

Does this anger you? It angers me. That many in the crowd are telling this blind beggar to be silent. What? Should he just sit there and accept the fact that he is blind? Jesus had healed many people of various diseases and afflictions. Why should he not be healed? Why is everyone against him?

Because God is against him. Is this not obvious? His condition, the fact that he is blind, is evidence that he is a great sinner. How dare he, therefore, cry out for mercy! He is not entitled to receive mercy. He is not worthy even of Jesus' attention. "Be quiet!" they tell him, "and accept your lot in life."

I'm just telling you what the crowd thinks and believes. And this is why they act as they do, ordering this blind beggar to be silent. I'm not saying that this is what you and I think and believe. We do not judge people because of their lot in life. We do not consider some people to be unworthy of receiving mercy. And we certainly do not prevent anyone from crying out to God. Unless, perhaps, that person happens to be ourself.

When you cry out to God, like Bartimaeus does here, for whom do you cry out? You cry out for your loved ones in your prayers, right? You cry out for our country, for our congregation, hopefully for your pastor. You cry out for those in need whether they are friends, neighbors, or just someone that you know has a need. Do you cry out for yourself? And for what do you cry? Your health. Your financial situation. You cry for forgiveness, right?

I'm going to get personal right now. Are you ever ashamed to cry out to God in prayer? You've done the same sin over and over, and it's a great and terrible sin. You've cried out for forgiveness many times. Yet you keep doing the same sin. You've even promised God that you won't keep doing that sin if He only forgives you. And yet you do the same sin anyway and break your promise. And so you tell yourself that you are not worthy of receiving mercy. God surely must not think much of you because you keep returning, like a dog to its vomit, to that same awful sin. You do not need a crowd to tell you to stop bothering Jesus. You've convinced yourself that He does not want to hear your cries anymore. For sure, not your cries regarding that sin in your life.

I've been there. Haven't you? It's easy to cry out for others. But not so easy to cry out for ourself. Especially when we consider our unworthiness.

Bartimaeus could do this day and night. His eyes are not able to peer out into the world around him. He cannot look without. He can only look within. His focus, therefore, is on his own sinfulness. How deep is his darkness. How easy for him to accept that which the crowd tells him. "Why should I bother Jesus with my need? I am unworthy of receiving mercy. Why should He help me? I am a great and terrible sinner."

When a Christian comes to this point in life, there are only two paths open to him or her. The path of despair, or the path of faith. Yes, even a Christian can despair. And not just weak Christians. The more we grow in Christ, the more we hear of His grace, the more we see how utterly sinful we are.

When a Christian is defeated by sin, and even by the same sin over and over, this is not just defeat. It is also victory. For if sin never defeated us, we would puff ourselves up with pride and never feel the need to cry out for forgiveness.

Bartimaeus cries out to Jesus. He is a Christian, for he calls Jesus the Son of David. He recognizes his Savior. The crowd tells him to sit in silence and despair. And surely, he has told himself the same thing many times. But this is Jesus walking by. He believes. And so, he cries. This is what faith does. It is a pathetic cry, perhaps a feeble cry. But when the crowd turns against him, he cries even louder. "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*" And Jesus does not, indeed cannot, turn away. He comes to Bartimaeus, and He heals him.

Friend, it is true that you are unworthy, and so am I. But it is only to those who are unworthy that Jesus shows mercy. It is only great and terrible sinners that Jesus forgives. Do you keep returning to the same awful sin over and over even as I do? Do not despair. Cry. Cry out to Jesus. No matter what others tell you; no matter what you tell yourself, Jesus will and does come to you. Not to punish you. No, He was punished in your place on the cross. He forgives you. And He never stops forgiving you.

Jesus will never tell you, "Stop believing that the word of absolution, which your pastor speaks to the congregation, is for you." It is for you! It is always for you. He will never tell you that your baptism does not mean anything anymore because you keep on sinning. No! Your baptism means that you are always God's forgiven child, and it will never leave you. Jesus will never tell you that His body and blood in the Sacrament is not able to forgive you because your sins are just too awful. Oh no, His body and blood are for you! And they do forgive you, every sin of yours. Nothing in you remains unforgiven.

Jesus heals Bartimaeus and tells him, "*Go your way.*" And look, Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the way. Jesus' way is Bartimaeus' way.

And so for you. Which other way is there in life? Not the way of sin anymore. Not the way of despair. Jesus' way is also your way because He is your Savior and He forgives your sin. Amen.