

**Pastor Jim Lloyd**

**Date: January 29, 2023**

**Title: WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE**

**Text: Mark 10:46-52**

Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus

*<sup>46</sup>“Now they came to Jericho. As He (Jesus) went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. <sup>47</sup>And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ <sup>48</sup>Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ <sup>49</sup>So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.’ <sup>50</sup>And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup>So Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ The blind man said to Him, ‘Lord, that I might receive my sight.’ <sup>52</sup>Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you whole.’ And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.”*

I’ve entitled this morning’s sermon – “Was Blind, But Now I See.” I could have called it “A Blind Man Teaches Us To Ask In Faith” or simply... “How To Pray.” I’m going to break a few rules of preaching today. So, I’ll ask you to forgive me in advance. My introduction might be longer than the sermon. Sorry!

Does anyone know who wrote the first hymn that we sang? (Blessed Assurance) It was Francis Jane Crosby – commonly referred to as Fanny Crosby. Fanny endured her first hardship as a six-week-old infant when a visiting physician mistreated an eye infection. The family believed his attempts to treat the infection resulted in total blindness. However, some modern experts contend she may have been born with congenital blindness. Another source stated that she developed an inflammation of the eyes thus damaging her optic nerve causing her blindness. Her father died when she was 6 months old, leaving her in the care of her twenty-one-year-old mother, Mercy, and her maternal grandmother, Eunice. Determined her granddaughter would flourish despite blindness, Eunice read classics like Shakespeare and Don Quixote to Fanny, taught her about nature, and embedded scripture in her young heart through memorization. Fanny once said, “It was Grandma who brought the Bible to me, and me to the Bible.” Days before her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, Fanny joined the New York Institute of the Blind. She flourished as a student and learned to sing and play the organ, harp, guitar, and piano. Fanny transitioned from pupil to teacher in 1847 and shared her skills in grammar, speech, and American history for the next eleven years as teacher where she had been a student. She wrote over 8000 hymns & gospel songs – over 100 million in print. She was known as the Queen of Gospel Song Writers. Sankey himself said that the success of the Moody and Sankey revivals were much to the credit of Fanny Crosby’s hymns. She wrote as many as 6 hymns in a single day. Publishers in her day were hesitant to publish a hymnbook with so many songs by one person so she used nearly 200 pseudonyms. A pseudonym is a stage or pen name. I also learned yesterday that she was related to Bing Crosby. If you were to ask Google who the greatest hymnwriter of all time is, you’d likely get the answer Fanny Crosby – a BLIND hymnwriter none the less. I love this quote of hers – “When I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior.”

Let me also tell you of a man that greatly impacted my life. I first met him in 1973. I was 18 years old. I had graduated Hedgesville High School that year. It was September and I was a freshman at Northeast Bible Institute now known as the University of Valley Forge. I had only been on campus for a few days. I received word that I had an appointment with the college’s music director, Chip Reardon. On campus he was affectionately known as Brother Reardon. I had no idea what this was about. On our college applications, we were asked to list our musical abilities and list instruments that we played. I had taken a year or less of organ lessons. In fact, I took them right here in this sanctuary during my later high school years on Saturdays. Saturday probably wasn’t the best day of the week to take lessons, in that, my teacher AND I often had to cancel. So, though I had taken lessons over a year’s time, many of those Saturdays there was no lesson. I was just a beginner. It was at this appointment that Brother Reardon asked ME to be the organist for the college concert & traveling choir! I found that to be hilarious. I reminded Brother Reardon that he had not heard me play the organ and if he had, that he

