

Pass Me Not
Luke 18:35-43

A question comes to my mind as I consider these circumstances that are given to us here within this scripture passage that we'll study today. That while yes, we know that God truly is always omnipresent, meaning that yes, He really is ever and always in our presence, fully involved in every matter that takes place on the earth at every moment, we Christians also know that there are special moments in time when something more takes place, special moments when we are able to experience God's presence in a much deeper and more intimate way and to receive blessings from Him that we would not otherwise receive.

And that was the special opportunity for this blind man spoken about here in our scripture passage for today. And thankfully, this man didn't miss out on the opportunity to receive the blessing of a lifetime from the Lord Jesus, but called out with great fervor for the Lord to please not pass him by.

Listen as I read this passage given here in Luke chapter 18, and witness what takes place in this man's life. Verse 35,

³⁵ 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. (Luke 18:35-43)

This passage begins with the words, "Then it happened", or as the KJV would have it, "And it came to pass", and then the story continues on with the account of the blind man sitting by the road, begging. These words, "Then it happened", in today's manner of understanding would describe what we might call a "coincidence".

But as you might know if you have listened to these studies over the years, I like to remind us, that within the providence of God, there is no such thing as a “coincidence”. Every occurrence, even the most seemingly random occasion is a foreordained, providential event, put into place by God Himself.

And all of these encounters with the Lord Jesus are the working out of special scriptural truths such as those given in John 6:44 where Jesus said that

⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.
(John 6:44)

And also in John 6:37 where Jesus said,

³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (John 6:37)

Here, it was God's providential plan and purpose that Jesus would pass by this exact place at this exact moment in time. And further, that this blind man would be drawn to sit in this exact place by the road.

But as seems also to be the usual way of God, though He perfectly positions men and women in the right place at the right time, He still leaves a special part for each of them, each of us, to play. And that part is to make willful choices.

Here was a man who was clearly in need of help. He was blind, and because of his blindness, he was unable to work and provide for himself and his family. So, he was reduced to begging. If he could only see, then his whole life could be different.

Here also was Jesus, the divine healer, the one who is able to cure all diseases, no matter how bad those diseases might be. He was the Man that was spoken about in Isaiah chapter 42 where it is prophesied about Him that He is God's Chosen One, the Messiah who would,

⁷ . . . open the eyes that are blind, bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. (Isaiah 42:7)

And so then, here everything was nearly in place for healing to take place, but yet, one part was yet remaining for the blind man. The man must ask Jesus for His help. And he must ask with continual importunity, persistence that will not be put off by opposition from others around him.

Folks, it is one thing to be an observer of someone else's suffering, to have sympathy, and to pray for them. But it is another thing altogether for the one who is doing the suffering.

This man lived every moment of his life in darkness and poverty. And he had reason and purpose for crying out to Jesus with a very loud and persistent voice, a voice that would not be silenced by the disciples.

I can't emphasize enough the need for persistence. Over and over again in these gospels, Jesus exhorts us to be persistent in our prayers, in never giving up in our asking of Him.

In another place, Jesus exhorted us to ask, to seek and to knock, never giving up until we have our answer.

This man did that, and his persistence was rewarded. Listen again,

³⁵ 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 stopped and commanded him to be brought to Him. (Luke 18:35-40)

Folks, we must not misunderstand these circumstances. It is not as if the blind man needed to get Jesus' attention. Jesus already knew everything that was taking place.

The problem is not within the Lord Jesus. It is never within Him! The problem is within us, always within us, in our need for persistent faith. And it lies within all of those intervening and interfering obstacles that are in between us and Jesus, between us and the healing that we need to receive.

How often do you and I get discouraged by the voices of others who would silence our cries for help, voices of well-meaning people, voices that tell us to go here or to go there to find our help, to this doctor or that therapist or these pills or even perhaps, that divorce lawyer, all well-meaning voices wanting to help, but keeping us from the only One who can truly help us.

And also, and sadly so, how often do we ourselves get caught up being one of those discouraging voices for hurting people who are in need!

Thankfully, Jesus will work His way on through the clamor of the discouraging voices.

Remember, that time and time again, we are told in these gospels that Jesus knew the thoughts of the people around Him. And Jesus knew the heart and the mind and the need of this poor blind man. And He perceived faith within the heart of this man, faith that would lead this man to a complete healing.

And I want us to give special emphasis to this part of this encounter with Jesus. Yes, it was the right thing for Jesus to be where He was at that moment. And yes, it was right for the man to be persistent in his crying out to Jesus. But another step was still required. Note the question Jesus had for the man,

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?" (Luke 18:40-41)

Coming to Jesus is only one part of the plan. Before the full transaction can be completed, we need to do one more thing. We need to surrender up our will, and "ask" Him to heal us.

Folks, going to church each Sunday is a very, very good thing, the right thing to do. But going there is only a part of the transaction. Your part, my part, must also be done and that is, that we must "ask", yea even beg Jesus to reach into our hearts and to save us.

If we are unwilling to ask, then our salvation might never take place.

May I say this again! If we are unwilling to ask, then our salvation might never take place.

What an awful thing that would be, to be so close, but yet to miss out on the greatest of all blessings of Christ. As with this blind man, the alternative to asking would be for him to remain in his blindness forever.

And oh dear friends, we must understand that the same is true for us! For us to make the effort to go to our church each Sunday where we clearly hear our Lord's voice being spoken to us by the preacher and by the words of the songs being sung . . . but then still foolishly allow the opportunity to receive His blessed salvation pass us by, is a decision that we will regret for an eternity.

Recall the plea by the rich man who had died and was suffering there in torment, crying out to Father Abraham to send Lazarus to go and get him just a few drops of water.

