

Do You See What Bart Sees?

Mark 10:46-52 April 15, 2026

How close and how bright does a situation have to be for you to recognize a familiar face? That's not really a question we think about, but one that *does* come up in, say, court proceedings. The outcome of trials often hinges on eyewitness identification. Researchers have tried to determine just how much light and at what distance a person can reliably recognize another person.

What they came up with has been called the rule of fifteen. No more than 15 meters and 15 lux of illumination.¹ That's equivalent to street lighting at night.

We have a better chance of recognition if we can hear the person. Research shows that we can identify the voice of a loved one after just 2 words or 4 syllables.² And we've got way more range than 15 meters. The normal male voice can normally be heard and understood at distances up to 600 feet. Though, "there is a recorded instance under optimal acoustic conditions, of the human voice being detectable at a distance of 10.5 miles across still water at night."³

Of course, sometimes we *don't* recognize someone we should. Recently I found myself in a group of people and was sitting and talking for a while before I realized I knew the person sitting across from me. I don't know if it's from the brain damage or just a lack of awareness.

The Gospel of Mark is all about recognition. Do we recognize Jesus? Who do people say that Jesus is? That's the central question. Who do *we* say that He is? As we go through this book, *Who Christ* is being revealed. But we also learn how people - *even disciples* - sometimes fail to recognize what it means that Jesus is the Messiah, that Jesus is the Son of Man, that Jesus is the suffering Servant, that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, and all the rest that is revealed in these passages.

We've been in a section where the 12 keep failing to recognize Who Jesus really is and what that means for His Kingdom. They don't recognize that they are missing certain directions the Lord keeps trying to give them. So again and again, Jesus stops to teach what it means to be a disciple.

We're about to enter the final act of the Gospel, which is all about passion week. The section we've been in started with Jesus healing a blind man. Now, it's going to end with Him healing *another* blind man in Jericho. They are bookends of Jesus pre-cross ministry.⁴ This is the *last* healing in Mark. But more than a healing, this is a depiction of *ideal* discipleship. We've seen a few less-than-ideal examples in the last few passages. Now, with Bartimaeus, we see as one commentator writes, "the last and therefore climactic miracle performed by Jesus. [Which] provides an example of one who understood who Jesus was, responded immediately to His call despite discouragement from

¹ *Familiar Face Recognition As A Function Of Distance & Illumination Psychology, Crime & Law* March 2005, Volume 11

² https://www.huffpost.com/entry/voice-recognition-study_n_5617c7b2e4b0082030a2071d

³ <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/farthest-distance-travelled-by-a-human-voice>

⁴ James Brooks *The New American Commentary, Volume 23: Mark*

others, believed in Him, and followed Him as a disciple. It remains an example for others to follow.”⁵

Mark 10:46 - ⁴⁶ They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road.

This is the only time in the Gospel of Mark where we’re told the name of the person being healed.⁶ One likely reason why is that Bartimaeus was a known Christian in the Church at the time, and people could go and follow up with him about his story.⁷

We’re also given an important geographical marker. This is happening in Jericho. Now, some skeptics will lash out at this story, because Mark says they were coming to Jericho and Matthew says they were *leaving* Jericho. So, there it is - the Bible must be fake!

No, in reality, there were *two* Jerichos. The old city is introduced to us in the book of Joshua. But Herod the Great had build *new* Jericho about a mile away as the site of his winter palace.⁸ And so Matthew and Mark harmonize as Jesus leaves old Jericho and makes His way into *new* Jericho.

You don’t want to be blind in the first century AD. There are no assistance programs. No technologies to help you navigate life. Your options were beg or starve. Bartimaeus had no future.

Mark 10:47 - ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

We have no reason to think he ever met Jesus before or heard Him speak before. But he knew something no one else in the crowd did. As the commotion grows, Bartimaeus asks someone, “Who is it coming down the road?” They call Him *Jesus of Nazareth*. But despite his pitiable position, Bartimaeus had hope the God’s Word was being fulfilled *through* this Jesus he had heard about. So when they said it was Jesus of Nazareth, Bartimaeus does not think of Him as a Nazarene, but as the *Messiah*. Son of David is a Messianic title.⁹

Without sight, he saw Who Jesus *really* was. And, in this moment, he is the *only* one who sees Jesus for Who He really is. The Son of David. The Deliverer of Israel. The Christ and Messiah. The One they had been waiting for.

