, was aware of the crowds around him.

[11 : 18] The other senses of a blind person are developed very highly so that he can hear better, he can feel better of what's going on around him than many a sighted person. And so he was aware there was a great stir on.

Something important was happening. He wanted to know what it was. He asked, what's happening? And they told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Now, as we'll see later, this information had a tremendous impact upon that man.

It had tremendous significance for him. It's obvious that he knew something at least about Jesus of Nazareth. But I want to just dwell for a few moments on what this teaches us today.

You see, as I mentioned at the beginning, this man had a great and unique opportunity. Jesus was not going to pass through Jericho as far as we know again. And this was the last opportunity that anybody there had to call upon Jesus for help of whatever kind.

And that reminds us that we also are given opportunities. And we can only be sure of the opportunities that we presently have. You see, that man, like perhaps many others that day, thought, well, we've heard a lot about Jesus and we've heard that he's able to help people in various ways.

[12 : 42] We've heard some people claiming that he's the Messiah, even some that he's the Son of God. But well, we'll just reserve judgment. We'll wait and see a little bit longer.

We'll wait for another opportunity. After all, he hasn't done very much this time in Jericho. He doesn't seem to be anything very special. We'll wait until another time, until perhaps he comes back again.

But you know, there wasn't another time when he came back again to Jericho. We ourselves may fall into that same kind of trap and we may think, well, we're presented with the gospel.

We have the opportunity opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ. We may not feel very sure about it. We may have all kinds of questions.

There may be all kinds of obstacles, as we'll see for this man there were. And we may say, well, we'll put it off until another time. But you know, the solemn thing that this passage reminds us of is that there may not be another time.

[13 : 54] And there may not be a better time. Who is to say that you are to get a better opportunity in the future to come and to believe in Jesus Christ than you're having today when the gospel is being preached?

And who is to say that you're going to have any kind of opportunity to meet with Jesus? Jesus is here. He has promised to be so.

Where two or three even are met in his name, he's there in the midst. We're reminded by that great vision in the book of Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ walking amidst the golden candlesticks that represent the Christian churches.

The Lord Jesus Christ is walking here amongst us today unseen. But the same Jesus. The same Jesus yet gloriously different.

Yes, the same Jesus because we believe on good grounds of scripture that he is the same body. The same body, the same feet, the same hands.

[15 : 09] but yet hands that bear marks and feet that bear marks and a body that bears marks and yet also a glorified body, one that is forever united to the eternal mysterious Godhead of the Son of God.

but he is here still today just the same, unseen by us but saying, behold, I stand at the door and knock.

Jesus, being here amongst us, being here by the preaching of his word is giving to us an opportunity, a chance, if you like, just as this man had that chance chance to call out as this man did for mercy and to receive it.

And then we notice, thirdly, the cry of this man for help. His cry for help in verse 38. He called out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

Now we need to notice here something about understanding. This man was not coming as a complete ignoramus with regard to Jesus.

[16 : 32] He was coming as someone who already knew things about Jesus. And it's important when we see this because this kind of passage ought not to be applied to someone who knows nothing about Jesus or nothing about the Bible.

This man, by what he said, demonstrated a knowledge of Jesus and of theological truth. First of all, he said, Jesus, Son of David.

That's a very striking expression and one that is not at all often used of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. But one that demonstrated that this man had a tremendous grasp of who Jesus was.

He had maybe heard people say that, well, maybe Jesus is the Christ. And he heard about some of the things that Jesus had done. Well, he took the conclusion himself that, well, if he's the Messiah, he is the son of David.

That is, he is the great promise, awaited one, the greater son of David who is to be a king greater than even David was. He had a tremendous grasp of the promises of God throughout the Old Testament covenant to be fulfilled in this one, the Christ.

[17 : 49] And so he calls him the son of David. But then also, note, he had a tremendous understanding of what Jesus' work was, of what Jesus did.

He didn't just say to Jesus, Jesus, I'm a poor blind beggar. I'm a poor blind beggar and I haven't done very much wrong in all my life.

