

By the sovereignty of God, we have come to this passage on Palm Sunday as Jesus was heading up to Jerusalem for the last time. This would have taken place a day or two before Palm Sunday. I'm not surprised any more when these texts line up with the calendar as it has happened so often. We would have come to it last week but for the message on our current situation with the Coronavirus. As Luke often does, the passages are a contrast with the preceding passage about the rich young ruler who chose wealth and comfort over following Jesus.

The conversation Jesus had with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration was about the subject of Jesus' departure (Luke 9:32,33ⁱ). Jesus began warning the disciples of what was soon to come when they came down from the mountain. In this passage today, Jesus was sharing some of that conversation with His disciples. ³¹ *And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.* Luke 18:31

We should pay attention to the fact that Jesus called Himself the Son of Man eighty-two times in the Gospels. The title is from Daniel 7. In that chapter Daniel is given a sweeping view of world history which concludes with the judgment of mankind and one like the Son of Man coming to the Ancient of Days. In verses 13 and 14ⁱⁱ of that chapter, the Son of Man is given authority, glory and sovereign power along with an everlasting dominion, and all the world worships Him.

Son of Man was not what other people called Jesus. It is the title by which He referred to Himself, which is not to be confused with the way Ezekiel used it (Ezekiel 2:6ⁱⁱⁱ). Jesus made that distinction between the two uses by telling the Sanhedrin they would see Him coming on the clouds, which was a line from Daniel 7:13ⁱⁱ. That is important because skeptics erroneously say Jesus made no claim to divinity. The Son of Man is obviously divine for the Ancient of Days has the world worship Him (Exodus 20:3^{iv}).

The end of this sentence in Luke says, "that which was spoken by the prophets will be accomplished." The disciples were probably thinking Jesus meant that the physical kingdom was about to be established. But Jesus was referring to Psalm 22^v and Isaiah 52-53^{vi}, and perhaps the typology of King David upon whose throne He would reign on forever (Isaiah 9:7^{vii}). David was anointed king, but then had to flee and live in exile before returning to the throne. It was a foreshadow of Jesus having to leave this world at the ascension and returning to reign at the Second Coming. At the end of this gospel, Luke tells us that Jesus explained to the disciples the prophecies about what He had to endure before He reigns on the earth (Luke 24:25-27^{viii}).

³² *For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.* Luke 18:32 Jesus cleared up any misunderstandings by telling them exactly how He would be treated in fulfillment of the prophecies. First, He would be delivered over to the Gentiles. That means He would be tried by a Gentile court. It may also have implied a death penalty as at the time Jews were not allowed to execute

people (John 18:31^{ix}). Consider that David preferred God's wrath to that of man (2Samuel 24:14^x). Jesus was about to face the wrath of man and God.

Jesus predicted the shameful treatment and mocking He would receive. After the Jewish trial they spit in His face, blindfolded Him and struck Him. Then they would ask, "Messiah, prophesy who it was who struck you" (Mark 14:65^{xi}; Isaiah 11:3^{xii})? The Romans put a royal robe on Him and a stick for a scepter in His hand and a crown of thorns on His head while mockingly bowing before Him (Matthew 27:29^{xiii}). Then they spat upon Him and beat Him over the head with the scepter stick (Mark 15:19^{xiv}; Matthew 26:67^{xv}). They were making fun of the claim that He is the king of the Jews. Jesus used spit and mud to heal a blind man's eyes (John 9:6^{xvi}); but they used it to humiliate Him. The religious leaders mocked Him on the cross. "If you are the Son of God, prove it by coming down from the cross. He saved others but He cannot save Himself," they said (Matthew 27:42^{xvii}). The Sanhedrin broke their own rules to quickly condemn Him: 1 trying Him at night, 2 asking Him to testify against Himself, 3 allowing Him to be struck, and 4 not waiting 24 hours before a guilty verdict.

³³ And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."