How did a *blind man* see what almost *no one* in the entire book has realized? The only other person who ever acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah was Peter. But then he went on to *immediately* demonstrate he didn’t quite understand what that meant.

⁵ Brooks

⁶ R.T. France *The Gospel Of Mark*

⁷ Clifton Allen *Matthew-Mark*

⁸ John Walvoord and Roy Zuck *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*

⁹ Ben Witherington *The Gospel Of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*

But Bartimaeus *saw* it. How? Well, he knew God's Word. Jesus had healed a blind man. Actually, He healed *multiple* blind people. Now listen - *no* Old Testament prophet had ever healed someone of blindness. And yet, Isaiah prophesied many times that one day it would be possible. That one day the Christ *would* open the eyes of the blind. And so, Bartimaeus is demonstrating *incredible* and *Biblical* faith here. That Jesus is not just a healer, but He is *the* Healer. The *Lord* Who came to save.

So not only does Bartimaeus hope Jesus is that Person, He believes it enough to *pray* to Him. The way he asked Jesus for mercy was a common line of prayer that we see in the Psalms, where people called out to God.¹⁰ So, without sight *or* sound, Bartimaeus recognizes Jesus for Who He is.

Mark 10:48 - ⁴⁸ Many warned him to keep quiet, but he was crying out all the more, "Have mercy on me, Son of David!"

This is a pretty sad moment for humanity. *Many* people told him to shut up. We're used to seeing people *bringing* their sick loved ones to Jesus, *hoping* He will help them. This is the *opposite*. They actively try to stop this poor man from getting to the Lord. To them, he's not worth helping. He's an annoyance. He's a zero.

Their discouraging behavior doesn't stop him, though. That in itself shows the courage of his faith. Because these were people *he* relied on economically. It was *their* coins he needed to survive.

But Jesus was more important than any decorum, any economic incentive, any peer pressure. Receiving the grace of God was way better than being in the crowd's good graces.

Mark 10:49 - ⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man and said to him, "Have courage! Get up; he's calling for you."

The Gospels never fail to show the tender kindness of Jesus. Remember: His mind is set on Calvary. He knows He's in the final phase of His mission. He's *eager* to get on with it. But He *will* stop for the lowest of the low. He will pause to give His love and attention to a zero.

Jesus never gets worn down by annoyance or cynicism. I think after three years and thousands of people like this trying to get my attention I'd eventually say, "*Another* dirty beggar wanting something from me? What is that, the 50th guy today?"

But Christ's mercy is new every morning. His compassions fail not. He really, truly, personally loved Bartimaeus. Jesus Himself said, "the way the Father loves Me, *that's* how I love you!"¹¹

Meanwhile, let's learn something about "the crowds" in life. Look at how fickle they are. One minute, they were yelling at him to shut up. Now they're like sucking up to him and giving him advice. "Have courage!" He already *had* courage - courage to believe *despite* their pressure.

¹⁰ Robert Utley *The Gospel According To Peter: Mark And I & II Peter*

¹¹ John 15:9

The crowds of life are often fickle and two-faced. Don't chase their approval.

Mark 10:50 - ⁵⁰ He threw off his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

I find it easy to think of this story as primarily a *healing* narrative. But it's a *discipleship* narrative. Like the fishermen before, when called Bartimaeus left all he had *on the spot* and followed.

And notice the energy here. He *threw* off his coat. He *jumped* up. This is a man full of faith.

This may just look like a bum's dirty jacket, but we need to understand how valuable this coat was. This is the garment that keeps him warm, his bedding, and probably what he spread out to collect coins as he begged.¹² We can imagine them jingling on the ground, rolling into the road as the man ran in the dark to where Jesus stood.