would NOT be asking me to play the organ for his choir. He insisted. He said, "Jim, I'll help you." I told him, "That is very noble of you, Sir, but I assure you that you don't have that kind of time." To make a long story short, somehow, I did become the choir's organist. I played in churches all over the eastern part of the United States. I played a great variety of organs in all kinds of churches. I played organs in the front of the church. I played organs on platforms at the back of the church. I became one of the college chapel organists and pianists. I became the missionary society organist and played Fridays during our mission's chapel services. All because a college music director challenged me WAY BEYOND my comfort zone. OH... Did I mention that Brother Reardon was BLIND? Blind since birth! The man who gave me lessons on the organ had NEVER seen an organ. The printed music on the organ that I attempted to play was NEVER seen by my teacher. I likely played the piano this morning because of the influence of a blind man in my life. Brother Reardon just passed a few weeks ago on January 5<sup>th</sup>. His funeral was on the 14<sup>th</sup> of this month. I would have attended but it was the weekend of our weekend prayer emphasis. I was able to watch online. I spoke to his widow again last evening. He was one AMAZING man! I never sensed that he felt sorry for himself, and he certainly never let his blindness stop him or slow him. He married the college's assistant cook who was known to have said that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. He fathered one son. He was the breadwinner – the provider – in the household except when he was working on his advanced degrees. He accomplished more with NO sight that I have WITH sight. Let me share a few of the accomplishments listed in his obituary. His schooling: In 1965, he graduated from Overbook School for the Blind. He went on to receive his bachelor's in music from Oberlin College in Ohio. He got his master's degree from Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. He then received a Fulbright Scholarship and studied in Germany for 10 months. While in Germany, he learned to speak German at a level that Germans believed he was born in Germany. While teaching at Valley Forge, he took Spanish lessons to help students, and in short order, he recorded an album singing in Spanish. After studying in Germany, he returned to the Eastman School of Music to obtain his Doctorate in Music Arts. His work assignments: For 8 years he was the music director of the University of Valley Forge. For 3 years he worked as the music director of Faith Assembly of God in Poughkeepsie, NY. He was self-employed as a piano tuner and private music teacher. He taught and arranged the music sets for the Philadelphia Police & Fire Pipes & Drums. The band was a feature of the Mummer's Parade. He was a member of the Eastern United States Pipe (bagpipes) Band Association where he competed & later sat as a competition judge. For 22 years he was the organist for Shepherd of the Hills Church in Pennsylvania. His greatest passion was music and he played any instrument he could get his hands on.

I must tell you a couple Brother Reardon stories. His hearing and memory were phenomenal. One day while entering the little cottage where I was scheduled for a voice lesson, he said, "Jim, there's a bee in the bottom corner of the window. Can you get it for me? I'm highly allergic." As I proceeded to the closest window, he said, "Not that window – the other one. It's in the bottom right corner." Sure enough – a big ole bee was in the bottom right corner of the other window! I'll likely never forget my first choir rehearsal with him. There was an abundance of chatter in the room and we freshmen were meeting for the first time. Brother Reardon was struggling to get the group to be quiet. He clapped his hands loudly and shouted, "Order. I said ORDER!" To which I said, "I'll have a hamburger, large Coke and fries." Instantly, this blind teacher came off the chapel platform and put his face inches from mine. He heard me and knew exactly where I was standing. I never did that again! He'd walk the campus snapping his fingers to tell how far he was from things. He'd leave the cafeteria and run up the long sidewalk and then race up the concrete stairs skipping steps to the administration building! During choir tours, I was often assigned to be his roommate. One evening preparing for a concert, he let out this loud sound. It scared me. I asked, "What was that?" He replied, "I almost sprayed my armpits with black shoe polish." All his personal care products were marked by his wife with rubber bands. 1 rubber band might mean deodorant. 2 rubber bands could mean black shoe polish. 3 bands meant something else. We'd get to a church he had never been to. He'd put his hand on my shoulder and I'd walk him through the church ONCE, describing the furnishings and he'd memorize it. Once he walked independently up the center aisle of a long church to get to the organ. He walked to the end of the pews. He turned left at the appropriate place and ran into a group of people. (They were standing there in silence.) After they got untangled, he proceeded to the organ bench.