³⁴ But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said. Luke 18:33,34 Jesus spoke the sentence that shocked and stunned the disciples. He would be flogged and killed. The disciples just couldn't grasp that this would happen to the Messiah though He had warned them twice right after the Transfiguration (9:22^{xviii}; 9:44^{xix}). The shock of what was first said probably caused them to not even hear or comprehend the last part about rising from death. They couldn't begin to imagine their Teacher would be killed, so rising from death was incomprehensible to them.

The fact that they didn't comprehend His words is seen in three expressions: they didn't understand, the saying was hidden, nor did they grasp what was said. I wonder if that was because they didn't want to believe it, or because their expectations caused their minds to reject it, or if God supernaturally caused them to not understand. Whatever the case, we know by their absence at the tomb and hesitance to believe the women's testimony that they did not expect Jesus to rise (Luke 24:11^{xx}). If they understood the reference to the Son of Man, they should have known Jesus could not rise in the clouds to the Ancient of Days in His present form. That would only be possible after the resurrection. Only then would they understand (24:31^{xxi}).

³⁵ As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

Luke 19:35 The disciples could not see what Jesus was saying when He predicted His suffering and death. This is contrasted with the opening of the eyes of this blind beggar. Too often we forget that the physical world is an analogy to the spiritual realm.

Jesus was drawing near Jericho. This means he was coming down the Jordan Valley and probably within sight of the city. Pilgrims from the north were also headed to Jerusalem a week or more before Passover to prepare themselves for the feast. The town was filled with Levite priests waiting to make their journey for their day of service in the temple. It was a place of opportunity for the beggar as so many people would be passing

by. Many beggars gathered at the gate, but this beggar, Bartimaeus, thought that by being up the road a bit he would have a better chance of receiving alms with less competition.

The city of Jericho was known for its eye salve so it is not unusual that the blind would be begging near the town. Matthew tells us there were two blind beggars (Matthew 20:30^{xxii}). Hebrew literature often truncates the story to focus on the one man who did the speaking. Luke does this in other stories such as the man possessed by the Legion (Luke 8:27^{xxiii}, Matthew 8:28^{xxiv}).

³⁶ And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. ³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." Luke 18:36,37 He expected it would be a good day for him with such large crowds. He could hear the chatter of women on their way to the well, the sound of squeaking wheels carrying loads of merchandise. Some of it he could identify by the smells as they passed. He found a familiar spot by touching the ground, laid out his mat, wrapped his cloak tightly around him to keep out the cool spring air, and began pleading for alms.

Something was different today. Young boys were running ahead of great crowd letting out shrill sounds announcing something special was coming. The crowd swelled and began to invade his space. He grabbed a cloak that brushed against him to get the person's attention and ask what was happening. The answer thrilled him with hope. The man answered that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

³⁸ And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹ And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Luke 18:38,39 The blind man must have been familiar with the fact that Nazareth was a town of Davidic descendants. That means that Jesus (the name in Aramaic is Yeshua – meaning the salvation of God) is from the line of David. Rabbi's and the prophets frequently referred to the coming Messiah as the Son of David. One of the eighteen benedictions in the Palestinian Talmud asks for mercy "on the house of David, of the Messiah of Thy righteousness." The blind man may have heard of Jesus' miracles. Though his eyes did not see, his heart saw an opportunity. Remembering that Isaiah predicted the Messiah would give sight to the blind, his heart began to race (Isaiah 42:6,7^{xxv}). This was his chance! He began to shout at the top of his lungs, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

Since Son of David is clearly a messianic title, and Romans would have been near the gates of the city, the crowd tried to shush him up. Besides, his screams were ear splitting and they couldn't hear what Jesus was saying. One after another people told him to pipe down. But he knew if Jesus passed on by his chance to be healed was gone.

What a cry he made! With all the Scripture tied to that title, his cry was the same as asking God to be merciful (Exodus 34:6^{xxvi}). A plea for mercy draws God's heart. Mercy is different from grace. **Mercy means I don't deserve it but I'm asking in hope that God is a merciful God who wants to forgive and bless me if my heart is repentant and humbled.** Like a little child in the previous passage in Luke, the beggar was placing all his hope and faith in Jesus to be merciful. I've told you before of my wife's cry for mercy when she was dying on a gurney and the miracle that followed.