Won't you help me? No. He says, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. He had that understanding of Jesus' work and of the way of God's working that made it quite clear that God, in helping someone, was having mercy on them.

He wasn't doing something just out of pity. He wasn't doing something because the person had done something good to deserve his interest.

Far from it. God, in helping a sinner, is having mercy on him. It's something free, something undeserved. And that man grasped that much, at any rate, and more than a great many more wealthy and more wise people have missed concerning the purposes of God.

[19 : 20] He said, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. It's not that I deserve anything, he said, but I'm just appealing to your mercy.

But then notice also he had an understanding of his own personal need. Now, of course, that would have been so obvious to him. He had an understanding that it was upon he himself that mercy had to be bestowed.

Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And so, there's a very direct personal appeal in those words to the Lord Jesus.

It's not just that he's appealing in general for mercy or for kindness, but he's appealing for that mercy and kindness to himself.

He recognizes that he is in desperate need and he needs Jesus' help. Now, of course, all these things have tremendous significance for ourselves.

[20 : 27] we need to recognize who Jesus is. We need to recognize that he is the one appointed from all eternity to come into this world and remove our sin.

That he is the one promised to Eve, promised to Abraham, promised to Moses, promised to David, promised through all the Old Testament prophets, the one who would come to set right what was wrong.

We need to understand also God's way of working, God's way of salvation, that it's a way not of our merit, but of his mercy. And we need to understand our own desperate and personal need as this man did.

So we see this man's cry for help. He recognized Jesus was passing by and he seized that opportunity. Are you seizing that opportunity today?

Because all that is required is that same cry for help. You put away from your mind everything that is behind you. You put out of your mind all the reasons against what you're doing.

[21 : 39] You're saying, well, I'm perhaps not good enough. I haven't reached a special stage in spiritual experience yet to be able to do such a thing. I haven't had any kind of wonderful experience.

Put away from yourself all kinds of wrong ideas. Put away from yourself even your own sins. And just recognize that all you have to do is to cry out for help as that man did.

But then I want to notice with you the three final things. There is, first of all, reasons against this man's persistence.

Reasons against him going on in what he was doing. When he cried out, Jesus, have mercy on me, those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet.

But he shouted all the more, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And we notice here something about obstacles to faith. We should never be fooled into thinking that it's the easy option to have faith, as if it's some kind of easy way out.

[22 : 53] Rather, it is the hardest choice to actually to have faith, to believe in Jesus Christ. and this man discovered it.

He had cried out, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. But all the people round about him making such a noise, and they were all perhaps jostling, wanting to see Jesus, and they were telling him to be quiet, be quiet.

Right away, he meets some kind of opposition, some kind of obstacle to his faith. Now, perhaps you may have found the same kind of obstacles, or similar kinds of obstacles, in your coming to faith.

Perhaps there is a genuine interest in your heart concerning faith in Jesus Christ, concerning really getting to grips with spiritual realities, of really finding out what the Christian life is all about.

You may have a good grasp of what the Bible teaches, a good grasp of its theology, just as this man did. but there may be hindrances keeping you back.

[24 : 05] That man that day might have been hindered, mightn't he? Might have just said, well, I don't want to make a fuss. I don't want all these people to turn against me.

After all, I'm blind, I can't see. And they can see, and they don't sound particularly friendly. Perhaps I'll just be quiet. could quite easily have happened.

And perhaps something similar has happened in your experience, perhaps away in the past, perhaps very recently, perhaps it's happening now. Some voice is whispering to you some kind of opposition to what you know in your heart of hearts you ought to do.

And it's saying, be quiet. Don't make a fuss. this isn't the time. Or it's whispering some kind of statement like that, that would stop you doing really what you ought to do, and you know you ought to do, and that is to say, Jesus, have mercy on me.

And to mean it with all your heart. Well, of course, there are all kinds of obstacles that may come in our way. There may be this kind of thing. Well, what will people say, or what will people think if I do this?

[25 : 27] Just as this man had to face up to that kind of objection. There is, in that sense, the cost of what's involved. Because, make no mistake, there is a cost involved.

