

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

What Do You Want Me to Do for You?

Matthew 20:29-34

In this passage, Jesus stood in front of two blind men and asked a simple question: What do you want me to do for you?

Through this passage, Jesus stands in front of all of us today and asks the same question: What do you want me to do for you?

Most people foolishly answer: “Nothing. There’s nothing I need or want from Jesus.”

Some sinners recognize their dire straits and beg Jesus for salvation: “Save me, Lord!”

Most Christians underestimate just how much Jesus could still do in answer to their prayers...

Some Christians answer in worldly ways: “Jesus, I want to be healthy, wealthy and wise.”

Others realize that the only thing of value is pleasing the Lord: “Jesus, work in me what is pleasing to you!”

So, what do you want Jesus to do for you?

I. The Context of the Healing: Jesus Passes Through Jericho

A. The End of a Major Section, the Beginning of a New Chapter

Overall theme of the Gospel of Matthew: The King of the Kingdom of Heaven

Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Everything in the Gospel of Matthew exists either to establish the greatness of Christ as the King of the Kingdom of Heaven, or to establish the nature of the Kingdom itself, or to establish the need we sinners have to repent in order to enter the Kingdom.

1. Matthew 1-4:11: The Prologue of Jesus' Ministry

Genealogy; Birth narrative; John the Baptist's ministry; Jesus' baptism; Jesus' temptation in the wilderness

2. Matthew 4:12-20:34: Jesus' Ministry in Galilee & Journey to Jerusalem

Early teaching and miracles; calling of the first disciples; the Sermon on the Mount; more miracles; the training of the Twelve; the rejection of Christ by the Jewish leaders; the parables; the end of Jesus' ministry in Galilee (including his acceptance by some and rejection by others); the Journey to Jerusalem (in which Jesus gets His disciples ready for His death)

3. Matthew 21-28: Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem, His Trial, Crucifixion & Resurrection

B. En Route to Jerusalem: On the Way to the Cross

1. Jesus is traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem... and every step of the way, He travels under the shadow of the cross

a. This is the time of the Passover in Jerusalem

b. Huge crowds of Jews would be making that same journey; but for Jesus it was unique and painful

c. He would BE the true Passover Lamb, and His blood would be shed for the sins of the world

2. Jesus has just warned His disciples about His impending death

Matthew 20:17-19 Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, ¹⁸ "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

3. He has also instructed them about true greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven

a. James and John had requested positions of honor, sitting at Jesus' right and His left in the Kingdom

b. Jesus had warned them of the suffering that He was about to endure, and that sitting in those seats of honor would require suffering as well

c. When the ten disciples became indignant with James and John, Jesus pulled His disciples aside and instructed them about true greatness in the Kingdom

Matthew 20:25-28 "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

So, the last two portions of Matthew's Gospel focus on the DEATH of CHRIST... He is traveling step by step to Jerusalem, knowing full well that He will die there.

4. The last healing account in the Gospel of Matthew

- a. This is the last healing story in which details of a healing are recounted
- b. There is one mention in Matthew 21:14, but it is just mentioned in passing

C. Jericho: A Historic and Beautiful City

1. The Jericho of Jesus' day lay somewhat south of the ruins of OT Jericho, destroyed by Joshua
2. located 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem; Jerusalem was build on a set of mountains and was 3300 feet higher in altitude than Jericho; thus in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus speaks of going DOWN from Jerusalem to Jericho; Jesus is going UP from Jericho to Jerusalem
3. Herod the Great and later Archelaus had strengthened and beautified Jericho; gave it an amphitheater, villas and a public bath; it was a little paradise, with an oasis of fresh water, palm trees, rose gardens, lavish crops of figs, citrus, and other fruit. Its winter climate was delightful—Josephus said that when it was snowy in Jerusalem, Jericho was warm and pleasant; thus Herod built a winter palace there
4. Historic: Jericho doubtless brought many memories to Jesus; it was the home of his ancestor, Rahab, who had hid Joshua's spies and saved herself by her faith; along with Ruth, she was one of two Gentile women to be named in Jesus' genealogy; it was near here also that Jesus went out into the desert for forty days to be tempted at the beginning of His ministry

D. Synoptic Problems

1. Matthew reports that this healing occurred while Jesus was GOING OUT from Jericho; but Mark and Luke say it was while he was GOING IN
2. Also Matthew mentions two blind men, while Mark and Luke mention only one, and Mark tells us his name was Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus
3. Both of these problems can be dealt with satisfactorily, but not with any great certainty

- a. John MacArthur mentions that there were two Jerichos in Jesus' time: the ruins of the ancient city and the rebuilt city; thus it could be that Jesus was leaving the one and entering the other
 - b. Other commentators have noted that it was at this time, as Jesus was leaving Jericho that He saw Zaccheus, the tax collector, up in a sycamore tree and went back into the city to dine at his house; they surmise that Jesus was in some sense then BOTH leaving and entering Jericho
 - c. Concerning the one vs. two blind men, the best solution is that there were two, but Mark only mentions the more prominent of the two, perhaps because he may later have been a well-known follower of Jesus
4. Bottom line, there ARE solutions to these minor problems, but we don't know for sure what truly happened
 5. So... let's concentrate on the story as Matthew has given it to us!!

II. Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

Matthew 20:29-34 As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. ³⁰ Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" ³¹ The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" ³² Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. ³³ "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." ³⁴ Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Matthew heightens the sense of immediacy in his account by using the word "Behold..." as if to say "Look!!! Two blind men!!!"

A. Their Wretched Condition

1. these two men were blind
 - a. modern surveys list blindness as one of the greatest medical fears anyone can have
 - b. we rely so much on our vision for our lives in the world

Matthew 6:22-23 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

- c. Blindness was very common in the Middle East in Jesus' day; many were blind from venereal diseases gotten from their mothers in the birth

process; other infants become blind through trachoma, a virulent form of conjunctivitis

- d. Reading between the lines, it seems that these men had at one point been able to see, and then had lost their sight... they ask to recover their sight... to have it restored; so unlike the man born blind in John 9, they knew what they were missing
- e. Jericho was apparently a haven for blind people, since it was reported that there was a special balsam bush growing up near there which could be used to treat blindness

2. beggars

- a. not only were they blind, but they were beggars
- b. they had no family structure to support them
- c. they totally relied on the generosity of an indifferent crowd
- d. like most beggars, they would congregate outside the city gates to take advantage of the travelers moving in and out of the city

3. They CRIED OUT to Jesus

- a. They could not see Jesus, but they could hear of Him
- b. They had heard reports of a man, a prophet from Galilee who could heal the blind
- c. Now their ears were telling them this same Jesus was passing by
- d. With desperate intensity, they cried out at the tops of their lungs

Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!!!

- e. Blind beggars must learn not to be shy about their needs, or they will starve
- f. This would be perhaps their last and best chance to be healed from their blindness... with passion, with volume, with faith, they CRIED OUT to Jesus for mercy
- g. Notice they use a messianic title: **Lord, Son of David...**
- h. Notice they also are begging for MERCY... this is not a matter of social justice; they don't deserve anything from Christ, and cannot demand it; they know their lowly position and all they can do is beg for mercy

B. Their Added Burden

Matthew 20:31 The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet

1. this was particularly cold and vicious of the crowd
2. O how cold our hearts can be, how indifferent to the sufferings of others
3. WHY the crowd did this, I cannot say... perhaps they didn't want to stop in their journey to Jerusalem; perhaps they were embarrassed at the loud intensity of their cries; perhaps they didn't want Jesus to be burdened
4. BUT Jesus said the second greatest commandment was

Love your neighbor as yourself

And similarly:

Do to others what you would have them do to you!

5. if any of the annoyed, impatient, cold-hearted crowd had been blind, they would have done the exact same thing!

C. Their Commendable Persistence

Matthew 20:31 The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

1. nothing is stopping them
2. they have an intense and deep desire, and no hostile opposition from the cold-hearted crowd will stop them
3. they do not give up... not at all!! Instead they INTENSIFY their cries
4. this is commendable persistence, a picture of some of Jesus' most poignant parables on persistence in prayer, as we shall discuss in a moment

D. Jesus' Essential Question

Matthew 20:32 Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

1. At one level, this could be the strangest part of the whole encounter... for it seems Jesus is the most OBTUSE man in history
 - a. To be obtuse means to be so dense as to not see the obvious
 - b. Some geniuses can be almost comically obtuse in other areas

Albert Einstein: used to walk out in the dead of winter in Princeton NJ with no socks or boots on his feet at all; his sister had to scurry after him with footwear!

Maybe Jesus was like that... so focused on His thoughts or what He was about to do in Jerusalem that He had to ask for this seemingly obvious information

What do you want me to do for you?

- c. I think everyone in the crowd knew exactly what these blind men wanted... they wanted from Jesus what only Jesus could do: to restore their sight
- 2. BUT this misses an essential issue: Jesus MADE THEM ASK FOR WHAT THEY WANTED!!!
 - a. This is the whole issue... Jesus always knows what we need; He has searched our hearts and studied our lives, and knows exactly what is going on
 - b. He stated very clearly concerning prayer:

Matthew 6:7-8 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

- c. Yet for all of that, He STILL WANTS US TO ASK... to put it into words; to make our request known to Jesus

E. Their Simple, Specific Answer

Matthew 20:33 "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight."

