



“The Blind Man”:

What do you want me to do for you?

– LUKE 18:35-43

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Luke 18:35-43 *Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. 36 And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what*

it meant. 37 So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, 41 saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." 42 Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." 43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day the villagers told them, "Hey, there is an elephant in the village today." They had no idea what an elephant was. So they decided, "Even though we would not be able to see it, let us go and feel it anyway." All of them went where the elephant was. Every one of them touched the elephant. "Hey, the elephant is a pillar," said the first man who touched his leg. "Oh, no! It is like a rope," said the second man who touched the tail. "Oh, no! It is like a thick branch of a tree," said the third man who touched the trunk of the elephant. "It's a big hand fan" said the fourth man who touched the ear of the elephant. "It's a huge wall," said the fifth man who touched the belly of the elephant. "It's a big pipe," said the sixth man who touched the tusk of the elephant.

A wise man was passing by and he saw this. He stopped and asked them, "What's the matter?" They said, "We cannot agree to what an elephant is." Each one of them told him what he believed an elephant to be. The wise man calmly explained to them, "All of you are right *and* wrong! The elephant may appear a certain way from your vantage point, but it is much more than what you alone understand it to be."

The idea of the story is that truth is often generally seen from the position of our own experiences and points of view. Sometimes we can see that truth and sometimes not because of our individual life position and experiences. The real truth however did not, *and does not*, change to form to those viewpoints. The elephant was still an elephant, not matter what the perception was. Further enquiry and exploration was needed in order to know the real truth, the *whole* truth!

For nearly 100 Sunday messages we have been following the path of Christ...the living ministry of Jesus. Through that period we have witnessed many miraculous acts...great "works of wonder." But now we are approaching the end of such marvels as our Lord marches toward Jerusalem and His *date with destiny*. Today, as Jesus walked His walk, He is approached...*and radically so*, by a man that was blind. A man that clearly knew He could not see...knew that he *wanted* to see, and most importantly he knew who had the power to open

his eyes. And he intended to carry the ball to the goal no matter how many blockers stood in his way! There was in this man a genuine earnest passion but no doubt still only a part of the full picture.

John Lennon in his famous song “Strawberry Fields Forever” says “*Living is easy with eyes closed.*” Sadly it seems that many of us seek that easy life more than any other aspect of our living. We “close our eyes” to the world around us because when we do risk opening them, we don’t like what we see. And we also so often close our eyes to the reality of ourselves for the same reasons! The Danish philosopher, theologian, poet, social critic and religious author Søren Kierkegaard said “*There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn't true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true.*”

This man however was an exception to the rule. For even though he was blind he still managed to recognize the great physician, and he did so long before millions of folks who believe that they CAN see ! The truth is we daily live out the old story of those blind men with the elephant. We believe we see the truth, and are unwilling to entertain the possibility that our view is skewed to our personal perspectives and limited view, and often that is actually lived out from a church pew.

The book *Blindness* is a novel by Portuguese author José Saramago. It won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1995 and has since been made into a Cannes Film Festival independent film and has garnered some great reviews. The story is one of an unexplained mass epidemic of blindness which began with one man and soon afflicted everyone in an unnamed city and perhaps beyond into the world at large. The story deals with the social breakdown that swiftly follows these events. The novel, it seems, seeks to ask greater cultural questions concerning what it means to see and what not being able to can do to individuals and to a society at large. It graphically and successfully magnifies the story of the blind men with the elephant, and what can happen when perceived understanding becomes only the possession of a particular individual. Facts and reality become blurred. Chaos of course follows quickly behind.

This man in our text was physically blind, and he knew it. Usually our pride will never let us admit that we can’t see things clearly. But this man was able to pick out the Messiah because, even though he was blind, he wasn’t deaf! He heard the facts from others, believed such, and he acted. “*And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by...and he cried out...*” There was more here than just a man wanting to gain something he did not have...more than just his desire to gain his sight. He didn’t call out “*Heal me! Heal me!*” He called out, “*Jesus...have mercy on me.*” He seemed to instinctively understand that there was more needed here...more required, than just miraculous medicine to relieve the immediate and obvious issue. He may have been blind, but he was apparently a wise man, who “saw” more than one would have expected!

In the movie “The Matrix”, Morpheus explains to Neo that the Matrix is an illusory world created to prevent humans from discovering that they are slaves to an external influence. Holding out a capsule on each of his palms, he describes the choice facing Neo: “*This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill—you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Remember: all I'm offering is the truth. Nothing more.*” In a case of Hollywood reflecting reality, the movie struck a chord in all of us because there is indeed a feeling that we are not seeing everything...that we are so often living in a world that is passing by us daily and is void of the truth, or at least **all** of it.

Notice verse 36: The “multitude”, just like now, were just “passing by.” They were just “following Jesus,” or so they thought, but they failed to see the actual heart of what it means to BE a follower of Christ. I wonder how many of us are doing the same thing? Believing we are “following Christ” but we are failing to act upon His teaching and live out his life dynamic. Failing to be aware of the world around us, we are blind to the “greater Jesus”...the actual living out of his truth and passion.

