

What Do You Want Me To Do For You?

Go along with me on this: Suppose Jesus really was who He said He was; suppose He could do what He say He could do.

--He is described as a kind, loving, welcoming sort of person...likeable.

--He was an amazing teacher—interesting and challenging

--He could perform all sorts of miracles—calm storms, heal the sick, even bring dead people back to life.

--He is said to be God come to us in a human form.

Let's suppose all that is true.

Let's say He came to you today and said, "*What can I do for you? What would you like for me to do for you?*" Suppose He told you to make a list—what would be on your list? Let's just say you could name 5 things you would want if Jesus said, "What do you want me to do for you?" How long would it take you to put your list together? Come on! Let's get going! What's on your list. "Genie Jesus" is going to give you 3 wishes...rub your lamp and get whatever you want.

Got it? Have you at least got a good start on it? Good...now cut it in half. I know, I know, you've got some good stuff there...some important things you would want. But now take that list and cut it in half.

Now cut it again. In fact, let's say you only get one request—just one thing—what would your one thing be? This just got a lot harder.

Now let's turn it a little bit: Let's suppose Jesus asked you, "What do you want me to do for you?" and you said, "I can't decide. There are so many things I want; why don't You choose? You pick, and I'll be happy." What would Jesus choose for you?

I want to take you to a time when Jesus asked a man that very question: *What do you want me to do for you?* He did. Jesus opened the treasure chest of everything He had, anything He could do: The man could have anything! My mind is flooded with questions:

--Who is this guy?

--Why would Jesus say that to him? Why him?

--What did he ask for?

--Did Jesus come through for him?

A guy named Luke tells the story this way, **Luke chapter 18, ³⁵ As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.**

There were a lot of beggars in those days. There was no government welfare program, and health care was nearly nonexistent; anyone with a serious disability was left to fend for themselves.

But I will tell you something about beggars: They are pretty savvy—they are now, and they were then.

- They know where to set up shop;
- they know the best corner to work;
- and what time of day to work it.
- They have an uncanny ability to identify a mark.

They pick a place with lots of traffic; and ideally a place where people with money are passing by; better yet, people with a propensity to share might be passing. A place like the city gate...on the main drag...at a place people would pass on their way to a big religious festival. You see, it was time for the Passover—the largest Jewish festival of the year—and all the Jews travelling from the north and east came through this gate on their way to Jerusalem.

That's where Bartimaeus set up shop. (Mark's tells the story, too, and gives us the man's name.) For Bart, it was another day at the office. He hoped to beg enough to have a meal. Put yourself in his place for a moment: Close your eyes—Really! Not just to visualize the situation—close your eyes because he was blind! Imagine life like that...all the time...every day, all day. He's poor. He can't hold a real job. He's poor, his clothes are old...ratty; his hair is scraggly, he needs a bath. Not a very appealing first impression. Little did he know the difference this day would make.

³⁵ As Jesus approached Jericho—best I can tell, Jesus only passed through Jericho 2, maybe 3 times in His ministry, **a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.** Blind Bart sitting...begging.

³⁶ When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. **³⁷ They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”** Here's the first thing I notice: *The crowd around Jesus attracted his attention to Jesus.* That's interesting to me. If it hadn't been for the crowd around Jesus, Bart would have never known Jesus was nearby. It's still true today: It's the people around Jesus that attract people to Jesus.

- It's the way they live
- It's what they say

Think about your own experience: Why are you here right now? It's the crowd. And what is the centerpiece of this moment? Jesus.

Bart noticed there was something different, something unusual. “What's going on?” And the people in the crowd told him about Jesus.

Isn't that interesting?

Blind Bart picked up on that: ³⁸ **He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"** What I notice here is that Bart already knew something about Jesus. He cries out, **"Jesus, Son of David!"** He had heard about Jesus. He knew enough to tag on "Son of David."

I think this is a shrewd move on his part: He was not the only beggar there that day. But he may have been the smartest one. How do you catch Jesus' attention? You say what no one else is saying! You say what you hope will catch His ear...draw His attention your way. As soon as the people told him it was Jesus of Nazareth, Blind Bart began to connect the dots: I have heard this man is a miracle worker. I hear He is a great teacher who influences a lot of other people. I hear He might be Messiah. Messiah...comes from the lineage of King David—He could become king! **Jesus, Son of David!**

Have mercy on me! Do something to help me! Feel sorry for me. Minimally can I have a handout...a few coins. But what I'd really like...if you are who they say you are...

³⁹ **Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet**—now here's a twist: Those around Jesus attracted him to Jesus; and now those around Jesus are actually trying to keep him away from Jesus! It's sad but that happens: Maybe you've had that experience. You went to church, but it was clear they didn't want you in their club. Sometimes it's those closest to Jesus that feel the responsibility to protect Jesus from people like Blind Bart. If you are in that crowd around Jesus, pay attention to what happens here. Don't block the way for those who want to see Jesus.

