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The story of blind Bartimeus is a bridge. It connects the bottom of the mountain with the top in Chapter 21. And it is full of contrasts and conundrums.

Our clue, our connection is in the words Jesus says to the blind beggars. *"What do you want Me to do for you?"*

That's a connection Matthew gives us and it begs us to compare incidents. You'll recall that is what He said to James and John and their mother upon their request that He do for them anything they should ask.

2 brothers with wrong motives. 2 beggars with right ones. 2 men who can see but apparently seeing is over-rated because after 3 years they haven't seen enough to figure things out, and 2 men who can't see and already have seen that this Jesus is both Lord, and Son of David, messiah.

The seeing are blind and the blind can see. It's actually quite astonishing! And when we look at it in some depth we can only surmise that the sovereignty of God is in play.

Those of us who have been around this for many years have pondered over this phenomenon. Why is it that people can go to a good gospel preaching church for years and ultimately, die, or leave, just as blind as when they got there?

In one of the conferences that I attended, Dr. R. C. Sproule shares the verse that initially brought the light of salvation to him. He was dead before the verse and alive afterwards, and to this day, even in failing

health after 60 years, is a great hero of the faith.

Here's the verse. It's in Ecclesiastes. 11:3 *If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies.*

How is a man's life changed by something as obscure as that. That's got to be the most obscure verse in the whole Bible! R. C. says he laid awake all night thinking about the tree. And the lights came on. And I can attest to what a bright light it is. But how?

Judas walked 3 years with Jesus and never did get it. He heard every word that Jesus said and his eyes saw miracles only bounded by the creation itself, and the connection never got made. And R. C. Sproule and thousands of others have pondered a single verse and an eternal light comes on and never goes off.

Jesus is traveling with a large crowd going up to Jerusalem. We don't know the number. A multitude. Jesus commonly drew crowds in the 20 thousands range. Is there 2,000 traveling with Him up to Jerusalem now? More? We don't know.

What we do know is after the crucifixion, about 120 gathered in a room. Where are the rest? Where is the multitude? How many of those traveling with Him on this day who spread palm branches in His path, were also the ones who shouted Crucify Him! Crucify Him!

Blind men know who He is. Seeing men do not. Why is that. How do we get a handle on that. If you're in the preaching business, something I never envisioned for myself, this is a phenomenon that you need to get a handle on.

How does this work? How can we understand and control how this phenomenon of belief, happens. We want some control. We need to manipulate this. We need to learn how cause works. I want control of this! I want to control this phenomenon. I want people to believe. How do I do that?

We've been here before. This is a re-visit. The answer is given by Jesus to Nicodemus. John 3:8 *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with **every one** who is born of the Spirit."*

Matthew visits this over and over for us. Sovereign God is in control of . . . eternal life. Why do some see with physical 20-20 vision and yet never see, and hear with acute hearing, and yet never really hear, and others who are blind physically can see the truth perfectly when no one else can?

Why is that? The answer is that it pleases Sovereign God for it to be that way. He is in total control. We are no more in control of ours or anyone else's eternal salvation than we are of how the rain gets distributed by the clouds or which direction a tree falls in the forest. Or where the wind is going.

Some of you will sit for years under the most careful and thoughtful exposition of the Word of God that this meager servant is capable of and leave here, ultimately, blind. Others, if it pleases God, may be helped. I pray for the latter. But, it's out of my hands.

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As long as I'm being reflective and philosophical, these verses offer another topic to stop and ponder.

All of us are in this at different levels, and we have different interests. Different depths of interest.

I'm very nuts and bolts about this book. Some of you are like, keep moving, we've stalled long enough. Sorry. I can't resist.

Because here we have a passage that is paralleled by both Mark and Luke, and the differences are enough that we need to consider them.

Matthew has 2 beggars. Mark only has one, and he has a name. He's a known quantity. Luke has one beggar but he doesn't name him.