When the man sought for more than what he had, *more than he was and for the mercy he knew he needed*, those who were happily tripping along after Christ *or at least the blessing of living in His earthly realm*, ...they tell him to be quiet. Oh, how the world wants us to just shut up! They don't want to hear our views, our state of being, or the state of the world around us. They don't care what you think the elephant is! They don't have time for a blind man! They know what the truth is. They don't want you to tell them any different. They don't want you to show them a different world.

But this man would not be silenced. He continues to shout. He continues to call out to Jesus, no doubt because he knew he was blind and this was his chance to see! And more importantly, *Jesus* knew it. And as long as both understood that truth, a change could actually occur. When the “thirsty” are looking for truth, there will always be those who will attempt to deter them. “Misery loves company”, and those who are intent on staying blind hate to have a fellow blind man leave their ranks!

There must have been countless voices vying for our Lord's attention that day on the road, yet he heard that *one* voice. There must have been something behind that voice to make it heard above all the rest. Perhaps it was because that this man was undivided in his passion and his commitment. He was not dabbling in this venture. He knew that he was blind, and he knew that the answer lay before him. He had *one thing* that he had to do. One thing that was required of him. He had to get up and go to Jesus. He had to *move*. While the hand of Jesus is always outstretched in invitation, we are required to “step up” when He calls! Perhaps this blind man knew of the prophecy of Isaiah 35:5, which says, “*And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the deaf.*”

Jesus never left the business of “Commander-in-Chief.” He commands that the man be brought to Him. He didn't *ask*...He *commanded*. When the man came to Him, Jesus took charge. Jesus then asked the man a question that could be construed as a silly question: “*What do you want me to do for you?*” I mean, isn't it obvious, Lord? And yet He asked! The man cuts to the chase: “*Lord, I want to see.*” Now the man knew two things about the situation before him. **One**, that the all-powerful Messiah Son of God stood before him. Can you imagine that? **Two**, the man had the critical element; he had the *faith*. Not just that this could happen, but that *Jesus* could do this. Not that He *would*. That would be presumption, not faith, but that He *could*.

Jesus is here today. The all-powerful Messiah Son of God stands before you. What do *you* want Him to do for you? Why are you following Him? Are you looking for Him to just fix you, or do you want to **really see**? Are you looking for comfort? For security? To be liked by people around you? To have...to be...to gain? In the book “Blindness”, the people had discovered that they could “see” in a way that they never could when they still had sight. That there was a greater seeing than just engaging the day to day world around them and accepting things as they were.

Jesus speaks, and His words are enough to do the job: “*Receive your sight...*” Note the careful choice of the words. He said, “*Receive.*” Jesus was *giving* him the ability to see, but he had to take it. He had to *receive* it. Jesus had just spoken those words shortly before saying “*Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*” (Luke 18:17)

The truth? Pilate asked the question that echoes down through the ages: “*what is truth?*” Our world today seems to move in mass...herded about like cattle. “It’s Christmas: *buy stuff.*” “You are 22: *listen to this music, and wear these clothes.*” “You are in college: *get the great career and make money.*” “Go here, *do this, don’t do that, live this way, ignore that over there.*” “*This is the right fashion, this is the way to live, this is the way to think.*” And we follow along, all the while believing we can see just fine.

“...*your faith has made you well.*” Your belief...your grasp on the truth of who and what I am and what I can give you...has made you well. His faith in the person of *Christ* “made the deal.” He had to believe *not just in the miracle, but the power behind the miracle.* He had to believe in *Jesus.* He had to **believe** Jesus.

“**And immediately he received his sight...**” Notice what happened after this miraculous event: he “*followed Him, glorifying God.*” The word “follow” here means more than just tag along after Him. It means “joined with”... “becoming a disciple.” I know a lot of folks that were once “blind.” but now they see. I don’t know for sure, but if history on this level holds true, I’ll bet that guy, while he followed Christ, *he* never forgot the “business end” of faith. He never forgot that other blind guy standing over on the sidelines, the one yelling, “Son of David have mercy on me!” He didn’t just get his sight, *he got healed!*

In fact, he probably was the one thereafter forever busy bringing blind people to the One who could make men see. He had *experienced* God’s love and now he would *exercise* that same love toward others! He had taken the “red pill,” and there was no turning back. His vision was more than just seeing the natural world. What was important had changed. What “mattered” had changed! And because of it, “*all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.*”

How is your vision today? Do you just see the natural world around you, or is your sight greater than that? Do you see yourself for who and what you really are? Do you see a man or woman in need of God’s mercy and a healing to your understanding of what your life is supposed to be? I am amazed and often pastorally frustrated when folks see themselves as a disciple...committed and faithful, when they are clearly not. And I’m not using **my** human bar as a benchmark, but that of the words of Christ.

In the book “Blindness” there is a statement given, and it goes like this: “*Why did we become blind, I don't know, perhaps one day we'll find out. Do you want me to tell you what I think, I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind, blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see.*”