

"BRING HIM YOUR PROBLEMS"

A Sermon By

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### INTRODUCTION

Thomas Watson was the CEO who built IBM. I've heard it said that he was known for visiting factories and spending time in conversation with the workers he employed. He welcomed their concerns and they looked upon him as a friend as well as a boss. There was the day one of his employees came to his office here in the city. The worker had just received word that his brother was quite ill and wouldn't live too much longer. Watson immediately arranged for this man's brother to be taken to a top hospital, where he was put under the care of a famous specialist. In relief and gratitude, the man thanked Watson and began to apologize for perhaps bothering him. Watson interrupted him, saying....

"When I said bring your problems to me, I meant exactly that!"

### BRING ME YOUR PROBLEMS

Bring Me your problems. That's what Jesus is saying to us today. Whatever those problems may be - family problems, health problems, career problems....whatever your problem may be, bring it to Jesus. Simple enough, isn't it? And yet....how quickly we lose hold of this basic tent of our faith.

Go back with me to today's scripture lesson. A man named Bartimaeus sat by the road...begging. Today we don't have to walk very far from where we are to find Bartimaeus. He's there...homeless, needing food. We don't like beggars, do we? We pass them by. They make us feel uncomfortable. We resent their intrusion into our lives....perhaps reminding us of our complacency and our self-satisfaction.

But, you see, there was no place else for Bartimaeus to turn. There were no government programs in Palestine for helping vision-impaired persons to train for productive jobs...no white cane or seeing-eye programs. Bartimaeus was out there on his own, trying to cope in a world of perpetual darkness while his friends and neighbors all lived in a wonderful world of light. It must have been lonely and demoralizing sitting by the side of the road...begging for alms. The hours passed slowly and the amount he collected in his little basket was barely enough to buy bread for the day. But Bartimaeus never gave up. Somewhere, somehow, there was something better for him...so he believed.

And then one day Jesus passed by. And hope danced for a brief moment or two in the heart of Bartimaeus. Maybe that very hope was a factor in his eventual healing. After all - hope is powerful...never forget that.

Sometime back I read about an interesting study that comes out of the world of sports. Some researchers gave a group of female athletes a test known as the Hope Scale - a test that measured their level of hope. First, their coaches rated each woman's pure natural physical ability and then recorded their athletic performances. The results showed that the hope of these women predicted their actual athletic performance....that is, higher hope related to better performance. However, what is especially noteworthy is that hope significantly predicted actual performance beyond the coaches' ratings of natural physical abilities.

It is important to note that Bartimaeus never gave up hope. Without hope he would never have gotten the attention of Jesus. He cried out,

"Jesus...Son of David.....have mercy on me!" (Bystanders urged him to be silent, but he cried out all the more.)

"Jesus, Son of David...have mercy on me!"

"And Jesus stopped". Powerful words. "And Jesus stopped!" Many of us grew up in churches singing that Fanny Crosby hymn that we sang a few moments ago...

"Pass me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry.  
While on others thou art calling...do not pass me by."

Jesus did not pass Bartimaeus by. He cried out and Jesus heard him and stopped. And this leads us to the first of three things that Bartimaeus found out about Jesus. Three things. I hope you'll jot them down and remember them...

### JESUS IS ACCESSIBLE

First, Jesus is accessible.

A national magazine had an interesting item about self-made multimillionaire, H. Wayne Huizenga. Huizenga is the former chairperson of Blockbuster Entertainment Group. And he also owns the Florida Marlins baseball team, the Miami Dolphins football team and the Florida Panthers hockey team. Many Floridians are, therefore, surprised when they learn that Huizenga's home phone number is listed in the Broward County phone book. He says,

"I am listed because I believe that when you are in business, people who are angry should have the right to look you up and tell you so....."

To me, it's refreshing to learn that a busy executive like Huizenga is accessible to the general public. And even more refreshing and reassuring to me is the knowledge that the Lord of all the universe is accessible to each of us whatever our need may be. Yes, indeed....if you think that God has put you on hold, don't hang up. Stay on the line. He (or She) is accessible...don't hang up!

It's really quite staggering to think about. We don't have to fight our way through a battery of secretaries to reach our Lord. We don't have to journey on long pilgrimages. We don't have to ransom our souls for a divine audience.

Christ is accessible. Bartimaeus cried out. Jesus stopped. And Jesus said to His disciples, "Call him". And they called Bartimaeus over, saying,

"Take heart. Rise, He is calling you....." And throwing off his mantle, Bartimaeus sprang up and came over to Jesus and Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

### JESUS IS ATTENTIVE

And it was at that moment that Bartimaeus learned a second thing about Jesus. Jesus is attentive. He cares. He cares about individuals. Jesus is not only Lord of the universe, but he is also the Lord of the sparrow. He sees. He cares.

A businessman by the name of Max DePree was in a hotel in Phoenix when his left knee gave out on him and he was unable to walk. A trip to the local emergency room produced only a pair of crutches, no real solution and the hotel where he was staying loaned him a wheelchair and the next morning he and his wife, Esther, appeared in the restaurant for breakfast with Esther pushing him in the wheelchair.

They had eaten several meals in the restaurant and each time the hostess had looked at DePree and politely asked him the same question, "How many?" But not this morning. DePree said that she looked right past him to Esther and politely asked, "How many?" And then, as she led them into the dining room, she again turned to his wife, Esther and asked, "Would he like to sit near the window?"

It was as if Max DePree had disappeared. In the twinkling of an eye, this polite, well-meaning young woman had stripped him of identity and position. It made DePree realize that to be oppressed is wrong, but to be overlooked can be even worse.