Now remember what happened earlier: The rich young ruler had been called by Jesus. But he would *not* leave his possessions. He had too many and *they* had too tight a grip on him.

But here is Bartimaeus. When he's introduced, he's *sitting*. Sitting in darkness. Sitting by the road. Sitting in hopelessness and misery. And with one call from Christ, he's up and jumping and moving.

Christ calls us to *life*. To activity. To closeness with Him and opportunities to share in His work. He calls us to live out our faith. Bartimaeus didn't only *believe* Jesus was the Messiah, on that day, he oriented his life and future around that fact.

Mark 10:51a - ⁵¹ Then Jesus answered him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

This is *exactly* what Jesus said to James and John in the last passage. Word for word. In that scene, the disciples failed to understand what discipleship really means. What about Bartimaeus?

Mark 10:51b - "Rabboni," the blind man said to him, "I want to see."

There's more here than meets the eye. First, he uses *another* title for Jesus. He's already recognized Him as Messiah. But here he uses not just the normal word for teacher, but an intensified version. One that means teacher *and* master.¹³ Even the 12 hadn't used this title of Jesus.

But his request wasn't just that he *wanted* to see. What he said could be translated, "Please, give me sight,"¹⁴ or, "Master, let me receive my sight."¹⁵ He knew it was in Christ's power to accomplish, but would have to be a gift of grace. And we'll see that Bartimaeus didn't use his sight for his own plans, but he would use his vision to follow Jesus' leading.

¹² Craig Keener *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (Second Edition)*

¹³ Morna Hooker *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*

¹⁴ *The NET Bible First Edition Notes*

¹⁵ William Lane *The Gospel Of Mark*

Mark 10:52 - ⁵² Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has saved you." Immediately he could see and began to follow Jesus on the road.

Sometimes Christians get hung up in verses like this. Is Jesus saying that if we have strong enough faith we decide whether we're healed? No. How are we saved? by *grace*, through *faith*. In other words, it was God's will and power that accomplished the healing, not Bartimaeus' faith. But by exercising faith he was able to *receive* what God was willing to give.

In other words, you can't faith enough to make a miracle happen if it isn't God's will to work it. Bartimaeus understood that sight would be a gift from Christ to be received. Not an accomplishment of his own spirituality.

As Jesus healed him, He also gave a command. What was it? "Go." Bartimaeus had a free choice in that moment to go where he wished. And *where* did he go? "Immediately...he began to follow Jesus on the road." He didn't go back to his coat. He didn't go back to any coins. He kept walking after Jesus. In the Gospels, the phrase "follow on the road" is a technical term for discipleship.¹⁶

And understand, this was no casual walk in the park. Spiritually, he was walking into intense opposition with his Lord. But even *physically* this was a hard road to take. The walk from Jericho to Jerusalem was 17 miles with a 3,500 foot climb in elevation.¹⁷

But Bartimaeus' discipleship was *roadworthy*! He was *ready* to follow. The story starts with him sitting by the road, now he's *on* the road. Healed physically, saved spiritually.¹⁸ Now he has a future. Now he has *life*. Now he has all he needs because he is with Jesus.

There's a wonderful Biblical connection here. Jesus, the Son of David, is about to go to Jerusalem in what we call the Triumphal Entry.

When David *first* marched into Jerusalem, there was this taunt that even the blind would be able to repel him - that the blind and the lame would stop David from conquering the city. And at the time it became a saying that, "the blind are despised by David and they will never enter the house."¹⁹ And now, the Son of David comes again into His city. But *this* time, He *heals* the blind and brings them with Him. Jesus, the *Savior* King.

And so, we recognize Christ for Who the Word shows Him to be. The Creator. The Savior. The Healer. The King. The Master. The Lord of all. The One Who still calls to us. Calls us to His presence. Calls us to follow. Calls us to receive His grace and all we need for life and Godliness. He is calling. Let's follow Him, knowing Who He is and what that means for our lives.

¹⁶ Brooks

¹⁷ CSB Study Bible Notes

¹⁸ Brooks

¹⁹ 2 Samuel 5:6-9