- 1. They knew exactly what they wanted
- 2. literally: **"Lord, we want our eyes to be opened."**
- 3. it was crystal clear in their own minds... they had dreamed of recovering their sight from the time they had lost it
 - a. they wanted to see the blue of the sky and the white of the wispy clouds
 - b. they wanted to see the lush green palm trees of Jericho swaying in a breeze
 - c. they wanted to see the color of the roses and the smiling faces of the little children
- 4. this was no small gift... yet like all of God's gifts of creation, it would have been effortless for Jesus to do it

F. The Astonishing Compassion and Power of Jesus

Matthew 20:34 Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

1. I don't know which is more astonishing: His compassion or His power
2. His compassion
 - a. Jesus is en route to Jerusalem, carrying already the weight of the cross in His mind

Luke 12:50 I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!

- b. Yet for all of that, He never stopped caring for others, being concerned about others, meeting the needs of others
- c. That others-centered attitude will come to its greatest fruition on the cross
 - i) While carrying the cross, Jesus saw a large number of the women of Jerusalem weeping and wailing for Him; His reaction was typically compassionate

Luke 23:28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.

- ii) While on the cross, three of Jesus' seven statements ministered to the needs of others

Concerning the soldiers who crucified Him:

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Concerning the thief who said "Remember me when you come in your Kingdom":

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Concerning caring for His mother after He was gone:

John 19:26-27 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," ²⁷ and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Most of us, when facing an immense trial, become self-centered; NOT JESUS

Most of us, when enduring an immense physical suffering, become self-centered; NOT JESUS

Jesus never lost His compassion for the needs of others

- d. What is “compassion”? The ability to be moved inside with the sufferings of others; to feel what they feel, to hurt as they hurt; to desire deeply to alleviate that suffering
- e. It is the emotion Jesus displayed more than any other... again and again it is listed as the reason why Jesus healed
- f. The scripture reveals that Jesus is a High Priest who is deeply moved with our infirmities

KJV Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities

3. His touch

- a. Jesus could have healed any way He chose... in John 9, He healed the man born blind by spitting on the ground and making mud and smearing it on the man’s eyes and telling him to go wash it off
- b. but frequently He chose to TOUCH sick people... lepers, Peter’s mother-in-law, other blind men
- c. Here Jesus, moved with compassion, touched these blind men

4. His Supernatural Power

- a. INSTANTLY the men received their sight!!!!
- b. How easy it is for us to be calloused after all these years, and to minimize the power of Jesus
- c. For these two men, Jesus changed their lives forever

G. The Results of the Healing

- 1. These two men were not only healed physically... if we just focus for a minute on Bartimaeus, we find that his faith was not only the vehicle of his healing but of his SALVATION

KJV Mark 10:52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.

The Greek word seems to go beyond a mere physical healing

It can be used for any deliverance: for rescue from drowning, for healing from any disease or rescue from any trouble at all; but it is the most common word used in the NT for spiritual salvation as well

And after these men were healed, they FOLLOWED JESUS, and Luke 18:43 says as they were following Jesus, they were glorifying and praising God

We have good reason to believe they had received more than mere physical healing that day, but became followers of Jesus for eternity

2. faith is not a requirement for healings
 - a. Jesus healed MANY people who had NO FAITH IN HIM at all
 - b. For example, the centurion's servant in Matthew 8 was healed without even knowing that Jesus had healed him; similarly, the paralyzed man in John 5 ended up turning Jesus in to the authorities
 - c. But in Mark's gospel, Jesus focused on the faith of Bartimaeus and said "Go your way; your faith has SAVED YOU"
3. the deepest need we have is for forgiveness of sins... to be saved from sin, to be healed from sin, to be brought again into a right relationship with God by the healing only Jesus can give

III. Spiritual Lessons for Us

A. Every Miracle of Jesus is a Parable of Spiritual Truth

1. All the healings were pictures of HUMAN WEAKNESS and DIVINE POWER
 - a. A blind man CANNOT SEE... Jesus has power to heal him
 - b. A lame man CANNOT WALK... Jesus has power to heal him
 - c. A deaf man CANNOT HEAR... Jesus has power to heal him
2. Thus each of these healings also translates into the spiritual realm
 - a. We are weak, Jesus is strong
 - b. We are unable, Jesus is able
 - c. We are paralyzed, Jesus can move us
3. Ultimate picture of our salvation

We were DEAD in our transgressions and sins... Christ made us ALIVE

Ephesians 2:4-5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.