People with disabling conditions of various kinds have experienced this treatment time and time again. Perhaps it has happened to you. For instance, your son or daughter takes you to the doctor and the doctor talks to him, or to her about your condition as if you were not standing there in the room. Or, you are in a group of people who are talking and they act as if you were not even there. DePree may be right. Being overlooked may be worse than being oppressed.

Jesus was attentive to Bartimaeus. He saw him. He sent for him. He sought to discern the great desire of Bartimaeus's heart. Love and concern flowed from Jesus to the man in need. It reminds me of something I once read about Jay Leno.

Leno has gained fame for his sharp wit, but in his recent book, Leading With My Chin, Leno shows a warmer side to his personality when he writes about his parents, both of whom are now dead. He fondly recalls a certain incident from his High School days. It took him a while, but he finally saved up enough money to buy an old, beat-up, pick up truck, and it became the apple of his eye. He spent long hours working on his new prize possession. And his parents, noting his pride in the truck, bought brand new upholstery for it. And they must have known how disappointed Jay was the day when he accidentally broke a window in his pick-up truck. He couldn't afford to get it fixed at the time.

One day, Jay was sitting in class when it began to rain rather heavily. He could see his truck out there in the parking lot and he knew that the new upholstery was getting doused. Imagine his surprise when his parents' car came flying into the school parking lot. He watched as he saw his mother and father run out with a big piece of plastic which they used to cover the broken window. Watching them, he realized they had left work and gone out to buy the plastic as soon as it began to rain and then came speeding out to the school to cover their son's truck, because they knew it was important to him.

And Jay Leno reports that he sat there in his High School class and cried. Jay Leno's parents were attentive to their son's needs. They could easily have looked out the window and said,

"Well...isn't it a shame that Jay's window is broken"  
and left it at that.

But they showed love and concern by going one step further. Jesus, too, went one step further. He called Bartimaeus and asked him what He could do for him, and at that moment, Bartimaeus learned a third thing about Jesus and that is this: Jesus is able. In the case of Bartimaeus, Jesus was able to give him the gift of sight. Accessible. Attentive. Able. Where you fit into this?

JESUS IS ABLE

Yes, Jesus is able! A father and son were talking together when the father was led to ask the son what he would like for his birthday. The boy said that he would like a baby brother. His birthday wish came true and he got a baby brother. Prior to his next birthday, his father asked his son again,

"And what would you like for your birthday this year?" The little boy hesitantly told his dad, "Dad....what I would really like is a pony, but I'm afraid that would be too hard on Mom!"

Have you ever hesitated to ask God for help with a particular problem, a particular concern...because you weren't sure that even God could handle it? Let me say this to you this morning that nothing is too hard for God. That God is able. He can deliver!

Consider the question of hope and healing. In a recent study of 269 doctors, a remarkable 99% said they were convinced that religious belief can heal! In fact, that's 20% higher than the figure for the general public. Why do doctors feel this way?

"Because we've seen the power of belief!" says Dr. Herbert Benson, author of Timeless Healing which offers scientific evidence that faith helps to cure medical conditions.

"We've seen that belief is powerful in conditions including angina pectoris, asthma, duodenal ulcers, congestive heart failure, diabetes...all forms of pain. We see it all the time and we cannot deny it".

And what's more, 75% of the doctors believe the prayers of others can help a patient's recovery.

God is able, St. Paul tells us,

"To do all things more abundantly than we desire or ask....." (Ephesians 3:20)

If you are leaving your religion behind when you step out on the plain to do battle with life's giants...whether those giants be health concerns, grief, family problems, career goals...whatever they may be...you are making a grave mistake to leave God out of it. God is able.

That is not to say that physical healing is automatic. Bartimaeus was fortunate. Our hospitals are full of people who called upon the name of the Lord and were not healed physically, but that is not to say that healing did not take place.

HEALING

Helen Keller was as blind as Bartimaeus...deaf as well. She never did see the light of day...not in this world. She read widely and wrote eloquently. She graduated from Radcliffe with degrees in English and German. She gave lectures on important issues of the day, like voting rights for women. Travelling extensively, she became a friend to many including Eisenhower.

In wartime, she visited military hospitals offering words of encouragement to soldiers wounded and disabled. In her later years, she wrote,

"I thank God for my handicaps, for through them I found myself, my work and my God!"

Was Helen Keller healed? Certainly her heart was.

And Fanny Crosby was as blind as Bartimaeus. Yet, here was a woman who wrote more than 8,000 songs. She could have easily wrapped herself up in a blanket of bitterness for her blindness was not congenital. When she was only six weeks old a minor eye inflammation developed and the doctor who treated the case was careless and she became totally blind...permanently blind. Yet, she harbored no bitterness against that physician...in fact she once said of him,

"If I could meet him now, I would say thank you, thank you...over and over again for making me blind!"

She always felt that her blindness was a gift from God to help her write the hymns that flowed from her heart and through her pen. Was she healed? Not physically, but mentally, emotionally and spiritually she towered over us all. Which makes you stop and wonder at times who is handicapped...doesn't it?

Jesus gave Bartimaeus the gift of physical sight. He could have just as easily helped Bartimaeus find victory in dealing with being "vision-impaired". But the important thing for us to remember and to carry away from here today is this brief TRIPLE A formula. Jesus, our Lord, is accessible. Attentive. And He is able.

PRAYER Make us sensitive, O God, to your lifting presence and to Your healing power in these quiet moments. Once again, the deepest things within us are being stirred up...that down below the surface of our lives, Your spirit is striving to bring forth the highest and best that we are meant to be.

Wrestle with us until we are conquered by Your love. Minister to our personal needs. Walk through this community of faith now and be the help and comfort, the inspiration and sustenance of our souls. May we hear Your voice speaking to us in these moments. In the name and spirit of Jesus who is able to make a difference...we pray. Amen.