Several ladies had watched the whole scene. One of the ladies said to another as they were sitting in the pew in front of Brother Reardon's wife – "This ought to be good!" It wasn't just good. It was incredible! I could sing a song to him that he had never heard, and he would play it perfectly. You could play a polished recording for him, and he would likely do it better. One more story. It was an Easter Sunday during our spring choir tour. We were at a large church in New Jersey. The church was packed as it had broken its record attendance. There was a sense of excitement in the house. The church had their opening worship – it was lively. They prayed and then introduced the choir. The choir took its place on the platform. Brother Reardon took his place in front of the choir. The pianist took her place at the piano on the left side of the platform, and I took my place at the organ on the right. I placed the first piece of music on the organ music rack and the rest of the music – in order – beside me on the bench. The organist for the church that morning was this itty bitty little lady. When I sat at the organ, there was not enough space for my legs. So, looking to the right, I pushed the organ bench back. Note that the organ was set on the very edge of the **ROUNDED** platform and the organ bench had two solid sides – not 4 legs like a piano bench. Again, the platform was rounded. Having pushed the organ bench back, left about half of the left side of the bench extended **OFF** the platform. I hadn't noticed. Again, this is our opening song. As was my practice, I would follow with my body the upbeat and down beat of my blind music director making sure I was where I was supposed to be for the first note of the intro. Remember, half the bench is off the platform unbeknown to me. When Brother Reardon gave the upbeat, I leaned back to come down on the down beat. When I leaned back, the left side of the bench left the platform, taking the right side of the bench, me, **AND** my music with it. All of it dropped, including me, about four feet to the floor below making a horribly loud crash! My music sailed like paper airplanes across the whole front of the church in slow motion. Complete silence filled the room. The choir inhaled in perfect unison and the 48 eyes of the 24 choir members were staring at me on the floor. To which my blind choir director said to the choir in a loud whisper, "WHAT in THIS WORLD was THAT?" To which 24 voices in unison said, "Jim just fell off the organ bench." To which he said in an even louder whisper, "He WHAT?" Just so you know – I got more compliments on my organ playing that Sunday than I did on all the other concerts together. Moral of the story – Sometimes you just have to get people's attention!

How many of you know a blind man OR woman? True or False – People who are blind or visually impaired are employed in as many diverse jobs as those who are sighted in the workforce. **TRUE**. Individuals with vision loss can perform jobs across all industries, including marketing, human services, business management and administration, health science, law, agriculture, and more. I even read of a blind photographer (Pete Eckert). That blows my mind. One source stated that about 44% of blind people are employed.

One day Jesus was walking down the road with his disciples, on his way out of the city of Jericho, when a blind man named Bartimaeus began calling out to him, saying, "Jesus son of David, have mercy on me!" (Know that Bartimaeus wasn't the only blind man on that road.) Here's the scenario: First, he was **BLIND**. This was during a time when a blind man couldn't work. He couldn't read or write. There was no braille. He couldn't get around without help. There were no "seeing eye dogs," in that, dogs were unclean animals to the Jews. Secondly, he was **REDUCED TO BEGGING**. Unless he had relatives to support him, there was little else this man could do except sit in a popular thoroughfare and cry out, "Alms, alms for the poor!" Thirdly, he was an **OBJECT OF PITY**. He used pity to make a living. It was only by soliciting the sympathy of others that he could survive. He was probably pretty good at what he did. Finally, for the most part, his life's story is told in the last 4 words of verse 46 – "*sitting by the road.*" That's what he did nearly EVERY DAY! On this particular day, **JESUS** was passing by. The people around him told him to be quiet, but he called out even louder, "*Have mercy on me!*" Jesus stopped and said, "*Call him.*" The people around Bartimaeus told him that Jesus was calling for him. So, he jumped up and approached Jesus. Jesus asked him **ONE** simple question: "*What do you want me to do for you?*" If Jesus were to say that to you today, would you have a ready answer? Bartimaeus replied, "*I want to see.*" Then Jesus said something that made all the difference in that man's life. Jesus said, "*Go. Your faith has healed you.*" Your faith has healed you? What healed him? His faith. Hebrews 11:1 – "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" One translation says, "*...the evidence of things not YET seen.*" He hoped to see. That was the thing he hoped for. He was a blind man. Anyone know what 2 Corinthians 5:7 says? "*For we*