You yield your whole life to Jesus Christ, and he now is your boss, and he is your manager, and he tells you how you're to live your life.

Yes, there may be struggles against that, but that is the position for the Christian. There is the cost in knowing that you have to follow that way, wherever it may lead, as well as the tremendous blessings of knowing Christ's presence with you every day of your life.

life. These kind of things may be whispered into your heart or shouted into your heart to try to stop you, to try to prevent you from coming to Jesus.

Perhaps there are all kinds of other fears that may come in as obstacles. Perhaps the fear that you're not good enough, or you're not ready yet, or as I mentioned already, that you haven't got the right kind of experience.

[26 : 39] You couldn't give a wonderful description of how bad you were, and then how suddenly good you became when you became a Christian, that kind of thing. Well, that kind of thing isn't in the Bible at all.

There are some very dramatic conversions, like the Apostle Paul, but these are very few. Most people coming to faith in Christ came in a gradual kind of way.

We may see even as this man did. He had already a good grasp of who Jesus was. It wasn't as if suddenly everything fell like a blinding light from heaven to him.

He had a good knowledge already of the truth. And here was rather the final public profession that he really believed in Christ and he needed his help.

So then, whatever the reasons may be against our persistence, those reasons, none of them are adequate. none of them can stand the test before God to say, well, I didn't accept your son because of these reasons.

[27 : 46] Which one of these reasons could stand the test? None of them. Because they all are just excuses. We know that when God offers us this greatest gift of all, the gift of life through his son, there is no alternative, no honorable or reasonable alternative, but to take it hard though it may be, with a cost there may be, but it is what God is inviting us to do and what we know deep down inside ourselves is the right thing to do.

And so we see that the man would have none of it. He shouted all the more, son of David, have mercy on me. He's not going to be put off. He's not going to be quietened down.

Doesn't matter what those people say. Doesn't matter what the world around him is going to say. He'll have none of it. He wants Jesus and he wants Jesus to hear him and he wants Jesus' help.

And that is the supreme thing above everything else. And that's the question for us today. Is that the most important thing in your life?

This question of whether Jesus is going to hear you and help you. Well, if it's not, then you certainly are not in the position this man was.

[29 : 12] You certainly are not close to faith. If there are many other things that are more important to you, and this is only a kind of sideline that's perhaps a little bit interesting or something like that, well, you're certainly not close to faith or as Jesus put it, close to the kingdom of God.

But if today this is the most important thing, the thing that's gripping your mind, the thing that perhaps keeps you awake at night, the thing that perhaps you find yourself constantly returning to, then you're in the position this man was, close to the kingdom.

And all you have to do is, as this man did, to shout it out, to ask God for his help. Jesus was passing by and he was not going to miss this opportunity.

Seize it now and believe in him and let it be known to others too that you believe in him. And then we notice briefly Jesus' response to the man.

Verses 40 to 42, Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, what do you want me to do for you? Lord, I want to see, he replied.

[30 : 23] Jesus said to him, receive your sight, your faith has healed you. There we have the tremendous response of Jesus to the need of this man. It's well known.

We don't need to go into it in any great detail. Jesus answered the man's prayer and he helped him. But what I want to say is just this. There is no recorded instance of anyone crying out for help to Jesus.

And Jesus simply passing them by, not listening to them. There is no recorded instance of anyone asking Jesus for help and Jesus turning them away.

This man comes pleading for Jesus' help in his need as a blind beggar. prayer. And Jesus hears that voice.

That voice out of the clamor around him. Out of all that jostling crowd, he can hear that one voice. And it's the same today. You may feel just one in a crowd here.

[31 : 36] But not to Jesus, you're not. He knows you and knows you individually. And if that cry is coming from your heart today for help, as it came from that blind man's heart, then Jesus also hears you.

And he never turns away anyone who comes to him in that faith. So he hears that man, but then also he questions him.

Now we may think this is a little bit unnecessary of our Lord. Why is it that he says to him, what do you want me to do for you? Wouldn't it be obvious this blind man feeling his way through the crowd coming to Jesus?

