

Take Heart. Arise. He Calls for You.
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Prayer: May the Holy Spirit now bear witness with the Truth of God and
 make it the power of God unto salvation . . . May God make
 his Word so potent that some of you shall close with Christ
 (or enter into eternity this very hour!) (CHS)

These three brief sentences arise out of a healing episode. The blind beggar Bartimeaus who, when he hears that Jesus is near, calls out **Jesus, Son of David** repeatedly, loudly¹. He spoke the name of Jesus and then his chains were broken—he was blind but now he sees. As we just sang: “My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed thee.” (v.4, of Hymn #307)

Behold, there came a moment in time. A moment when time, as it were stood still, when the world felt as if it had been put on pause. And that pause was occasioned by **Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me**. What king except the King Eternal could do anything about blindness? What king could strike the chains off, and set the captive free? Why, Jesus, only Jesus . . . what a wonderful name. **At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**. Yes, at the end of the age. But for now there was this intrusion of the eternal into our temporal, someone from outside of time was addressing a man stuck inside of time, and blind. The cry for mercy, **in Jesus’ name!**, reached the ears of Jesus and he stopped. **The royal procession to the throne of Israel was put on hold**—something massively important, majestic, and largely prophesied was paused. In the ringing silence that followed, perhaps his last cry for mercy hung in the air . . . like a bell . . . lingering and audible to all. All were suddenly attendant and attentive, and watching Jesus! Why had he stopped? Then Jesus says, **Bring him to me**.

Wouldn’t you like to have been there? The thrill of the moment trembled in the air. The disciples quickly shift from shushing the beggar to **Take heart. Arise. He calls for you**. The chains aren’t off quite yet. **Master, I would recover my sight**. The power to do it, the willingness to do it met with his request and, by faith, he received back his sight. Now he is free **to go his way** as Jesus says. And he, who trusted in Jesus before, seeing aright, now chooses to follow Jesus in, or on the way! The calamity of his existence had been reversed, the chains were off! Following Jesus was his freedom.

There is power . . . there is freedom . . . there is healing . . . there is salvation . . . and there is life in the **name of Jesus**. **And there is more: there is mobility**,

¹I love a line from Jeremy and Adrienne Camp’s song, “Isn’t the Name” (of Jesus wonderful): “Chains are broken when it’s spoken/ Every knee shall bow/ Isn’t the name of Jesus wonderful.” Blindness was Bartimeaus’ prison—healing struck off his chains.

sight, hearing, speaking . . . and thinking, and feeling, and sensing . . . there is restoration and resurrection. Anything that we can be crippled in, handicapped in, including sickness, fear, guilt, to shame . . . absolutely every kind of disfigurement, and form of bondage (personal, social, spiritual) must yield to the **name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth . . . for He is Lord.**

It was God who arranged that moment in time, set up that encounter. Bartimeaus was on God's work schedule! The love of God sought him out, and divine mercy placed him by the roadside, where Jesus would pass by on the very day, at that very hour. God was bringing glory to himself in demonstration of power, in freeing Bartimeaus. God is still in that business, still bringing glory to himself . . . all you need to do is cry out, speak the name of Jesus, in full faith that he will do what he came to do. It may not be exactly what you request (it may be different, or better) and it may not come about in an anticipated manner.

I am sure that I have called upon the name of Jesus many times in my life, but one stands out: my roadside encounter took place the evening that God put me into a conversation with a sixteen year old Christian girl whose radiant faith had caught my attention and as she shared about her friendship with Jesus my heart was infected with a holy jealousy. I had such an intense longing for my own friendship with Jesus that I prayed for it by name, with urgency in fervent prayer. It was as if the world stopped, and my prayer shot up to heaven and Jesus answered it. He came into my life and everything changed, the chains began falling off.

This came back to me recently. While suffering sermon block, I decided to open up some worship music, when a video entitled "Let God write your love story" popped up. It was enviable tale about two Christians (Nate and Sutton), both obsessed with finding the person God had for them to marry! Imagine. And all the time, they are talking about their romance, their prayers, their discoveries in the journey to their marriage, I was thinking how this love story is really about God's love for them, God's apparent provision for them—just like all it took to get Bartimeaus to the right place at the right time, filled with faith and expectation. *Wanting to recover your sight is no more impossible than finding a godly spouse, now is it? No more difficulty than seeing Christ in your spouse.*

How beautiful was Jesus to Bartimeaus, upon first sight with newly opened eyes? And "the beaming light of beauty," which pierced Nate's heart on his wedding day to Sutton, which came in the person of his bride within whom dwelt the light of the world, even Jesus—it would border on the profane to say that beauty, splendor was anything less than sacred—one of those moments when eternity touches down and we see better, higher, further.

When I saw Sutton walking down the aisle towards Nate (in the video), I was thrilled; for I, too, had had that glimpse of *beaming beauty* on my own wedding

day with my own lovely bride. ***Christ in her the hope of glory!*** I am so blessed. It is so much of the Lord's doing. He looses the chains of my past. And he even wooed for me as we were knit by faith, prayers and longing for God's will. I cannot bear to take credit for any of it. *His blessings are better than chocolate, or bouquets!* Have you heard, **When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.**? There are three movements to this verse: ascended, led and gave. The first alludes to his resurrection and vindication. The second refers those imprisoned by sin, lying in darkness—he struck off their chains, freed them from demonic domination. But the third is where the bouquets and chocolates come in. Jesus ascended, led and gave gifts—and the gifts were, through the Holy Spirit, the church, spiritual leaders, and spiritual gifts given to woo us, his bride, *into union with him* (**building up the body of Christ** (us, the Bride), **until we attain the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God** (Him, the Bridegroom). (Eph. 4:8, 12-13) Of course, union with him is ultimately expressed in our marriage to him. This is part of the “how,” I think, behind **God so loved the world**—that love didn't stop with Easter. It continues to be poured out, from heaven, expressed through his **gifts to men** wooing us to his side . . . at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

I had prayed, **Lord Jesus, have mercy on me.** He stopped for me, the world paused for me again. He then gifted me with what I desired most.