*walk by faith, not by sight.*” Tell me, how many ways can we walk? TWO – We walk by FAITH, OR we walk by SIGHT. Which way does man usually walk? Let me put it another way. Which of those ways do YOU usually walk? By SIGHT! Get this! Bartimaeus has NEVER walked BY SIGHT. There is more to meet the eyes of those who have no eyes to see. It wasn’t even possible at this point for him to walk by sight. Perhaps, it’s easier for a blind man to walk BY FAITH. So, the BIG question is – WHAT did Bartimaeus do that showed such faith? He wasn’t like the men who tore open the roof of the home where Jesus was teaching so they could lower their sick friend into His presence. He wasn’t like the woman who fought through the crowd so she could touch the hem of His garment. He wasn’t like the centurion who came to Jesus and said, “I’m not worthy to have you in my home; just say the word from here and my servant will be healed.” When you read this story, you can’t help but wonder: WHAT was this great demonstration of faith on the part of Bartimaeus? ALL HE DID WAS ASK! Hmmmm... Maybe there’s a lesson in that. The story of Bartimaeus receiving his sight teaches us a lesson about faith: ASKING is an act of faith.

ILLUSTRATION: The story is told of two men on an airplane. Both walked through the first-class section. Both noticed five or six empty seats. Both walked through the curtain and took their place with the rest of the riff-raff sitting in coach. Before takeoff, the flight attendant walked the aisle making sure they were all buckled in, when one of the men seated across the aisle from the other stopped her to ask a question. He asked something along the lines of “Empty seats in first class...can I have a free upgrade?” She smiled and said, “Sure, I think we can do that.” The man collected his belongings and walked through the curtain that separates the castes of American society, taking his seat in the luxurious first class, where I’m certain he was pampered for the duration of the flight. The other man knew there were still 4 or 5 empty seats remaining in first-class, BUT he just couldn’t bring himself to ask if he, too, could be upgraded for free. Perhaps he imagined the flight attendant saying, “Just because I did it for him, doesn’t mean that I will do it for you. Stay put.” So, HE DID NOT ASK. The book of James says... *“You have not because you ask not”* (4:2). That was certainly true of the man in coach, AND... It is true in many of our lives, day-in, day-out. We DO NOT have because we DO NOT ask. ALL BARTIMAEUS COULD DO was ask to be healed – and it was enough. It demonstrated faith on his part, and as a result, Jesus healed him. Just asking is an act of faith.

Today, as we take a closer look at this story, we’ll see there is a right way to ask. Asking God for anything is, itself, an act of faith. Today, we’ll look at how to ask in a way that will open the door for God to reward us. I’m not sharing the steps of this blind man as a magic formula. We all know there are still blind people today who would love to see. As I reflected on Fanny Crosby and Brother Reardon, I can’t help but think that what they were able to accomplish in their blindness were most incredible miracles. I would never attempt to put God in a box, but I do love Bartimaeus’ example and I would that we would have the faith of this blind man.

There are three things this story teaches us about how to ask. First of all...

**1. ASK IMMEDIATELY.** As soon as Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was passing by, he IMMEDIATELY began calling out to Him: *“Jesus, have mercy on me!”* I don’t know how much Bartimaeus knew about Jesus. I don’t know what stories he had heard, but evidently there was some recognition, some prior knowledge. Bartimaeus must have heard how Jesus could heal. There are descriptions of at least 6 people who were healed of blindness in the New Testament. Bart had probably heard of at least some of them. Romans 10:17 – *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Bartimaeus may not have SEEN anything that stirred his faith, BUT... He MUST HAVE HEARD something that stirred his faith. Faith comes from hearing – by hearing the word of God. So, when Jesus came his way, Bartimaeus made up his mind that he would not let this opportunity pass him by. He immediately began to call on the name of Jesus, AND... He continued to call on the name of Jesus UNTIL Jesus heard him. Here’s the problem we have with prayer. TOO OFTEN, it’s NOT our first option. TOO OFTEN, we try to fix things ourselves, without getting God involved. TOO OFTEN, we think that we can handle the situation more efficiently than God. After all, He might make us wait. He may ask us to repent. He’s likely to make us re-evaluate and re-organize our priorities. It’s easier to try to do things on our own. AND... As a last resort, if NOTHING ELSE works, THEN we’ll try prayer. Of course, that kind of asking NEVER demonstrates faith. It

