

# Following Jesus

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Prof J.Douglas Macmillan

[ 0 : 00 ] Let us turn together this evening for a little while to the portion of God's Word in which we read the Gospel according to Mark chapter 10, verse 52.

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.

And we shall send our attention especially upon these words, he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.

Let the words bring us face to face. The man whose life was touched and transfigured by the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

The illest for us is a very central thing in the Gospel of Christ as it touches sinful, needy man.

[ 1 : 21 ] They show us how God can enlighten the mind and transform and change the life and give it a new direction and a new purpose.

This evening, after having in the providence of God been out of this pulpit for two Sabbaths, I want to take these words and by the grace and help of God use them in a very simple way to set before us all again to set before us all again the wonderful power and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The power and the grace of the Gospel to help people like you, yourself, and me, myself.

And because of a sore back and sore leg, the sermon will probably be a lot shorter than the sermons of an hour.

Four things from the word. Four headings, if you like, are shaped to your sermon and I must confess I do. Four headings. Simple, straightforward, I hope they'll help you to remember some of the lessons of this very wonderful text.

[ 3 : 03 ] He received his sight. And followed Jesus in the way. We look at the four things and I'll do something I don't often do.

I'll give you the headings of the sermon before the sermon itself. First of all, we look at how these words point us to Bartimaeus and the deliverance he experienced.

The deliverance he experienced. And then we'll look at the decision that he was involved in. And then sadly at the direction he took.

And lastly at the destination he had. So there are four easy headings for you and we'll sign and keep to them. The deliverance he experienced.

The decision that he was involved in. The direction that his life was given. And the destination that he had in following Jesus. I believe that our text shows us the very essence of what real salvation is.

[ 4 : 15 ] Brings us face to face with the very nub of real Christian experience. What is it to be a Christian?

Well it's to be very like Bartimaeus. It's to receive your sight. And it's to follow Jesus in the way. Just think then of the deliverance of Bartimaeus experienced. Bartimaeus was blind. And I don't know that there is anything.

Any affliction. Any bodily affliction. That would be quite so difficult to live with.

As the affliction of blindness. You know what the Apostle Paul says when he's writing his second letter to the church at Corinth? He says that those who are not saved are affected with a spiritual or a mental blindness.

[ 5 : 42 ] This is what he says. This our gospel he says be hid. It is hid to them that are lost. If you don't understand the gospel.

And have never seen the gospel where salvation. You're lost. The gospel is hidden to you. And while this gospel remains hidden. Man, woman, boy or girl.

You remain lost too. That's what he says when he speaks with God. Our gospel is hid. It's hid to them that are lost. In whom the God of this world.

That's not the God of eternity. It's the God of this world. It is hid. In whom the God of this world. Hath blinded the mind.

Of them that believe not. For a blinded. And the blindness of Bartimaeus. The eyes that couldn't see.

[ 6 : 46 ] The blindness of Bartimaeus. Spoke of a deeper blindness that was in his mind and in his heart. And that was in the mind and heart of every person as they are born into this world.

That spiritual, intellectual, heart, mind blindness. Of which Paul speaks there in 2 Corinthians chapter 4.

And into this blindness came Jesus. And he spoke a word of power.

That meant the cry of this man's heart. He said to Bartimaeus. You notice that? What would you? What do you really want me to do for you?

What do you want me to give you? And Bartimaeus said it very simply. We are allowed to give our spiritual needs very simply to the Lord.

[ 7 : 51 ] Oh Lord he said that I might receive my sight. Jesus answered his cry. And he opened his eyes.

And I believe he opened his mind and opened his heart as well. Go away he said. Your faith has saved you.

Go your way. And we'll notice in a minute how Bartimaeus refused that. And said no Lord I'll go your way. Not my way but your way.

With I wish thy faith has made you whole. Is our authorised version. Translation. But in the Greek behind it. And in the translation of the Greek into Gaelic.

You get it. More forcibly. Your faith has saved you. There was not just an outward physical miracle. There was an inward spiritual miracle.

[ 8 : 56 ] And the blindness was taken away not only from the eyes of Bartimaeus. But from the mind and heart of Bartimaeus. That's conversion. Jesus opened this man's mind and heart.

