LESSON *eight*

THE RANSOM

Mark 10:1–52

GETTING STARTED

When is a time that God revealed something to you in a dramatic and profound way? How did that event change your understanding of Him?

SETTING THE STAGE

Jesus and His disciples were headed toward Jerusalem and the crucifixion. Jesus was out in front, leading His disciples, teaching by example. He was helping them understand what leadership was all about. The disciples were amazed and afraid.

Perhaps this was because He was speaking to them more solemnly than usual. Or maybe because His gait seemed more steady and determined than usual. Luke writes that "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51; see also Isaiah 50:7). Whatever the case, the disciples knew something was up . . . and they were filled with anxiety. They were following Jesus, knowing that something foreboding lay ahead of them.

Jesus does little to calm His disciples' anxiety. In fact, He intensifies it with His brutal honesty. This wasn't the first time Jesus predicted His death. He had talked about it on two previous occasions (see Mark 8:31–33; 9:30–32). Both times, however, His disciples had misunderstood his words. They thought He was talking about establishing an earthly kingdom. They thought He was predicting Israel's return to power and the end of bondage to Rome.

This time, however, Jesus left no room for misunderstanding. He explained to them that shortly He would be suffering at the hands of His enemies. He told them that He was going to offer Himself as a sacrifice. He was not going to do any political maneuvering. He was going to give His very life as a ransom for many.

Lest anyone mistake what Jesus was saying, he offered specific details. He told His disciples His death would occur in Jerusalem. He identified the chief priests and scribes as the ones who would condemn Him to death. He used legal terms to indicate that He would be tried and executed within the criminal justice system. And He left His disciples feeling stunned.

Exploring the Text

Marriage and Divorce (Mark 10:1–12)

[1] Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again.

[2] The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" testing Him.

3 And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?"

4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her."

5 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. 6 But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

10 In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. 11 So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12 And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

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1. King Herod had previously put John the Baptist to death because John had denounced the king's marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife (see Mark 6:17–18). What might the Pharisees have been trying to do by asking Jesus this question on divorce (see Mark 10:2)?

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2. What did Jesus reveal were the differences between the Pharisees' views of divorce and God's view on the matter (see verses 4–9)?

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The Rich and the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:17–31)

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt
before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I
may inherit eternal life?"

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is
good but One, that is, God. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not
commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false
witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things
I have kept from my youth."

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One
thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the
poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the
cross, and follow Me."

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he
had great possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard
it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And
the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered
again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust
in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to
go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the
kingdom of God."

26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves,
"Who then can be saved?"

27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible,
but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

28 Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and
followed You."

29 So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is
no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother
or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, 30 who shall

not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. [31] But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

3. How did Jesus respond to the rich young man? What were His specific instructions (see verse 21)?

4. Why do you think it was so difficult for the rich young man to move from trusting wealth to trusting Christ (see verses 22–25)?

Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time (Mark 10:32–45)

[32] Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: [33] "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; [34] and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him,
saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask."
36 And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"
37 They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right
hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."
38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are
you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the
baptism that I am baptized with?"
39 They said to Him, "We are able."
So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink,
and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; 40 but
to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is
for those for whom it is prepared."
41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased
with James and John. 42 But Jesus called them to Himself and said
to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the
Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority
over them. 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires
to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 And whoever
of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of
Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a
ransom for many."

5. Look back at Mark 9:33–37. Why were the other disciples upset with James and John? Why do you think Jesus kept having to address this issue?

6. Why does Jesus expect His followers to have servants' hearts (see Mark 10:42–45)? What does Paul indicate in Philippians 2:5–8 about the attitude of a servant?

Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52)

46 Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. 47 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!"

48 Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

49 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."

50 And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.

51 So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."

52 Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

7. There are stories throughout the Gospels of people helping the sick and disabled get to Jesus. How is the story of Bartimaeus different from those other stories (see verse 48)?

8. Read John 9:1–3. How did Jesus' attitude and actions toward Bartimaeus contradict the prevailing thought about sin and punishment?

Reviewing the Story

Once again the Pharisees had tried to catch Jesus in a theological trap, this time with a question about divorce. As before, Jesus exposed the wrong thinking behind their question. He welcomed children into His presence and upbraided a rich young man—two things that were unusual in first-century Jewish culture. He also spoke explicitly to His disciples about what was about to transpire in Jerusalem. The news shook Jesus' disciples momentarily, but an argument about which of them was the greatest soon distracted them. Jesus intervened in their dispute and then restored sight to a man named Bartimaeus.

9. The Pharisees approached the issue of divorce from a legal perspective—they wanted to determine what a person *could* and *couldn't* do. How was Jesus' approach different (see Mark 10:5–9)?

10. Why would it be considered a "wise investment" for a person to surrender his or her life to Christ (see Mark 10:29–30)?

11. Given Jesus' statements to the disciples in Mark 10:33–34, why should you be surprised by the requests James and John made to Jesus (see verses 35–37)?

12. Put yourself in Bartimaeus's place. You are suddenly able to see, and the first thing your eyes focus on is the face of Jesus. How would you describe your emotions in this moment?

Applying the Message

13. Jesus never walked around trouble. He set a course straight for the heart of controversy and confrontation. What are the implications of this mindset for those who follow Him?

14. What can you do to serve someone else this week? If Jesus asked, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51), what would you say?

Reflecting on the Meaning

As Jesus was approaching the city of Jericho, he was met by a blind man named Bartimaeus, who cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47). As we look at this story, we need to remember that Bartimaeus serves as an illustration of what it means to come to faith in

Christ. If we, like Bartimaeus, are to receive *spiritual* sight and have our blindness removed, we must take the same steps as he took.

First, we need to *acknowledge our condition.* In 2 Corinthians 4:3–4, Paul writes that Satan has "blinded [those] who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." Bartimaeus knew his greatest need was not money or housing—as important as those things might have been. What he needed most was *eyesight,* for he was blind (and had probably been so since birth). In the same way, we need to acknowledge our condition: we all suffer from spiritual blindness.

Second, we need to *accept the truth about Christ.* Bartimaeus had never met Jesus, and he had certainly never seen Him. Yet he believed what the people were saying about Christ. He believed He was the Son of David, the Messiah, and he believed the reports he had heard about the miracles Jesus had done. Once we acknowledge we are blind, we must likewise accept the truth about Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Third, we need to *act on the truth we have received.* In Romans 10:13, Paul writes that "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." When Bartimaeus heard the command from Jesus to rise, he believed he could stand up . . . and he did. And when Jesus commanded Bartimaeus to go his way, he began to walk in obedience. In all this, Bartimaeus demonstrated his faith by his obedience. Our faith must likewise be demonstrated in our action. We come to Jesus by an act of our will and, in repentance, we seek His healing and forgiveness.

Finally, we need to *affirm our faith by following Christ.* Jesus had previously said to His disciples, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up His cross and follow Me" (Mark 8:34). After Bartimaeus received the healing he had requested, he did not return to his house but began following Jesus from that day forward. "And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road" (10:52). If we are born again—if we have truly been saved from our sin—there should be evidence we are following the Lord!

Journaling Your Response

What evidence can others see in your life that you are following after the Lord?