demonstrates DESPERATION. Asking in faith requires that we ask IMMEDIATELY, that we turn to God as a FIRST resort, NOT a last resort. If you REALLY believe God can help you, He'll be the one you call on FIRST. When we don't call on God first, we're demonstrating a LACK of faith. Only, it's a foolish lack of faith, because God really can help you with ANY problem you face in life. If you want to receive anything from God, the story of Bartimaeus teaches us to call on God IMMEDIATELY and CONTINUE TO CALL on Him until He answers. Jesus said, *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you"* (Matthew 7:7). Those verbs – ask, seek, knock – can be translated from the original Greek as "Keep on asking; keep on seeking; keep on knocking." It's not a one-time request. It's a continual prayer. Bartimaeus asked immediately, and HE KEPT ON ASKING JESUS UNTIL JESUS ANSWERED him.

MY STORY – Some 50 years ago, my eye doctor told my mom that I had progressive myopia. He said, "Your son's eyesight will continue to get worse. We'll need to change his lens prescription every 6 months. By the time your son is 20, his glasses will be as thick as the bottom of a Coke bottle." At that time, my vision was 20/400 and 20/200. He said to mom, "What a person with 20/20 sees at 400 feet, your son doesn't see at 20 feet. If your son was 21, he'd get a blind man's pension." In the days that followed, dad took me to a Revival meeting at the old Bethel in Martinsburg. My uncle Joe was the evangelist. The sermon ended; The altars were open; I did what all teenage boys do with a full bladder. I went to the restroom. Dad sought me out and escorted me to the front of the church. A group gathered around me and prayed for the healing of my eyes. I had hands all over me. I prayed, too. In short order, I removed my glasses and broke them into many pieces. If I knew anything about my dad, I knew that he worked hard and anything he bought me, I had better take care of it. If I ever neglected to use the kick stand on my bicycle and just threw it down, I wouldn't see that bike for a long time. I don't remember all that went through my mind that night, but I certainly knew better than to break my glasses. I didn't have a spare pair of glasses at home. If I left there without glasses and I wasn't healed, I couldn't see AND most importantly, I'd have to deal with the wrath of my father. In addition, if I went very long without wearing glasses, I'd have a serious headache. The service ended and we headed home. All the way home dad had me reading signs. When we got home, he reported the events of the night to mom. In short order we were back at the doctor's office as the doctor had recommended contact lens as they had shown some success in slowing down one's vision decline. The doctor appeared to be taking longer in the actual examination. Mom couldn't hold back any longer and she asked, "Doctor, do his eyes look any different?" He immediately responded with "Yes, they actually look much better." Mom shared a bit of what had transpired. Then he had me read the eye chart. My vision had gone from 20/200 and 20/400 to 20/40 and 20/60. That's was quite an improvement, BUT... It wasn't 20/20. So, my question had been for a long time, why wasn't my eyesight 20/20? I don't have an answer, but don't tell me I didn't ask in faith. Perhaps it's so, BUT... I certainly don't believe it. Jesus does mention those of little faith, BUT... Jesus tells us that faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains. BTW – Neither would I encourage anyone to break their glasses. I told you that to tell you this: A couple years back I had cataract surgery on my right eye and was told that I didn't qualify to get my left eye done. Miraculously I did have the left done. That was the first time in nearly 50 years that I could see or drive without glasses. I just had an eye appointment on January 5<sup>th</sup>. The tech had me remove my glasses and read the chart. She said, "Mr. Lloyd, your vision is 20/20!" So, confidently I would say, like Bartimaeus, ask immediately and KEEP ON ASKING JESUS UNTIL JESUS ANSWERS. The second thing this story teaches us about how to ask in faith is...

