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How to Get Out of the Gutter Mark 10:46-52

On February 17, 1982 the Chicago Sun Times ran a story about a woman named Anna Mae Pennica. She was 62 years old at the time and had been blind since birth. Anna Mae had never seen the blues and green of the ocean. She had never witnesses the change of color leaves in the fall, or fresh greenery in the spring, yet because of her loving and supporting family, she never lapsed into a resentment about her handicap. She was known as cheerful.

At age 47 she married a man, she met in a Braille class, who at the time had limited use of his eyes. For the first 15 years of marriage he did the seeing for both of them, until he completely lost his vision to Retinitis Pigmentosa.

In October 1981, Dr. Thomas Petit from the Jules Stein Eye Institute of the University of California at Los Angeles performed surgery on Mrs. Pennica's eyes to remove several rare congenital cataracts from her lenses. She woke up from surgery to eye for the very first time ever. Her vision became 20/30 good enough to pass a drivers test. The newspaper article says that she found that everything was so much bigger and brighter than she had imagined them to be. While she immediately recognized her husband and other close friends, other acquaintances were taller, or shorter, heavier or skinnier than she had pictured them to be. She is excited to wake up every morning early to watch the sun unveil the new day.

Would that not be incredible? To see a sunset when before you could only feel the drop in temperature and quieting of the birds. To watch an eagle hover and dive for it's prey. The gift of sight is exciting. To begin to explore and see things you've never seen before...only dreamed about. What would it be like to see having never been able to see before?

This morning we study a man who had that very opportunity. He had been blind but then after an encounter with Jesus...he could see.

He is once confined to the gutter on the side of the road...but then he is free to walk and run and jump. All of us here have our physical sight. We can see physical objects, we can enjoy the facial expressions of our family and friends. We can see with our eyes, but some of us today are struggling with seeing Jesus. We are having a difficult time seeing with our heart. We are struggling with fully following Jesus in certain areas. There are some areas that we just find ourselves sitting in the gutter. How can we get out of the gutter? For some, you haven't taken the step to fully trust Christ as Lord as Savior. For some, you are saved, your a believer but your commitment to him is superficial, it's lacking and you know it. There are some areas in your life that you'd be embarrassed if people knew about them. How do you take off the blindfolds? How do you get the cataracts off your life so you can see the great things that God has in store for you? How do you get out of the gutter?

Turn with me in your Bibles to Mark 10:46-52. The author Mark has used a framing technique to set this section of commitment to following Christ..This section of discipleship is sandwiched between two healings of blind people. In Mark 8:22-26 The Blind man at Bethsaida is healed. It's a two step progressive healing. The sight is healed gradually. Sometimes it takes a process for Christ to come into our lives and reveal light to us. Here in chapter 10 of Mark we read of an immediate obedient response of faith and an immediate healing. As we move with the author through this book towards Jerusalem, Jesus instruction has focused on dealing with the spiritual blindness of the disciples. He wants them to think more and more the things of God and less and less the things of man. He takes every opportunity to expose the difference. In the last chapter we've seen their misunderstanding of power, position, faith, commitment and servanthood. Slowly we watch as Jesus performs surgery on the eyes of their hearts..and ours as well.

Unlike the rich young ruler earlier in this chapter, the blind man has very little of this worlds stuff. He doesn't have many props to hold him up. He would rather see than be seen. He knew he must come to God as a child..a helplessly dependent child. Lets read Mark 10:46-52. (READ)

Jericho was a town 19 miles north west of Jerusalem. A few miles from the Sea of Galilee. There was a well worn road from the second

largest city quite wealthy city of Jericho to Jerusalem. The road was a long slow uphill walk. Early in the morning the business travelers and Levites that were called to duty at the Temple, got ready to make their way out the gates of Jericho and up the long hill towards Jerusalem. And every morning a blind man woke up even earlier, eager to get in a good place. He dusted himself off from his sleeping place behind the bakery, felt his way over to the scrap bin hoping to find something to take the edge off his hunger. He knew his father Timaeous would be along soon to lead him to his spot. The spot next to the dusty road in the gutter, where people threw their candy wrappers on the way out of Jericho. The place where he would spend the day asking the travelers for help. The day began like so many other days...Bartimaeous pulled his cloak over his head to take the chill off the crisp spring morning. The sun would soon come out and warm his tired bones, but until then if he kept rocking back and forth and calling out his plea...he could forget. He heard a few shuffling sandals. Alms.. Alms for the poor. Alms. Several other beggars were taking their place next to him. Traffic increased. Then he heard the tramp, tramp, tramp of a large crowd. He grabs a robe rushing by. "Hey! what's going on? Who's coming? It's Jesus...Jesus from Nazareth.

This day would not be like every other day. Bartimaeous had a choice. Jesus may never walk this way again. He had heard about Jesus. He had heard he could make blind men see again. He wanted to see. He wanted out of the gutter. How can we get out of the Gutter?

First, Know your own inability. Bartimaeous knew this well. He was dependent on others to help him get around. He depended on others to help him out financially. He was Bar (son of) Timeaous. A poor mans son that kept him begging by the road. He knew how the folks in the city view beggars. He couldn't see but he heard their quieted comments as they increased their speed walking by. His position in the city was lowly. He was also aware of his own sin and need.