Matthew has us leaving Jericho. Mark has us both approaching Jericho and the incident is upon departure. And Luke has the incident happening upon the approach to Jericho.

Who cares? Well, you've been hearing from this pulpit that the Word of God is innerrant. There are no errors, and yet clearly, we have a bunch of discrepancies. What do we do with that?

Let me give you a couple of possible approaches.

First, we could join along with unbelieving scholarship and say, "for goodness sakes. This was written by goat herds 2,000 years ago, years apart from each other who were in different places. It's amazing they got it that close. Why would we split hairs over whether one guy remembers they were arriving at Jericho and the other guy remembers it different?"

"It isn't important to the story. Arriving or leaving. Makes no difference. One guy remembers there were 2 guys, and the others can only remember one. So what? Are we nit picking here? The important thing is Jesus can touch someone, or two people and give them sight. There's thousands of little errors like this in the Bible."

Normally, I would argue that way. I'm not big into nits. And I have a low tolerance for nit pickky people. Rivet counters. People that tell me the Lionel coal tender has 3 less rivets than the real one had. I'm not impressed with those folks. The head bolts on the Model A should be painted the same color as the motor, not cadmium plated. I don't care.

But this is quite different. And here's why. If we open this little crack in the dike that seems so logical and sensible in how the real world does things, the dam breaks, and all the water comes out.

If we just shrug and say, of course three goat herders got the details different. So what?

Well . . . what else did they get wrong? Because, here's the thing. Our current culture is getting really really tired of the few little nut balls like me that are still saying, this book is both definitive and authoritative on important moral issues.

Every word I say here in this tiny pulpit in this tiny church, as insignificant as I am, and we are, gets posted on line.

The other day, I was curious, so I went to Advanced google search where you can type in words and then tell it, go to this web site and tell me every place those words occur. So I typed in sodomy and tonopahchurch dot org and it took microseconds for every time that has come up in this pulpit to flash onto the screen.

We're still protected by free speech. Now. But, increasingly, the conversation is over. Tolerance for people who believe this book is definitive on issues like that, or abortion, or gender assignment, and others, is wearing very thin. Folks on the so-called right side of history are out of patience with me.

People who think God is in charge of the sun spots that ultimately control periods of global warming and or cooling are no longer in the conversation. People who say, God is bigger than your so-called science, are quickly being subjugated as problem folk. Defiantly ignorant.

There's no real cost so far. Other than people looking at you like, oh, you're one of those. Or the president telling me I've got my head in the sand.

But what happens when the cost does get real. When the corporation I work for that derives my pay from the federal government decides I need to sign a paper that clearly goes against what this book says? What then?

All of a sudden, whether this book has errors, and who decides where those errors are and what is or isn't, become extremely important. The

visual of the crack in the dike and the dam breaking is apt. The idea that there are errors is untenable. Either it's all without error and we're going to die on this hill if need be, or . . . we can pick and choose.

Two times the angel who was speaking to John said, write this down. These words are faithful and true. Therefore, when we get to places like this where it would be much easier to just say, of course the goat herds who were missing teeth made little boo boo's, we're going to take the high road and say, no, actually the three accounts are without error. Just like the rest of the book.

O . . . K. So how are you going to harmonize the three seemingly different accounts? Again I'll offer a couple of approaches.

First, is the easiest. We don't know, nor will we ever know until we get to heaven and ask, why 3 tellers didn't get the details exactly the same. Our default is what the old bumper sticker said.

**God said it.
I believe it.
That settles it.**

The baseline is it's true whether we can harmonize it logically or not. There is no error. Not here. Not anywhere. Someday in heaven we'll hit the youtube instant replay and see perfectly how what seemed a problem fits perfectly. We'll have all the facts. For now, whether we have them or not, our default is . . . this book is perfect, innerrant, and **authoritative**. That's the default high view. Whether I can solve the problems or not.