**2. ASK BOLDLY – ASK DEFIANTLY.** Defiantly? Yes. Here's what I mean. When Bartimaeus began calling out to Jesus, the Bible says... *"Many rebuked (imperfect tense – kept rebuking) him and told him to be quiet, BUT he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'"* (v. 48). There was a group of people surrounding Bartimaeus who decided it was their job to keep him in his place. After all, he's just a blind beggar. What right does he have to approach Jesus? He needs to stay in his place and keep his mouth shut – and that's what they tried to get him to do, BUT... He defied the crowd and began shouting even louder, "HAVE MERCY ON ME!" He didn't care what the crowd SAID. He didn't care what the crowd THOUGHT. NEITHER SHOULD WE! He defied the crowd and called out to Jesus anyway. I want you to realize there were some risks involved in this. First of all, Bartimaeus was a beggar. The people around him were the ones he begged from. IF he antagonized them,

they might decide not to give him anything, ever again. Secondly, WHAT IF Jesus had ignored him? Certainly, OTHER PEOPLE had ignored him. Probably MOST people had ignored him. WHAT IF Jesus had just walked by without acknowledging Bartimaeus's presence? Wouldn't he have looked foolish? Wouldn't everyone have said, "See! I told you so! You're just a beggar! Why would Jesus pay attention to you?" Bartimaeus decided it was WORTH THE RISK. It didn't matter to him if people stopped liking him, even if he looked foolish and he became the object of further ridicule, he wasn't about to let Jesus walk by without AT LEAST TRYING to get his attention. He had to get beyond what other people were saying. What we need to realize is that the MAJORITY OF PEOPLE making up the human race are NAY-SAYERS. They're PESSIMISTS. Not only that, but they're also FICKLE. His attitude was, "Maybe YOU can stand there and let the King of Kings pass you by, but I'm NOT about to! I want to experience the touch of God in my life. This is MY chance. I'm not letting it get away." Bartimaeus risked ridicule when he defied the crowd and began calling the name of Jesus louder than ever, and in doing so HE ALSO DEMONSTRATED HIS FAITH. When you ask anything of God, you sometimes must DEFY those around you and ASK ANYWAY. They'll say things to try to put you in your place. Things like, "What gives you the right to think God will bless YOU? There are sick people everywhere, what gives you the right to think God will heal YOU? This world is in turmoil, what gives you the right to think God is concerned with YOUR measly problems?"

ILLUSTRATION: Yogi Berra was a catcher for the New York Yankees. One afternoon during a game, he was behind the plate and a batter stepped into the box and crossed himself. Yogi said, "Why don't we just play the game and leave God out of it? OK?" Now, I like Yogi Berra, but this was one time when he was wrong. BALL PLAYERS have the right to ask God to help them do well. SALESPEOPLE have the right to ask God to help them do well. TEACHERS have the right to ask God to help them do well. EVERYONE has the right to ask God to help them in their daily lives. I realize the world is in turmoil and there are many serious global issues to contend with, yet the God we serve is concerned with EACH & EVERY ONE OF US – Even a blind beggar sitting on the side of the road. If you want to experience God's power in your life, you'll have to defy the critics and the skeptics and ask anyway... EVEN IF it puts you at risk of looking foolish. It's that kind of bold defiance that demonstrates faith. STOP worrying about what other people will say! The third lesson we learn in this story is...

**3. ASK SPECIFICALLY.** When Jesus heard Bartimaeus call Him, He stopped and asked him directly... ***"What do you want me to do for you?"*** (v. 51). Bartimaeus didn't hesitate. He said... ***"Rabbi, I WANT TO SEE.' 'Go,' said Jesus. 'Your faith has healed you'"*** (v. 51-52). There are TWO THINGS I want you to notice about this exchange. First... Bartimaeus knew EXACTLY what he wanted. Jesus said, "What do you want me to do?" and Bartimaeus said, "I WANT TO SEE." His request was SPECIFIC. He didn't say, "Uh...I want to be helped. I want to get better. I want You to bless me." He said exactly what he wanted: "Lord, I want to see." We've got to remember that God is not apt to answer a prayer that we aren't willing to make. Again, we have not because we have not asked. If you want something from God, you must ask specifically for it. The ACT OF ASKING is a demonstration of faith. It does no good to ride coach all your life and hope that the flight attendant will pick you out of the crowd and invite you to sit in first class. It WON'T happen. You have to ask, and you must be specific.