And he saw wonderful things. And I always think of this. The moment his eyes were opened. He saw Jesus of Nazareth. And at the same moment his soul was opened. Or his mind was opened. And he saw more than Jesus of Nazareth. He saw the loveliness.

Of the Son of God as a Saviour. How precious the Lord Jesus is to the Christian believer. Isn't he? He's the Pharaoh of ten thousands.

The deliverance that he experienced. And it speaks to us of the deliverance that every Christian here has experienced.

[ 10 : 00 ] Deliverance from blindness. Not of our physical nature but of our spiritual nature. He received his sight.

Let me ask you my friend. Is this true of you yet in the spiritual sense? Have you received your sight? Do you know until that moment Bartimaeus never knew how poor he really was.

It was when his eyes were opened. Where he saw the rags that he lived in. Did you ever think of that? He never knew how rugged he is.

And how dirty. And how helpless. How awful he was in the eyes of others. Until his eyes were opened to see for himself.

There's a deliverance. A deliverance from what? A deliverance from a blind view of self. And every sinner needs to be delivered from that.

[ 11 : 07 ] Oh we think we're fine. And we, this is this tragedy. We're in danger of going on thinking that we're fine. Until we arrive in the light of God's judgment throne.

Until our eyes are open. And we see the rags of our own righteousness. This is one of the things that happens when the Holy Spirit opened your eyes, isn't it?

You saw the things you had been so proud of. The righteousness that you've been putting onto yourself and covering yourself with every day of life.

Perhaps it was touch going. Perhaps it was the very opposite. Perhaps it was the pride of not going to touch me. I'm good enough as I am. You were on these rags of your own righteousness every day of your life.

And you never really were able to look at them and see what they were like. And then Jesus opened your eyes. And you said, what filthy, raggedy garments to be clothed in.

[12:17] You were delivered through ignorance. So was Bartimaeus. And he was delivered from complete dependence upon others. Bartimaeus could only live as others led him out to where?

To a place where he could walk, no. To a place where he could beg. To a place where he could take up the lowest station of life. The most despised station of all.

And he never really saw himself as a beggar. Until Jesus opened his eyes. And you and I, the last thing we want to do is see ourselves as beggars.

But we are. When it comes to the spiritual wealth and spiritual riches. And the coinage of heaven. What do we have of our own nothing?

We have a beggar. Bartimaeus had to live on the light of others. He had to depend upon others taking him to the very place where he could beg.

[13:27] And we know there are multitudes today who are depending not upon the light which seems some kind. But upon the light, the dim light of others.

Why should I be different from others? All this preaching. All this gospel that we get from the pulpit in St. Vincent's Creed and wherever we go.

And the gospel is preached. It's calling me to be different. It's calling me to be very radical. Why should I be different from others? They get on fine in life.

And so we depend on and we live in the light of other people who want to do. We deliver from him. Bartimaeus born. These two thought, under our first heading, the deliverance that Bartimaeus experienced.

Go on now to our second head. The decision that Bartimaeus was involved in. When his eyes were opened. He was faced with this decision.

[14:34] What was he to do? Would he continue to sit on the roadside out? On the road out of Jericho?

Would he continue to be a beggar? Or would the fact that he could now see, would that mean that he would do something else?

And he was involved in decision. And in a decision that only he could make. And although our theology is very skeptical about decisionism.

And although we're afraid of the preaching that calls only for a mental decision. Let's be fair. Let's be fair to scripture and to our own theology too.

When God opens our minds and opens our eyes to see our condition and our need. We are faced with decisions. And it is the power of God coming in.

[15:39] And it is the grace of God enlightening our minds and renewing our hearts that enables us to make the right decision. Once we've seen ourselves as beggars and our dependence.

Once we've delivered from our ignorance and we see Jesus. Can we really continue to live? As a beggar?

As a beggar? I said the first thing Bartimaeus saw when his eyes were opened. Was Jesus the Son of God.

That's what made him take the decision. He did take. He looked at Jesus on the very look at the power. He looked at Jesus on the very end.

He looked at the power of God. He looked at the power of God. To follow this Jesus. Your mental decision is involved too. God asks you. To decide whose you are and whom you stand.

[16:50] God asks you to take the right way. And to forsake the way of death. God does. He does that in every age.

