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The Restoring Christ

Reflections The Person and Work of Christ 1 April 2017

Mark 10:46-52

Isaiah 55:6

2 Corinthians 4:4

Luke 18:43

Mark 10:52

A Christian priest and a socialist were sitting on a park bench one evening. A poor, drunken beggar walked by, dressed in rags. The socialist pointed to the beggar and said, "Socialism would put a new coat on that man!" To which the priest responded confidently, "Maybe so, but Jesus Christ can put a new man in that coat." Such is the restoring power of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will, today, meditate on the theme 'The Restoring Christ'. In my last reflection, we deliberated on how Christ liberates us by His grace. The end result of His liberation is the transformation, or restoration, of humankind to a state acceptable to Jesus.

Have you ever been in total darkness? Have you any idea how dark it can be when not even a single ray of light is visible? I experienced it last year, in a restaurant in Hyderabad called Taste of Darkness, for about an hour. They make you leave everything that may generate or reflect light — your watch, your keys, your mobile telephone — in a locker, make a choice from the menu, and then lead you into total darkness. You are guided by people who are themselves blind. One of the thoughts that occurred to me, while struggling with my plate of food, was of the event narrated in the Gospel concerning Bartimaeus.

You see, the choice of the time of our restoration is not ours. The only time we can come to the Lord is while He is calling us to come to Him — when we feel that pressure upon our hearts, when we know we are lost and headed in the wrong direction, and want to change. Then is the time to come to the Lord. To delay may mean that we shall never get a second opportunity to be restored. Isaiah's counsel remains good today:

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." — Isaiah 55:6 (KJV)

That is exactly what most fail to do. But it is exactly what Bartimaeus did, and that is why I want to describe him as the blind man with a

twenty-twenty vision.

If you want to think about the life that Jesus is granting you, walk through this account of Bartimaeus and see how life changed for him. Bartimaeus was most probably born blind; he was a beggar, prevented from finding or performing any work by which to earn a living, and there were no charities or government programmes to which he might turn. He was wholly dependent upon the generosity of others for his survival. Bartimaeus is a good portrait of every person who has yet to accept Jesus, and who is lost to sin. A lost person is spiritually blind (2 Corinthians 4:4) — blind to their condition, to their sin, and to their impending eternal doom. Only Jesus can open their eyes and restore them. The lost person is also a spiritual beggar: they can do nothing, and have nothing within themselves that could produce salvation. It is as if they simply sit begging as Jesus passes by, wholly oblivious of Him.

Bartimaeus must have heard about Jesus, and known what Jesus had done for others, and believed He could do the same for him. That he called Jesus the Son of David shows that he recognised and accepted Jesus as the Messiah. His faith in Jesus as the Messiah brought about his healing — his restoration. This is the first step in coming to Jesus for our own restoration. Besides this, the poor blind man saw things that most of the people in that multitude never saw — indeed, things that many of us have never seen. Some things we need to see today.

He saw that his greatest opportunity had come, and relentlessly sought after Jesus to restore him. Though blind, he was able to seize the opportunity when it stared him in the face. When we do some serious self-examination, we shall realise how many such opportunities we have let pass us by. Every lost person needs to understand that Jesus Christ loves them so much that He died on the Cross to save them, and that He will do just that today, if only they will come to Him. He will not, however, force Himself into our lives; therefore the challenge before us today is to obey that call. If we refuse, this golden opportunity will certainly pass us by. Bartimaeus also saw that Christ's way was far better than his own: after he had received healing from the Lord, he was told to "go his way", but he preferred to follow Jesus, and, according to Luke 18:43, praised the name of the Lord as he followed Him along the way.

In the background of this incident, we see that our Lord was on the final leg of His journey towards the Cross. He is entering Jerusalem, knowing that crucifixion awaits Him. The disciples and other followers were astonished and afraid; nevertheless He proceeds purposefully, though it means walking into danger, persecution and suffering. In the midst of

all this, He is ready to shower His blessing upon a poor, blind beggar.

As I read the account of Bartimaeus again and again, I sometimes wonder how many other people who were there cried out to Jesus for help. We may also wonder how many perishing souls there are today who are still not calling upon Jesus for mercy. How much of that spiritual breath do people still have left in them? Or are we perhaps so busy, so excited, so caught up in being followers of Jesus that we are, much like the crowd around Jesus on the road at Jericho, telling such people to be quiet?

It is said that there is none so blind as he who will not see, or who refuses to see. I suppose you will agree that there are many people walking about in this world today whose eyes work perfectly well, and yet who cannot seem to see that the way they are living will eventually lead them into eternal damnation. If there is anyone reading this who still walks in that darkness, they are invited to come to Jesus, Who alone can lead them out of their darkness into His glorious light, and receive complete restoration.

Bartimaeus trusted Jesus to heal him. Hear what Jesus said to him:

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."
— Mark 10:52 (KJV)

Bartimaeus received far more than physical healing that day; he received spiritual healing also. This is what happens when the lost person responds to the Gospel of grace: immediately, as faith is exercised, the power of Jesus moves into that person's life, and He saves that person completely and eternally. May we have the insight to make a serious self-examination in our quiet times, and to establish a right relationship with Jesus, our spiritual vision fully restored. Amen.

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