So, Bartimeaus got his sight back, Nate and Sutton married. Beautiful. However, there is another incident of healing in Scripture involving another blind man. And it starts off unhappily. I mean, it starts off with the blind man being “a topic of theological discussion,” an object lesson. **Did this man sin, did his parents that he was born blind. *Talked about, not conversed with.***

Imagine having “the calamity of your life” attributed to your sin, or to your parent's sin as if the only frame for understanding congenital blindness was sin and punishment. He had heard it probably a hundred times before, the parents may have grieved the thought and wondered if there was anything to it. These are heavy chains indeed on top of blindness. Blame, thoughts of inadequacy, wondering “what was wrong with me,” that our son would be born blind? Very negative, difficult, oppressive thinking.

But Jesus, blowing that erroneous piece of popular theology out of the water, says, **Neither.** He says that evil exists in the world because there is no other kind of world in which ***the overruling power of God might be displayed.*** So that is what was going on with Bartimeaus, with Nate and Sutton, with me—blindness, over-ruled by God . . . loneliness and longing, over-ruled by God . . . lostness, grief and sin, over-ruled by God. O Lord come in power and over-rule whatever is bent in us, whatever is crippling, disfiguring and disabling . . . in us. In the name of Jesus, for the sake of your glory . . . meet us in eternity where we are, give us glimpse of what's to be.

Yes, sin brings suffering in the world. And Satan loves for us to self-accuse, blame and judge one another—to stir things us and trouble us—while the original crime occurred at his instigation! He seeks to bring God’s creation down to ruin, and particularly he despises God’s image bearers. Rescue us from his wrath and contempt, Jesus! He thought by harming us he could get at God, and avenge himself. What he actually does is incense God and guarantee his final, awful and eternal torment. He finalizes his just punishment for his rebellion, have and mischief.

So, this man was born blind to bring about this occasion. For the glory!

He was afflicted so that this day, God might work a miracle, or, more directly that Jesus **doing the works of him who sent me** could bring glory to God by him receiving the sight he had never had. Now, for such a stupendous miracle, Jesus takes a very folksy approach—using a familiar remedy for eye infections, very common in his day, Jesus makes some mud with his spit. Mud actually does draw infection out, just as it does the poison of bee stings. Jesus anoints his eyes and says, **Go, wash in the pool of Siloam** (which means “Sent”) . . . **go** where you are sent and do what you are told, **wash**. Be obedient. He did so **and came back seeing**. One might be tempted to dismiss this as a demonstrate of folk medicine except, **Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. That was a hopeless, untreatable condition which remains difficult today!** It was not the healing a simple eye infection, but a most miraculous healing—*something only God could do!* Of course, Jesus has just demonstrated his divinity. Again, the man’s blindness, in the purposes of God, was to set up this demonstration of messiahship—the overruling power of God right out front—declaring where Jesus was from (God) and his identity as the Son of God!

There follows some controversy, back and forth. **The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes**, he reports (v. 11) to his friends. In his second report to the Pharisees, all details or work (making mud, healing, walking to the pool Siloam, are discretely deleted.

And, of course, this is another Sabbath miracle: the making of the mud . . . the traveling to the pool, even the washing were probably violations of the “no work” rule (implied, not stated). Then, under pressure by the Pharisees to denounce Jesus as a sinner—this drive to make believers repudiate Jesus continues to our day for martyrs!—their persecutors demand things like, **“What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?”** With clear, startling and brave defiance, **He said, “He is a prophet.”** (v. 17) He is a man from God!

These intractable Jews did not believe him so they fact-checked his claim to have been blind. **“Is this your son who you say was born blind? How then**

does he now see?" they interrogate his parents. They answer, "yes, yes, and we don't know." Why the urgent questioning? *Because opening the eyes of the blind is a sign of the messiah! It is evidence or proof of the messiah's identity.* (See Isaiah 35:6ff) That, too, is **why** the man was born blind, that the truth might be revealed about Jesus! That he is the Son of Man, the Messiah, he is God himself. God of God and come from God. Things intensify. **If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.** (v.33) **You were born in utter sin.** They are clinging to the sin causes this blindness angle, however, they don't seem able to deal with the facts: he is not blind anymore! They are explaining a condition that no longer exists! So they end up excommunicating him. **When Jesus hears that they had cast him out, he goes and gathers him in.** The man confesses, **Lord, I believe** (that you are the Son of man/Messiah, **the Son of God**) **and he worshipped Him.** (v. 38)

This is a flat out refutation of those who maintain that Jesus never received worship as God in scripture. So, as with Bartimeaus, this man has fulfilled the purposes of God which, though unseen for ages, have come in view through him, through his blindness from birth!

Sin can infect you in any of your faculties, sight, sound, sense, or feeling—your reason, your will, your physical being *but not necessarily*. We can be crippled by disease, or accident, by our past . . . even by age. God seeks his glory regardless. We are all beggars, but we are not strangers to the one who loves, and saves and seeks us out.

I am not sure where you may be crying out, but I encourage you to so do. He is near, he hears. He will stop and attend to you, maybe today . . . yes, even every one of us. What a Savior! What a glorious God!

Amen