He does it in every gospel sermon you hear. If it's a real gospel sermon. He calls on you to decide. Choose ye this day.

He said through Joshua home. Choose ye this day whom you will serve. God be God. Serve him. My friend I would ask you tonight too. To make your choice. Who is it going to be? Is it going to be God? Or is it going to be the rags of your own righteousness?

And the spiritual poverty. Of a beggary that you don't really understand. Is it? Or is it going to be the unsearchable riches of Christ?

[17:57] Decision is involved. And Spartamius' decision to follow Jesus must have involved a lot of things. Let me just tabulate some of them.

Probably it involved a severing of family ties. He was the blind son of a blind father. Bar-temias. Temias means one who is blind. Bar means son-o. He was the blind son of a blind father. He had family relationship.

Probably it was one of his own family that took him out there. To his begging position. And family ties are to be cut.

And Jesus, when our decision to follow him or not is involved, says, Family ties must not come between. Father or mother or brother or sister or husband or wife must not come between our soul under the demand of the gospel upon us.

[ 19 : 05 ] For except a man forsake father and mother and except a man forsake, that is, unless a man ceases to put these ties first.

He doesn't mean to say that everybody is going to be a Christian and have to run away from home. Of course he doesn't. What he's saying is these ties must have a secondary place.

And they took a secondary place for bar-temias where he said, I'll follow Jesus. He had this to overcome too, that he could see his loved ones for the first time.

The voices he knew and the hands that he had touched. He could see the people they belonged to. That must be a wonderful thing. To be able to look on people you know for the first time.

But he didn't let that come between them. And even the world around him. This place with which he was so familiar and yet which he had never really seen.

[ 20 : 09 ] He had never really seen the wonder of the sun in the sky. He had never seen the town to which he belonged, Jericho. He had never really seen the curves and the dams and the road that he backed by.

He had never even seen the flowers that grew by the wayside. And these things must have been drawing his eyes. Of course they must have been.

And my friend, there's much in this world to distract you from the claims of the gospel. Oh, how often it happens. We go out to the service. Our heart has been impressed and our mind has been made to feel and we say, yes, Lord, I'll have to do something.

Perhaps we say, I'll go home and go down my knees and I'll ask Christ to make his will for me. And then, before we're home, the world has come back in.

And other things have attracted our attention. And once again, we'll put in it all under our feet. Oh, my friend, be careful. You'll do that for the last time.

[ 21 : 16 ] Sometimes a lot. He didn't allow all these new vivid impressions of the world to come between him and Jesus.

He made his decision. Follow Jesus. Follow Jesus. You know, that's the Christian life. Theologians spend all books in writing and defining what the Christian life is.

I've just spent some days through the past four nights reading some of these theological books.

Definitions of the Christian life. Before you finish reading the definitions, you don't know where they began and where they're going.

What is the Christian life? It's to follow Jesus. It's not to be a free church member. Although if you're following Jesus, I hope you will be a free church member.

It's not to be a Baptist or a pedo-baptist. It's not to be a free church member. It's to follow Jesus.

That's the essence of the Christian life.

[ 22 : 37 ] And to follow Jesus will take decision. It will take determination. It will take all that you are as a person.

Ah, my friend, and it will take far more. It will take the grace and the power of Almighty God to change you day by day to follow Jesus.

Just look back through that chapter. Just think of the things he was saying to his disciples. Oh, my, how blind they were, too. Did you notice that? He said, I'm going up to Jerusalem to be delivered to the chief priests.

The Son of Man shall be delivered to the chief priests, to the scribes, and they shall condemn him.

And you'll come under that condemnation, too. You'll know the sneer of the world and sometimes even know the sneer of religion at you if you're a Christian.

They shall deliver him to the Gentiles. They shall mock him and shall scourge him and shall spit on him. Have you ever been spat on in the faith because you're following Jesus?

[ 23 : 43 ] Have you? I was reading in these days, too, about men who took a stand for Christ in this city.

Simple man, but men whose lives were radiant with Jesus and who go out onto the streets there and I was reading about one. He knew what it was to have people spit in his face that he preached and that he all spoke of a century ago.

How often have somebody spat in your face? Ah, they won't spit in their faces because we temper, don't we? We temper our witness for Jesus.

We won't be offensive and we will attract them by the loveliness of our Christian lives. I wonder if we've turned the whole thing inside out.