B. Our Blindness

1. Blindness is especially a metaphor for the darkened state of our hearts
2. God IS light... and God's truth (the Bible) is a lamp for our feet and a light to our path
3. Christ is the LIGHT of the world... the radiance of God's glory... the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ
4. This divine, supernatural light we CANNOT SEE naturally, because Satan has blinded us

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

5. Application

- a. Lost people: ask Christ to let you see His glory... call on Him to show you His glory in His perfect, sinless life; His atoning death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead
- b. Christians: despite our salvation, we still need greater clarity of spiritual vision: I believe FAITH is the eyesight of the soul; so we need to ask for greater faith to see what is invisible but true
 - i) we need to "see" Christ's perfections more clearly—His holiness, His compassion, His power, His righteousness
 - ii) we need to see more clearly the invisible spiritual realms around us: the angels serving us, the devil and his demons tempting us; God sitting gloriously on His throne, Almighty, Sovereign, Powerful
 - iii) we need to see more clearly the future world: Judgment Day, heaven, hell

C. Our Intense Cry for Mercy

1. These two blind men cried out for mercy
2. There was a deep intensity to their cry
3. So let us cry out to Christ for mercy
 - a. Mercy means we know we don't deserve anything
 - b. Mercy is asking God to see us in our weakness, our sin, our misery, our suffering and to alleviate our grief

4. Crying for mercy means intense, focused, passionate prayer
 - a. Not the cold, formal prayers that freeze before they leave our lips
 - b. I mean a CRY to Jesus for MERCY
5. I believe one of the real purposes in prayer is to heal our cold, distant, unengaged hearts and make them truly passionate for the things of God

Illustration: iron in a bed of coals; bellows blowing on the hot coals, the iron GLOWS and is soft and ready for the blacksmith's skillful pounding

So is FERVENT PRAYER

KJV James 5:16 The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

D. The Opposition of the Crowd

1. The crowd hushed these blind men and tried to silence them
2. What Matthew didn't tell us is that when Jesus called for Bartimaeus, the crowd changed their minds!!

Mark 10:48-49 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you."

3. O how fickle is the crowd! Ignore them as you passionately seek Jesus; the world cannot help you in your Christian journey; it will stand by and mock you and call things out to you; keep pressing on to follow Jesus
4. We need a generation of people who are willing to live counter-culturally: willing to be persecuted for righteousness' sake; willing to say no to immorality, and materialism; willing to be bold witnesses for Christ
5. How much do YOU let the heckling of the crowd stop you from doing what you know is right?
 - a. Teens: are you more concerned with what your schoolmates and peers think than what Jesus thinks?
 - b. Employees: are you willing to stand up for Christ and live a life pleasing to him in full view of your co-workers, your boss? Especially in this context, are you willing to make your total dependence on Christ obvious to people... to live out the truth that, apart from Christ, you can do nothing?

E. Our Need for Persistence

1. these two blind beggars DID NOT GIVE UP... it is quite possible that Jesus heard them the first time... like the Canaanite woman who begged Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter, Jesus did not answer a word... he was TESTING HER
2. so it is in prayer: we are the spiritual beggars, coming to Jesus for something; we must persevere... we must pray and never give up
3. Jesus told many parables about the need for persistence in prayer

Luke 18:1-5 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

4. it is clear that God does not intend to give us things RIGHT AWAY... even if they are very much in His plans for us; our desires are TOO WEAK, our hearts are TOO COLD, and He will delay the blessings until we ask for them

F. Jesus' Essential Question Today

"What do you want me to do for you?"

1. In our prayer lives, Jesus stands in from of us and asks the same question He did to these blind men
2. we should see ourselves in prayer coming to Christ and acknowledging that He alone has what we need; it is in His hand to grant all our requests
3. Jesus wants us to SPEAK OUR NEEDS to Him, though He knows what we need long before we ask

G. Our Need for Specificity in Prayer

1. We need to be specific in prayer: the blind men knew what they wanted; so must we
2. LOST PEOPLE: the simple question Jesus asks is "What do you want me to do for you?" Your answer should be "Lord, I am a sinner; I deserve to be condemned to hell for my sins. I WANT TO LIVE FOREVER! I want to be forgiven!! I want to go to heaven when I die!! I want to be transformed!! I want to be SAVED!!!!"

3. Christians: we are far too vague in prayers... we need to grow in specific prayer
 - a. Best example: George Mueller; German believer who lived his life for the glory of God in caring for over 10,000 orphans in England; one of the central themes of his life was putting on display all that can be done by faith through PRAYER... to run the orphanages by PRAYER ALONE; so he kept a personal record of specific prayer requests and their answers; he recorded over 50,000 answers to specific prayer requests
 - b. This leads me to wonder if we should keep similar prayer notebooks; don't pray, "Lord, please bless brother so and so or sister so and so..." "PLEASE BLESS..."??? How can we ever know if that happened? Pray instead specifically: "Lord, give this person a deep love for your word displayed in a commitment to read through the Bible in a year and to memorize a book of the Bible." Or "Lord, please bless this struggling marriage so clearly that this couple that is contemplating divorce will testify a year from now that you saved their marriage."

H. The Unchanging Compassion and Power of Jesus

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

1. He is as compassionate now as He was then; pour out your troubles to Him in prayer
2. He is as powerful now as He was then... unleash His power in specific answers to prayer