And perhaps his eyes were obviously blind. Why did Jesus ask him, what do you want me to do for you? Well, Jesus never did anything that was unnecessary.

This questioning of the man was very important to that man. It was very important to clarify his thought and to enable him to testify to what exactly it was he wanted.

[32 : 43] What was the most important thing that was a burden on that he couldn't get rid of? Of course, it was his blindness. Lord, I want to see. There may have been many other things in his life. He may have suddenly been filled with the ideas of, well, I would like a lot of things in life.

I would like to have plenty of money so I wouldn't need to come here and beg. I would like everybody to be kind to me and to be popular with everybody. All kinds of things could come into his mind. But there was one thing that was at the heart of that man's need and that was his blindness.

witness and that was the thing he wanted dealt with above everything else. Now, Jesus helped that man to be able to clarify that and to be able to lastingly bear that witness that this was the thing he wanted Jesus to do for him.

And it's the same for us today too. There may be many things that if we were given the opportunity what we would have in life. But does it come down to, like it came with this man, does it come down to say, no, first things first.

Above everything else, I will have Jesus. As the old Negro spiritual goes, when I come to die, give me Jesus. You can have all this world.

[34 : 00] Give me Jesus. That's really what that man was saying at his own personal point of need. Give me Jesus. Give me the help that you alone can give to my blindness which is the root of all my other diseases.

And so, for us today, we have to come with that same prayer to Jesus and to say that is the most important thing, my blindness, my spiritual blindness, my ruined condition.

And I want you to help me there. And then I leave everything else into your hands. What happens with me? What kind of life I'm going to live? What kind of service I'm going to give you?

But set me right there. And so, finally, we just see the recovery of this man. Jesus heals him. And he says, receive your sight.

Your faith has healed you. And immediately he received his sight. He followed Jesus and praised God. The transformation that came about in this man through the healing of the Lord Jesus.

[35 : 02] But notice also the Lord Jesus teaches that man even as he heals him and speaks to him. He says, your faith has healed you. He's saying it's not because you're a very special person or because you've done great good deeds in your life.

It's your simple faith. You've appealed to me trusting that I can do it. And that is why you're healed today. And it's the same for us. We come having simple faith in Jesus Christ for what he has done upon the cross to take away our sin.

And it's our faith that heals that disease, that cancer of sin. Because the faith is the channel by which God's grace flows to us from Christ and meets our needs.

Look at the transformation the man immediately received his sight. He followed Jesus. Amazing thought, isn't it? That the first face that that man would see coming out of darkness was the face of Jesus Christ.

And that face would be more precious to him than anybody else's face, even his own when he could perhaps see it in a mirror. Because that was the face from which shone the love of God to him at his point of need.

[36 : 19] Now you, if you today commit yourself to Jesus Christ, you're committing yourself to a life of loving service to Jesus. And your life from now on is going to be a life dedicated to him.

You're going to be following Jesus. It is not an easy option, an easy way out to say, oh yes, I'll believe. I just need to have faith. I don't need to have good works. Rather, it is exactly the opposite.

When you say you have faith in Christ, you are dedicated to living a life of love, that love that Christ has shown to you. And you are following that master.

And so is a very demanding life, but the life, of course, that is the only worthwhile one. The life that leads to eternal fellowship in the presence of God with the Lord Jesus Christ and all his people.

So the tremendous transformation in the man. No longer is he sitting there begging, sitting there in a handicapped and ruined condition. but he's going about praising God.

[37 : 27] And notice also, causing other people to praise God too. When all the people saw it, they also praised God. And isn't that one of the most wonderful things, that when a person becomes a Christian, Christians are of course the first people to praise and to thank God for that tremendous transformation.

salvation. Nobody ever needs to worry in becoming a Christian that perhaps those who are already Christians will not think them good enough or will turn away from.

Certainly ought never to be so. Rather, you become a Christian today. You'll be welcomed and God will be thanked on your behalf because one sinner repenting that is rejoicing not only with the angels of heaven, but there's rejoicing also among the people of God.

Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.