The torments of hell are real and they are eternal. And we dare not allow the opportunity for salvation to pass us by.

And again, as with this poor blind man who encountered the Lord Jesus, we need to clearly realize our dilemma, that we also are poor, wretched naked and blind, and we are in need of a healing Savior. And that Savior is Jesus, and Jesus alone.

This man surrendered up his free will and he cried out to Jesus and said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."

What a blessed relief it must have been for that poor man at that first moment when he first was able to see! What a delight must have flooded his soul!

But may we not miss these other, somewhat subtle, words spoken by Jesus, "Your faith has made you well." Verse 42,

⁴² Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." (Luke 18:42)

We need to understand these words well folks! "Faith" must be present before healing can take place. Jesus often said the words, "Be it according to your faith".

This man had faith and he was healed!

But let's pause here for a moment and ask, "how does such believing faith come about in a person's heart, in your heart, in my heart?" We are told how in the words of Romans 10:17. Listen to these precious, simple words.

¹⁷ So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
(Romans 10:17)

Aren't those wonderfully simple words. I love them. These simple words and some of the other words that go with them tell the complete story of salvation for anyone who is willing to listen.

Why is the "complete story of salvation" so important? It's because, as we have seen at other times that Jesus healed people, the healing of their body might have been all that they received. As with the healing of the ten lepers that we read about in chapter 17, it seems that while all ten received a healing of their bodies, only one out of the ten lepers received a healing of their souls.

May I pause here for a moment and read some of the accompanying verses given to us here in Romans chapter 10. And listen carefully for the "complete story of salvation". Listen.

⁸ . . . "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:8-17)

We don't know much about this man that Jesus healed. But it seems safe to assume that though he was blind and poor, he most likely had been attending synagogue and listening to the preaching. We can know that because of the way he addressed Jesus as, "Son of David" and pleaded for Jesus to have mercy on him.

For us who have received Christ as our Savior, as we sit under the preaching and the teaching of God's word, God's Holy Spirit communicates with our spirit, helping us to know the things He wants us to know. He is the Grand Teacher of men's souls, bringing us into all truth, and bringing us into a condition where faith can be born in us.

Oh dear friends, our sitting in church and listening every Sunday is so very important beyond measure. It is where faith is born within our souls. Those words again in verse 17,

¹⁷ So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
(Romans 10:17)

This man evidently heard! And he had faith! and because he had faith, he was healed! Isn't that wonderful!

And note also here, that the man's response was the exact right response to have. Verse 43,

⁴³ And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. (Luke 18:43)

It is never right for us to receive God's blessing and then just go on about our merry way.

How thoughtless we so often are, as we receive the many countless blessings from God, only to then go on about our "business as usual", not taking the time to turn and say thanks to Him, and especially not taking the time to turn to another person to share with them how our blessing came from the loving hand of God.

Folks, we really must always be quick to give thanks and praise and glory to God, the one from whom all blessings flow.

And our "witness" can be such a powerful instrument in His hands. If we are willing to be a strong witness to the grace and mercy of Christ, then others might also be drawn to Him for healing.

And that is proven out in these next words here in verse 43.

⁴³ . . . And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. (Luke 18:43)

This is so very important folks. The witness of Jesus' power in healing this man, and then the man's response in following after Jesus and glorifying God, immediately drew many others in the crowd to join with him in praising and glorifying God.

And yes, some of the more skeptical onlookers might say that the response of praise to God by the people was just a contagious emotional response. And that might be true. Praise and worship within a group is often contagious to others in the group. And I count that as a good thing, to rejoice with those who rejoice.

But then, good is often not good enough! The very "best thing" to take place would be for the Holy Spirit to get hold of the souls within a group, and for Him to bring forth a spontaneous praise and worship of God. That is the very best thing!

And yes, during those circumstances, that will mean that the praise and worship will be emotional. But "love", whether it be for God or for one another is most often very emotional. And that too is a very good thing.

So then . . . What shall we conclude from these words of this passage? May I suggest this!

First, we must know, with confidence, that yes, God has a plan that He has put into place for all of mankind. But beyond that broader plan, our Lord also has a plan that is exclusively tailored, made to order for your life and for mine, individually. God is that intimate and that loving.

Here in this passage, we see that God brought this poor blind man to this specific place at this specific moment in time, just for the purpose of him having this blessed encounter with Jesus.

And we are told in those precious words of Acts chapter 17 that I love to quote for us, this circumstance is and will also be true for you and for me. God has placed you and me in a special place at a special time so that we can have our encounter with Jesus. Listen carefully to those words of Acts 17 where we are told,

²⁶ And he (God) made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for In him we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:26-28)

Our part is to do exactly this, to reach out for Him and to find Him. And as with this poor blind man, to be persistent, crying out continually, and not allowing anyone or anything to discourage us from our quest, “seeking,” “knocking”, “asking” and then, “receiving”.

Folks, dare we to go into our church each Sunday allowing Jesus to walk so near to us. But then allow Him to pass right on by us without our receiving the precious blessings He wants to give to us.

I plead with us not to allow that to happen. And I plead with each of us even now as we consider these precious words that we’ve been studying here today, do not let this opportunity slip away from any of you.

May I close by reading a few words from the hymn “Pass Me Not”!

Pass me not, O gentle Savior
Hear my humble cry
While on others Thou art calling
Do not pass me by

Let me at Thy throne of mercy
Find a sweet relief
Kneeling there in deep contrition
Help my unbelief

Trusting only in Thy merit
Would I seek Thy face
Heal my wounded, broken spirit
Save me by Thy grace

Savior, Savior
Hear my humble cry

While on others Thou art calling
Do not pass me by

Pray with me.