And how often has some so-called study or science gone against what this book says, and then later on, something else was uncovered that showed the old book was correct and science or whatever human learning was in opposition, was wrong. Over and over we've seen that.

So, our base line is, the book is true in every word it says, whether I've got all the information to connect the dots, OR NOT. But, once that's in place, we can approach this with some very easy ways to make all of the

accounts come together.

How many of you have traveled hwy 120 from Tonopah to June Lake, or Lee Vining, or even to Mammoth? On our way we travel through Benton. Right? Two times. Benton Station and Benton proper.

A little history lesson. The original town is on hwy 120 about 3 miles after you turn off of Hwy 6. Old Benton. But then when the railroad came, it stopped at a place that got named Benton Station. 100 years went by and we dropped the "station". Now it's just Benton.

So, me and two high school buddies were in the Model A woody on our way to June lake and we approached Benton and turned right on 120 and we went up the hill and just where it tops out there and drops into the little valley we got a flat tire and stopped to fix it.

Years later all 3 of us are re-telling the adventure to our grandchildren. Glen says we approached Benton and after we left we got a flat and had to stop.

I say yeah we were on 120 past Benton and we had to stop to fix a flat.

Rich says we were on 120 and almost made it to Benton and we had to stop and fix a flat. And upon inspecting the other tires we found a second one that was low and had to pump it up too.

Who's right? We all were. But, if I hadn't prefaced my story with a bit of historic information about Benton, we would sound like we were contradicting each other.

Turns out that when these men re-counted this story, the original city of Jericho that Joshua marched the children around and the walls fell down, was no longer in use. Jericho had moved about 3 miles up the road from the ruins. Both would be called Jericho.

So Mark says we came to Jericho (old) and as we were leaving...
And Luke says we were approaching Jericho, (new)...
and Matthew says they were leaving Jericho...

It isn't difficult to harmonize all of the accounts. Much better than defaulting to goat herds who didn't remember the details properly.

What about Matthew has 2 beggars and Mark says there was one, and we know his name and his dad's name, and Luke just says there was a beggar, but he was a particular beggar.

Again we can't be dogmatic, but here's a possibility for you. Obviously there were 2 beggars. Just like the 10 lepers. How many came back? One. Maybe the reason we know the one beggar's name is because he became a brother that day, and the other one, just got eyesight and followed Jesus for a time and dropped away.

OK, some of you are squirming going, can we get out of the weeds and just move along, and others of you, I hope, have learned that the book is always right whether we can explain it plausibly, or not.

Vss. 29, 30 As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. 30And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

Son of David is a messianic title. It makes the scribes and pharisees and rulers of Israel crazy. It makes them want to kill Jesus that anyone would call Him that.

Initially, it's the demons who are shouting this. And Jesus tells them to shut up about it.

But now, as we approach Jerusalem, we'll see this title over and over. Many of the folks in the multitude who could see fine haven't seen this yet, but these blind men can see it perfectly. And so they start shouting. Crying out. Like someone lost on a desert island would cry out to a ship passing by a quarter of a mile away. Life or death shouting.

The word is krazo. It is an onomatopoeic word which means the word defines the sound. krazo! Where we live we're familiar with the constant cry of ravens. krazo krazo krazo! The word itself gives us a

picture of the event. The ranting was a torment.

31The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

This was curious to me. Why did the crowd take offense and tell the beggars to shut up? Was it the indignity of crying beggars toward someone whom they had decided they would make king?

Or was it the component of religious jews, scribes and pharisees who seem always to be surrounding the phenomenon of Jesus taking offense at the title Son of David.

Indeed, in Lukes account of the triumphal entry which is just a day away with the same group present, the religious jews order Jesus to scold his followers for just the same thing. They are shouting hosanna to the son of David and the scribes and pharisees tell Jesus to make them stop. And Jesus says if they did, the stones would cry out!

So whatever the reason, annoyance, indignity, religious belief, the crowd tells these beggars . . . SHUT-UP!! I do that often just because I really struggle with loud noises. Maybe that was it. Just a lack of forbearance.

