

Jesus, Son Of David, Have Mercy On Me – Niquita Hohm

Job 42:1-6, 10-17; Psalm 34:1-8, 19-22; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52

*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.*

This prayer has been rolling off my tongue quite frequently lately, and I'm struck by the vast company of people across time and space that I'm joining with that prayer.

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on our weakness in supporting stranger and friend.

Job's friends got it right at the beginning; they sank to their knees in the heap of dust and ashes and for seven days and seven nights they were silent and present to him. Think of the last time you shared silence with someone. If it was an unintentional and uncomfortable awkward silence, the mere seconds it lasted were probably still too long. If it was an intentional sitting with people in pain, it still may have been fleeting silence. Now this is not to say that anyone you encounter in pain wants you to sit silently with them for a week. On the other hand, even the week of silence was not enough time for Job's friends to be reflective enough to refrain from passing on their damaging theology; it wasn't long enough to keep them from doubting the victim.

Bartimaeus' "friends" got it right, basically once they got caught. How quickly they change their tune once there's no risk in offering support. It's a good thing Jesus listens so well, and calls out to him across his diminishers and detractors, because Bartimaeus really could have used the support when he first called out, and faced the daunting task of making his way through the crowd as a blind man. But that wasn't even their first missed opportunity. Bartimaeus was a blind beggar sitting on the side of the road; support from his community had already been withheld for many moments before this encounter.

Let's be friends who commit to the whole journey.

Although it is worthwhile to work toward this for our whole life long, we will never perfect this commitment, so when we get weak or fearful and let people down, we pray, *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!* As Jesus comes near, and calls out to us, we see anew. *I have uttered what I did not understand...but NOW my eye sees you.* Those who see God come away with a new way of seeing the world. This beatific vision will cause us to wind our way back to the ash heap, where Jesus is waiting for us.

And because we will never perfectly be there for people, and other people will let us down, we can rest assured that we have an eternal advocate, always drawing us back to the presence of our loving God.

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us, in our suffering, or in our ignoring of it.

For those of us who are able-bodied, it is easy to ignore the daily discomforts, challenges and pain of those not that way. One pastor, who is himself blind, uses the acronym SHARE to walk through the steps we can take to move from simple disability awareness to unity and belonging.

The first is: Slow down—Jesus is in ministry on the way, on the move, but he slows down and stops to minister to Bartimaeus, who is then no longer stationary on the side of the road, but can join him on the way.

The next is: Hear—Often people will assume they know what differently-abled people need and act without asking, or will talk to those accompanying them, ignoring the person themselves. Not so with Jesus, he speaks directly to Bartimaeus, *What do you want me to do for you?*

Adapt—The Bartimaeus story doesn't include much of this in detail, other than perhaps Jesus slowing down and allowing Bartimaeus to follow his voice in coming to meet him, but this is crucial hospitality. Our world is so often only oriented toward able bodies, so thinking ahead to adapt is so important.

Relate—Jesus healed Bartimaeus, but that was not the end; Bartimaeus followed him on the way so the healing was just the beginning of a relationship.

Empower—Jesus empowered Bartimaeus by respecting the fact that he, not those around him, knew what he needed, and by granting his request. James and John found out that granting requests is not a given, though Jesus does honor everyone who asks, relating to them with integrity and genuine love. Jesus grants mercy every time.

We need to celebrate the courageous among us (and not just once it's safe to do so, like the fickle crowd around Bartimaeus). Some are dealing with woundings so deep that it takes rivers of courage just to make it through an ordinary day.

We may not have the worldview of those surrounding Job, saying that suffering is a result of divine rejection, but we can also isolate people in their deep suffering when we sternly order them to keep quiet when they call out for mercy.

Job comes to God, lamenting, complaining, and shouting his discontent, but rather than this driving a wedge between them, it empowers him to keep his relationship with God alive despite his incredible suffering. Not only can God clearly handle Job's questioning and anger, but Job's engagement in this way leads him to the wrestling, which leads him to the seeing. When there's pain that threatens to swallow all of creation, we need to know that that's not all there is in the world. Creation and re-Creation are stronger than the chaotic. At first glance, it seems God is simply bullying Job, but that is not the case. The story of Job doesn't give easy conclusive answers despite the happily-ever-after ending. In fact the answer, it seems, can only be tapped into through the wrestling with God. *I have uttered what I did not understand...but now my eye SEES you.*

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us, and help our unbelief.

Jesus tells Bartimaeus, *Your faith has made you well.* The only other time this happens in Mark is for the woman who dares to reach out for Jesus' cloak to be healed. This is another one where there are more layers at work than the healing that takes place. Those layers are illuminated to me in the way Christena Cleveland unpacks the passage. Jesus was on the way with Jairus to his

house to heal his dying daughter when this woman sees her one opportunity of being in proximity to power and reaches out by faith. As soon as she touched his cloak, she knew she was healed, and Jesus knew she was healed, so why does he ask, *Who touched me?* Well, Jesus was the powerful one, the center of attention, so in calling that out, she got to tell her whole truth. Jesus was strategically humble, shifting the center of power and attention from himself and Jairus to this woman. Somehow Jairus sits and listens to this woman preaching and hears her whole truth and in the waiting gets the worst news, that he has lost his daughter. But then Jesus says, "Jairus, just believe." By not intervening, by emptying himself, Jairus experiences multiple miracles that day, and there is renewal and healing for all.

"God's inbreaking empowers us to seek a more just way of living that overcomes the injustice of suffering." Job saw what his friends could not and so had a life-reorienting encounter with the living God. Bartimaeus saw what the sighted people around him could not and so found that Jesus grants mercy every time.

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us.