ILLUSTRATION: I once heard a seminar leader say that when someone in his goal-setting seminars says they want more money, he gives them 50 cents and says, "There. You asked for more money, and now you have it." If you want to be on the receiving end of God's blessing in your life, you must have enough faith to ask specifically for whatever it is you want. It must NOT be selfish, yet it MUST BE specific. You say, "Pastor, what if I'm asking for something that's against His will?" Don't worry. He'll let you know. Don't make the mistake of trying to edit in advance what God is willing to do for you. ASK SPECIFICALLY. That leads me to the next thing I want you to notice... Bartimaeus asked for it all. He could have asked for a FEW COINS and Jesus probably would have given them to him. Most days he likely asked for a few shekels – NOT TODAY! He could have asked for SOME FOOD; Jesus probably would have given him that as well. BUT... Bartimaeus had the faith to ask FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE: He asked to be able to see. AND... He got WHAT HE ASKED FOR. Bartimaeus wasn't afraid to ask for everything. He wasn't content just to say, "Lord, give me a cabin in the corner of glory land." He said, "I want a mansion...I want the impossible." The act of asking demonstrates your faith. How BIG your faith is, is revealed by how BIG

your prayers are. Do you have enough faith to ask for SOMETHING BIG? Do you have enough faith to ask for IT ALL? Do you have enough faith to ask for the IMPOSSIBLE?

**CONCLUSION.** Just like Jesus spoke to Bartimaeus on the Jericho Road 2000 years ago, He's standing before you today and asking... WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU? What is your answer? What are you willing to ask for? Are you willing to ask and keep on asking? Are you willing to ask even if it puts you at risk of looking foolish? Are you willing to ask for the impossible? When you ask God for anything at all, you demonstrate your faith. The SIZE of your faith is revealed by the SIZE of your prayers. Don't be afraid to be like Bartimaeus. Don't hesitate to ask God immediately and keep on asking. Don't give a thought to what the crowd may think or say. Defy the crowd and ask anyway. AND... Don't forget to ask specifically for what you want, even if it seems impossible. That's the kind of faith God rewards. Verse 50 says, *"And casting aside his cloak, he jumped up, and came to Jesus."* Another passage speaks of casting aside the weight that so easily besets us. Get rid of that outer garment. Don't let ANYTHING slow you down in getting to Jesus. I love the way this story ends. It says... *"Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road"* (v. 52). There was a GREATER benefit than the physical sight he received. The REAL benefit Bartimaeus received that day was that he got to leave the side of the road and follow Jesus. He witnessed Him performing miracles and touching people's lives. He heard AND SAW Him teach the crowds who surrounded Him. Jesus performed the impossible for Bartimaeus, and Bartimaeus responded with greater love and devotion than he had ever known. God wants to make it possible for you to be a more devoted follower of Christ. Don't be afraid to ask. PRAY. PRAY. PRAY. PRAY. PRAY! If some of you with a measure of faith will take your place in front of these front seats, I'd be grateful. Pastors, church leaders, prayer warriors – I'm calling on you. We need you to come behind those with needs and pray for them. We're going to sing another Fanny Crosby song. Fanny was ministering in a prison, sharing songs and testimony. She heard a prisoner say, "Good Lord, don't pass me by." She went home that evening and wrote the hymn "Pass Me Not O Gentle Savior." In essence, that is the cry of Bartimaeus. Jesus is passing this way. "Jesus don't pass me by. Have mercy on me!" If you have a need this morning: **Ask immediately** – NOW! **Ask boldly.** We are exhorted by the Word to come boldly before the throne of grace. What a privilege! **Ask specifically!** AND keep on asking... COME!