What we can surely surmise is that this crowd counted these beggars as less than nothing. No value. No importance. Just irritating noise. Be quiet. Not so our Lord Jesus.

Jesus is marching to His death. Days away. But He has time for beggars. And He even has time for me! And you!

32And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

Sound familiar? That's what He said to James and John. They asked for something they couldn't have in order to spend it on themselves.

I couldn't help thinking of another time God said, what do you want me

to do for you. Remember it? In 2 Chronicles 1: 7 - 13

7In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you."

8Solomon said to God, "You have dealt with my father David with great lovingkindness, and have made me king in his place. 9"Now, O LORD God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. 10"Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?" 11God said to Solomon, "Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, 12wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you."

13So Solomon went from the high place which was at Gibeon, from the tent of meeting, to Jerusalem, and he reigned over Israel.

When Jesus says to you; What do you want me to do for you? What would your answer be? Because Hebrews 13:8 says; *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

If you cry out to Him, He still hears. But, if He says *What do you want me to do for you?* What will your answer be. Something noble, like Solomon? Something ignoble like James and John? The need of the moment like these beggars? Eternal life? Forgiveness for sin? Fix my marriage? Fix my job? Fix my kids?

33They said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened."

Their spiritual eyes were wide open. Somehow, we won't know this side of heaven, but somehow they understood that this Jesus who could do miracles was the Messiah of Israel. Son of David. Their ears worked fine. Maybe sight is over-rated. They believed He was Messiah.

34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

Why does Jesus have such compassion for these beggars? The answer is that sin caused this debilitating disease. God didn't design disease in the original creation. It came after the fall.

Jesus has compassion for all fallen men (and women, and even those confused about what they are.) He has compassion for all sinners. That's us.

So much compassion that He's set His face to go to Jerusalem and die for them, so that they can live. These 2 men are a micro picture of the damage of the fall. Hideous, dirty, blind beggars. Eyes that don't see. But they have big hearts inside them for God.

To the onlooking crowd, they are cast off's. Human refuse. An intolerable annoyance. To Jesus they are men broken by the fall into sin. Just exactly who He's marching up to Jerusalem to heal, by His death on a cross.

Mark's gospel says that upon restoring their sight, Jesus told them to "go their way". Go about your business. Your request is granted.

But their business was to follow Him. At least one of them, maybe both, but one of them for sure followed Him from then on. Mark presents one of these as Bartimeus as if the church would have known him well.

It happened just as I've said and one of them was Bartimeus! Whom you all know and love.

Science tells us our eyes are like a digital camera with a few billion megapixels behind the lens that form the image in front of us and send the information to our brains.

When that's broke, there's very little to be done to fix it. We have faith healers but . . . nobody has made a blind man see, lately. They're much

better at making unequal legs equal again. Stuff like that that no one can prove or disprove. Why aren't there blind people in those lines?

I guess what I'm trying to say is that some knowledge of science makes this miracle more astounding than it already was when we were ignorant. The only person in the universe that can put that broken egg back together is the one who formed us from the dust in the first place.

How did hundreds of thousands of people see these miracles and then just go on about their lives unchanged, unbelieving? That phenomenon seems almost more remarkable than the miracles!

Just days from now, some of the folks who witnessed this miracle will cry out for His blood. More astonishing than restoring vision.

And that kind of brings us full circle back to where we started, doesn't it. The only explanation for all of this is God's sovereignty. Over everything.

A few minutes ago I posed the question; If Jesus was asking you "*What do you want me to do for you?*", how would you answer. I'm going to give you what I believe is the right answer;

Lord, I want to know you intimately and personally as my Lord and Master, and I desire to spend myself, the rest of my days, advancing your Kingdom, Your agenda in this world. Satisfy my hunger to have more of You every day. Forgive my sins, known and unknown. Then use me somehow for your purposes. Like these beggars, I want to follow You.