If we offend them, they'll never think of Christianity again. Well, Jesus wasn't afraid to preach the offense of the cross to his disciples, was he?

[ 24 : 48 ] He wasn't. And yet they were blind to it. You know what they started arguing about then? Who'll be the greatest and who'll sit in the right hand and who'll sit in the left?

How much they are to wear them, too. The decision that Bartimaeus made and the direction he took.

There's only one direction you can take. If you follow Jesus and that's the direction that Jesus is going in. Where is he going?

Where is he leading when you and I follow him? I go to my Father. Can I put it like this? That Jesus is walking into the center of God's throne and of God's heart.

There, my friend, is where Jesus leads. And he leads there through many difficulties, many trials, I understand that the road from Jericho to Jerusalem in these days was a very hilly and a very twisty road.

[ 26 : 08 ] I understand that it was famous, famous for a place where bandits lay. To go from Jericho to Jerusalem was to take your life in your hands.

Just on a human level. Remember the story of the good Samaritan? He got beaten up on that same road. Was left for dead. And the Christian pathway is not an easy way.

God help us. Our preaching through this century in Scotland has fallen into a grave error, I think. It has attempted to make the Christian way an easy way.

It's not. It's the hill road from Jericho to Jerusalem. It's through sweat and tears and trials and gethsemanes that Jesus will lead.

Of course it is. Some through the fire, some through the blood, some through the blood, some through the blood, some through the blood.

[ 27 : 22 ] God leads his children along. There's only one thing that could have kept Bartimaeus walking on that road.

And that's the one thing that will keep you and keep me walking on it too. And that is that we're following Jesus. And to follow is much easier than to lead.

All I have to do is plant my footsteps where his have been before. And my friend, I don't care how far down you may go in the experience of life.

You'll always find that Jesus has been there before. And he doesn't ask you to put your footsteps but in our place where his own has been before.

He was made like unto his brethren in all things. Do you know what it is to know sorrow and loneliness? Jesus says to you tonight, Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me.

[ 28 : 37 ] Loneliness, and some of you here know what it is to be lonely in your own home. Then look to Jesus too. And they all forsook him and fled.

and he was left alone. And he knew a loneliness that you and I if we trust him shall never know because he stood in the place of ultimate loneliness when he said, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken?

The direction he took following Jesus and finally the destination that he had. Where was he going? He was going up, my friend, to the city of God. He was going up to the city which is beautiful for situation. Zion, city of our God.

He was going up to the place that God had chosen, in which God had chosen to dwell in the midst of his people, Jerusalem. He was going up to the place where in every age had spoken to God's people of the new Jerusalem.

[ 30 : 02 ] And I think that in his heart as he went, I think there was the sound of a Psalm of David in the heart of Bartimaeus as he followed Jesus on the road to Jerusalem.

I think he was singing this song in his soul. My joy went to the house of God, go up, they said to me. And even if he did see his master in Gethsemane, Gethsemane, and even if he did see his master taken and scorned and spat upon, mutilated and crucified, and dead and buried, as he followed Jesus through these experiences, he followed them to the experience of resurrection glory too.

And I'm sure that he was one of those who the disciples said, the Lord has written in Jesus.  
On the first tonight, to follow Jesus through good report and through will, will you follow him?  
He received his science, and my friend, because he received his sight, he couldn't do anything else.  
He had to follow Jesus. Let your mind and your heart be opened by God and you follow him too.  
[ 31 : 47 ] Let's pray. O gracious God, enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Jesus and warm our hearts toward him and give us that impulse, that grace, that renewal that will link our lives with his life and that will take us journeying along his way, the highway of the redeemed, the highway of the Lord in which the redeemed walk.

O Lord, set our feet on it tonight. And no matter how little our understanding, no matter how small our vision, O God, if we have a glimpse at all of Jesus and his power of his way, set our feet tonight following him.

And may we as we follow him and journey with him finally arrive at Jerusalem, the city of God, in that place where we shall see him and be like him because we see him as he is.  
in that place where there is no more death, nor crying, nor sorrow, nor darkness, where there is no need to the light of the sun or of a candle because the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, is the light thereof.  
O Lord, hear us and answer us in grace because we ask in Jesus' name Amen.