Jesus had set His face determinedly toward Jerusalem and the sacrifice He would accomplish (Isaiah 50:7^{xxvii}). Peter's efforts couldn't stop Him (Matthew 16:22,23^{xxviii}). The disciples' trepidation did not stop Him (John 11:8^{xxix}). But the cry for mercy caused Him to pause, for mercy upon fallen humanity is the reason He came.

Is God merciful to those who recognize their need for mercy? The Divine Presence was above the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle and the Temple. His most commonly mentioned attribute of God in Scripture is the word *hesed* that is translated as steadfast love or mercy. Moses told Israel, "*The LORD your God is a merciful God.*" Deuteronomy 4:31 David faced with the wrath of man or of God chose God because "*His mercy is very great!*" 1 Chronicles 21:13 I could go on and on for there are hundreds of references to God's mercy. But in many of those references, there is the condition of us being merciful to others and turning to the Lord (Matthew 5:7^{xxx}). His mercy does have qualifications.

⁴⁰ And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight." Luke 18:40,41 Jesus hears our cries for mercy. The world may try to silence it, but He hears and calls to those who are pleading for mercy and causes them to be brought to Him. Mark tells us that when the crowd said Jesus was calling for him, he sprang up and left his cloak behind (Mark 10:50^{xxxi}). It was his most valuable possession and being blind meant he had a good chance of losing it. But he was full of faith and expectation. At that moment nothing else mattered.

Then Jesus asked the question that I believe the Spirit of God often asks us. Jesus could see that He was blind and yet He asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" He wants us to ask in faith exactly what it is that we desire. If it is a request to fulfil some desire that is not of God, He will not grant it, for He wants what is best for us (James 4:3^{xxxii}). The blind man, whose spiritual vision was clearer than most in the crowd, voiced his urgent plea, "Lord, let me recover my sight."

What do you want Him to do for you? My answer is, "I want to see - to see things as God sees. I want to see through the illusions of this world and see the truth. I want to see the depths and riches of God's Word. I want to see more clearly how great His love is for me, for love begets love" (1 John 4:19^{xxxiii}).

*This blind man can represent every lost soul. John Newton wrote those famous lines, "I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see." When Helen Keller was asked about if it was a terrible thing to be blind she responded, **"Better to be blind and see with your heart, than to have two good eyes and see nothing."**^{xxxiv} When those who are spiritually blind to the truth of God and His love and justice realize their condition and cry out to God to see, their cry rises above all the praise in the world and reaches the heart of Jesus. He opens the spiritual eyes of the blind and gives them sight.*

*⁴² And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well."
⁴³ And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God.* Luke 18:42,43a Jesus gave the command but credited the healing to the man's faith. The man's faith was placed in Jesus. Instantly he could see. And the first thing he saw was the face of Jesus. His entire optical system worked perfectly. He would have had 20-20 vision.

But even more importantly, he saw that Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah and responded to that spiritual sight by following Jesus and glorifying God. It was a fulfilment of the promise in Isaiah 61:1^{xxxv} (Luke 4:18^{xxxvi}) that the Messiah would give sight to the blind. Was he more elated that he could see or that he had found the Messiah?

^{43b} And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. Luke 18:43b I can testify to this reaction of the crowd. I was only nineteen-years-old living Texas in a small commune of about ten people. A blind man off the street joined us and lived with us for a few months. He trusted Christ as his Savior. He had a lot of fear of being attacked because of his blindness so he carried a few non-lethal weapons. He slowly overcame his fear as we loved and cared for him. Then he began to worship with us in the evenings.