Charles Colson in his book "Who speaks for God?" recalls a 60 minutes interview by Mike Wallace. He asks an Auschwitz survivor Yehiel Dinur who was a prime witness at the 1961 Nuremberg war crimes trials. He showed a film clip of Dinur's first face to face encounter with Adolf Eichman. Dinur is shown to sob uncontrollable and then

fainted as the judge pounds the gavel to restore order. Wallace asks Dinur, was it the horror of this man's atrocities, fear, shock? memories? What brought the emotion? None of these. I realized when I came and stood in front of Eichman that He was not a god like army officer who exercised deadly power. Dinur continued, I sobbed because I was afraid of myself. I realized he was just a man and I am capable of doing this..exactly like he. Wallace summed it up referring to the Eichman in all of us. We all have sin inside of us. We are not all naturally good. We have not only the potential to sin. To sin is our very nature. It is the enlightening power of God's grace that only can pull us away from sin. Do you want to get out of the gutter? Begin by knowing your own inability. Admit your sin.

Second, Know Jesus ability. Look at verse 47. Bartimaeous cries out to Jesus. Son of David, have mercy on me! Son of David, have mercy on me! Bartimaeous somehow knew about Jesus and His ability. He used the title Son of David. Clearly a title of Messianic Kingship only used this time here in Mark. The Messiah would be a descendent of David and here the king was heading to Jerusalem. He had faith in Jesus ability. George Micheals sings to us "you just gotta have faith, faith" But faith is just not enough. It has to be properly placed. Faith is not the power of positive thinking, but an active recognition of the authority of God. While man says seeing is believing. God says believing is seeing. Seeing Jesus ability for what it truly is. God justifies a man not for the worthiness of belief by the worthiness of Him who is believed. This blind man could see what so many others that day failed to see. He recognized Jesus ability to pull him out of the gutter and heal his blindness. You want to get out of your gutter? Know your own inability and Know Jesus ability.

Third, Capitalize on your strengths. Verse 47, He "heard" What is it about blind people. They can't see very well, but they can hear incredibly well. Our bodies senses work overtime to overcome the loss. One who is blind is not distracted by the many things around to watch. He listens very well. Because of this he understands what others fail to understand. You probably aren't great at everything. some of us may have glaring deficiencies in our talent pool. Don't let that keep you in the gutter. Get out the gutter by capitalizing on your strengths.

Number four, get out of the gutter by refusing to let others pull you down. Look at v. 48 "many were sternly telling him to be quiet" Shsssh. I want to hear the teachers words. Be quiet. Oh how embarrassing, I wish that guy would learn a few social manners. They also didn't like what He was calling Jesus. Son of David. That title is reserved for the Messiah. Be silenced you blasphemer. Yet, his calling out to Jesus, his faith refused to be silenced by the critics. The crowd is blind to the Messianic rule of Jesus, but Bartimaeous could see things others could not see.

Don't let others get you down. Don't let them mussle you. Assume your own personal responsibility for change. Quit blaming it on others. Stop waiting for the ideal circumstances to get out of the gutter. The crowds will always be there. The critics you'll always have with you. Stop worrying about what others will say. Dont allow them to steal your enthusiasm. Bartimaeos here was not able to see but boy he had a pair of lungs. He could talk. Check out his persistence. in v. 48 "But he kept crying out all the more!" I love that. Isn't that great. You haven't heard loud. I practice this all day. Jesus son of DAVID Have mercy on me! Refuse to let others pull you down. Be persistent! the continuous cry will be heard.

Fifth, Do you want to get out of the gutter? Than throw off the things that slow you down. Jesus in verse 49 has called Bartimaous and in 50 He throws down his cloak and jumps up to see Jesus. Normally a blind man in a crowd in reluctant to let his cloak get out of touch range, or risk possible loss. Do you have some grudge your wearing that is comfortable like an old house coat, but it's getting pretty old and ugly? Is there some resentment that is putting wrinkles on your face? Are there some empty spaces in your talent basket that keep you from throwing off that cloak and really doing something? What is it that's holding you back? Throw it off!

Finally, Do something bold! No one is saved by sitting quiet in the gutter. A petrified gutter sitter will not change. Get up and be bold. Move against the flow. Buck the tide. Stand against the crowd. Be radical. Bartimeous cries out to Jesus in the midst of the crowd. And Jesus stops, talks to the same people who were quieting him. "Call him here" Get up Bartimaeous. Go for it. Now's your chance. Go for it! He

literally jumps up and Jesus asks him the same question he asks James and John in verse 36 "What do you want me to do for you" Remember James and John wanted positions of power in the kingdom. They wanted to be seen. Bartimaeus says. "I want to see!"

The man's need is obvious. He's blind. Jesus can see that, but he wants him to ask. He wants the crowd to hear his request and affirmation of faith in Jesus. He knew that Jesus had the ability to heal. He gave no conditions, "Master if you are able please heal." He gave no foreshadowing promises to follow him. No great words of flattery, he simply asked. Jesus says Go, Your faith has made you well. That word well is *sozo*. same word from salvation. Your faith has saved you. Does this mean that if we ask Jesus and have enough faith we will be healed? No. Faith was the means, not the cause of healing. It was not the quality of Bartimaeus' faith but the quality of whom that faith was placed. Jesus Christ. Immediately he regained his sight and began to follow Jesus.

What's important to you? To see or be seen? Jesus never went to Jericho again. This was the only opportunity this blind man ever would have had to get out of the gutter and come to Jesus. We don't know what next week will hold. Today may be the only opportunity you have to come to Jesus. Are there those who wish to come to Jesus as a helplessly dependent child. Come in faith to him and in need of salvation? Then come on down I want to pray with you. Is there some folks who want to get out of the gutter and more fully commit to Jesus then come on down I want to pray with you. Throw off that cloak that is keeping you back and come. Do something bold. Do it. All of history's significant movements have started with individuals who have acted on what they believe. Do you believe? Then do it!