³⁹ **Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"** Good for Bart! *He wasn't going to sit there and let this opportunity pass him by.* Listen, Bart wasn't interested in Jesus; Bart was interested in Bart! Bart loved himself some Bart! Anyone who cries out to Jesus, every one of us who have cried out to Jesus, did it because of what Jesus can do for me. That's where it starts for all of us.

There was some level of understanding; there was some level of faith that caused him to cry out; that added, "You are the Son of David...Messiah...King-to-come." He had some level of faith that Jesus could do for him what no one else could.

But what got Jesus' attention was he didn't just sit there. He did something. He made an overture; he said, "I want what you've got."

But then what happened? ⁴⁰ **Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him,** ⁴¹ **“What do you want me to do for you?”** There it is. There’s the question: *What do you want?*

--“A hamburger and fries would be nice”

--“Could you set me up with a date with the cute girl who runs the hamburger stand?”

--“How about an umbrella to block the sun while I sit out here and beg?”

What do you want? You are here...now... What do you want?

--Got some bills you’d like some help with? --Want help with your marriage?

--Got some pain you want to manage? --Maybe it’s your kids?

--Want to jump start a stalled career? --A reason to keep going?

--Bart said, **“Lord, I want to see.”** That was his deepest felt need. He took his shot. He made his ask.

⁴² **Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.”**

⁴³ **Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.** Jesus answered his prayer. Blind Bart became...Bart, the Jesus follower. He joined the crowd around Jesus. Here’s what I notice: *Bart got what he wanted; and Jesus got what He wanted, too.* Which is bigger? Bart received sight; and Jesus got a Bart.

But what if this is not Bart’s story; it’s yours.

--It began as an ordinary day. Dealing with life as best you can, but life is hard... painful...shameful. Just another day like all the one’s before...

--Then the crowd came...and attracted you to Jesus.

--You already knew a little bit about Jesus; it’s not like you had never heard of Him.

--Now what happens when your need has the opportunity to meet Jesus’ power?

--Do you sit still?

--Or do you act?

It’s up to you.

--**What do you want me to do for you?** I’m not trying to slight Bart’s request; but he could have asked for something bigger. Bigger than sight? Yes, and bigger than release; bigger than a restored relationship; bigger than a few bucks; or a physical healing. That’s not to say Jesus can’t or Jesus won’t answer prayers like that. It is only to say if you have one shot, make it count!

Jesus, I believe You are who You say You are. I want a whole lot more of life than I’ve had so far! I want peace within and peace with those I’ve estranged. I want to live without guilt; without shame. I want a better life that starts now and goes right through death like tissue paper! I want to live my life without fear of anything that might happen here; without fear of death; and without fear of meeting my Maker. I want what only You can give. I want what I need the most. Help me sort through the lesser things that beg for my attention and ask for the one thing that is most important.

--There is one more thing I want to point out: This is the last time Jesus would ever pass through Jericho. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem where He will be killed. It wasn't like He didn't know what was coming. He knew...He had planned it. Yes, he planned His own execution. Remember I started with suppose Jesus is God come as a person. That's true. He came because we have messed up. And we can't fix the mess. The Bible calls it sin.

--It blocks the way to having a great relationship with our God,

--It blocks the way to Heaven,

--It keeps us living in the stench of the mess we've made.

The only way we can be fixed would be if Jesus would give His life to die on a cross so that the penalty for what you and I have done and be forever paid in full. It's going to be a horrific death. But there's good news: He will rise from the grave, alive! If we believe Him and trust Him, we can have that better life.

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem; but He won't be back through Jericho. This is the last time Bart will have the opportunity to meet Jesus.

My point is, for every one of us there is a last chance. We don't know when it will be. It almost always comes disguised in the ordinary. But when it is gone...it's gone for good.

Bart got his sight. He followed Jesus. His miracle convinced him Jesus was everything He claimed to be. And the crowd couldn't help but give God the credit for the change they witnessed in Bart's life.

So, what will do you? Sit and watch; or act. You know a little about Jesus; do you know enough to let that little bit you know spark a faith that believes what you know is true? Will you let that belief become trust? Will you sit...afraid? Or will you respond? The question is "What do you want?"

In a moment the band will come and lead us in some music. Counselors are prepared to meet with you and talk with you about what Jesus can do for you. While everyone is standing, don't stay; act—move to one of the counselors. They are eager to listen and coach you into a life changing relationship with Jesus. Those who have already made this decision will be singing...and praying...praying hard for you. And this same Jesus who met Bart will be asking, "What do you want me to do for you?" Let's start there. We will pray; we will stand; we will sing; you step out and come.