One night we were all really caught up in worship when he suddenly shouted that he could see. Looking at his face, none of us doubted that a miracle had taken place. No one had prayed for his healing. We were just worshiping God in song. When we heard and saw what had happened the worship went to an even higher level. When I read that "all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God," I can picture the moment that man shouted, "I can see!" We were in awe of God, of His love and His power. We were on the mountain top with Jesus beholding His glory. You never forget those glimpses into the eternal. Jesus still opens the eyes of the blind, physically and spiritually. But the spiritual opening of eyes is the greater wonder.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the people were praising Him for the resurrection of Lazarus, but their eyes could not see (John 12:17,18^{xxxvii}). They were looking for a Savior from Rome, from physical conditions, but He had come to save our eternal souls. That is why He wept (Luke 19:41:42^{xxxviii}). It wasn't for what He would suffer. It was because they were blind to the result of their choice (Matthew 23:37-39^{xxxix}). Oh that the world today might see that its greatest need is not to be delivered from a virus, but from the virus of sin.

Are you spiritually blind? Is all you see this world and how it can meet your physical needs? There is a God who is merciful and gracious. Ask for that mercy. Ask for the Savior of the world to open your eyes so that you can see how great His love is for you. I know He will answer that prayer for I once was lost but now am found. I was blind but now I see.

Questions

- 1 Why did Jesus call Himself the Son of Man? Implication?
- 2 Where is Jesus going and why is He going there?
- 3 How did the blind man's expectations change?
- 4 What was significant about his cry?
- 5 What did Jesus ask him and why?
- 6 What is the double meaning in Bartimaeus answer?
- 7 What is God's chief attributes demonstrated by Jesus?
- 8 What did Helen Keller say about being blind?
- 9 What was the crowds' response?
- 10 Why did Jesus weep on Palm Sunday?

ⁱ **Luke 9:30-31 (ESV)**

³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

ⁱⁱ **Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Ezekiel 2:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.

^{iv} **Exodus 20:3 (ESV)**

³ "You shall have no other gods before me. (before can also be translated "besides".)

^v **Psalm 22:14-18 (ESV)**

¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; ¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— ¹⁷ I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸ they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

^{vi} **Isaiah 53:3-8 (ESV)**

³ He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

^{vii} **Isaiah 9:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

^{viii} **Luke 24:25-27 (ESV)**

²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

^{ix} **John 18:31 (ESV)**

³¹ Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death."

^x **2 Samuel 24:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man."

^{xi} **Mark 14:65 (ESV)**

⁶⁵ And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows.

^{xii} **Isaiah 11:3 (ESV)**

³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

^{xiii} **Matthew 27:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

^{xiv} **Mark 15:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him.

^{xv} **Matthew 26:67 (ESV)**

⁶⁷ Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him,

^{xvi} **John 9:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud

^{xvii} **Matthew 27:42 (ESV)**

⁴² "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

^{xviii} **Luke 9:22 (ESV)**

²² saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

^{xix} **Luke 9:44 (ESV)**

⁴⁴ "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

^{xx} **Luke 24:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

^{xxi} **Luke 24:31 (ESV)**

³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.

^{xxii} **Matthew 20:30 (ESV)**

³⁰ And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

^{xxiii} **Luke 8:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs.

^{xxiv} **Matthew 8:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way.

^{xxv} **Isaiah 42:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,

⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

^{xxvi} **Exodus 34:6 (ESV)**

⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

^{xxvii} **Isaiah 50:7 (ESV)**

⁷ But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

^{xxviii} **Matthew 16:22-23 (ESV)**

²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

^{xxix} **John 11:8 (ESV)**

⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?"

^{xxx} **Matthew 5:7 (ESV)**

⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

^{xxx} **Mark 10:50 (ESV)**

⁵⁰ And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

^{xxxii} **James 4:3 (ESV)**

³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

^{xxxiii} **1 John 4:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

^{xxxiv} (Preaching the Word - Luke, Volume II: That You May Know the Truth.)

^{xxxv} **Isaiah 61:1 (ESV)**

¹ The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

^{xxxvi} **Luke 4:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

^{xxxvii} **John 12:17-18 (ESV)**

¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

^{xxxviii} **Luke 19:41-42 (ESV)**

⁴¹ And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴² saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.

^{xxxix} **Matthew 23:37-39 (ESV)**

³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"