

## PZ's Gospel Preview

For the Week of 10/18-10/24

Text: Mark 10: 46-52

### I. Opening Questions:

A. In your opinion, what is the main reason Jesus came? What is the most important thing Jesus offers? He does many things . . . what is most important.

B. Likewise, what is the main reason the church is here? What is the most important thing the church can offer?

### II. Read the Text.

A. Ask your group to open their Bibles to Mark 10: 46-52. Either you or a volunteer read the passage aloud.

B. Ask your group these questions. What did you hear? What jumps out to you? What tickles your mind or spirit about this passage?

### III. PZ's Text Note

A. First of all, we can't pass up these wonderful names without playing PZ's Name Game! Timaeus comes from the Greek verb "timaeo" which means "to honor." Think of when we hold someone in high esteem. That "teem" part of esteem is related to "timaeo." So, Timaeus is literally an honorable person! The "Bar" in Bartimaeus means "son." So, Bartimaeus is literally "an honorable son" or "son of an honorable man." So, perhaps we could say that right off the bat we can tell Jesus and Bartimaeus are going to have a good interaction. Bartimaeus is a "good guy" as a "honorable son."

B. Now, what is very important here is what Bart originally shouts to Jesus: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Think about that. Here is a man who is both blind and poor. He can't see; he can't provide for himself and so he begs. Yet, his original request to Jesus is not for sight. And it's not for sustenance. It is for *mercy*.

C. Jesus is moved by the request. He summons Bart to himself. The crowd was likely very surprised to see a religious leader (Jesus) interact personally with a blind beggar. Blind beggars were left outside of the Temple and the priests never bothered to talk to them. Jesus is different. He interacts with those on the margins. He gets in to the nitty-gritty.

D. Like we heard last week, Jesus again practices good “person-centered” therapy as championed by Carl Rogers. He begins with Bart: “What do you want me to do for you?” What is it you really want? PZ thinks that is why God is sometimes silent when we pray. Or at least seems silent. God is giving us space to figure out what it really is we are praying for. What do you want me to do for you?

E. Now, when directly asked by Jesus, Bart asks for his sight to be restored. And Jesus obliges and heals him, saying “Your faith has made you well.” So, this story begins with Bart asking for mercy. It ends with Bart asking for his sight and being healed. As PZ has said before, the structure of stories, particularly in Mark, matters. PZ thinks this story is told in this way to emphasize that the *main* reason Jesus came is to give us *mercy*. To forgive our sins. To offer us grace. To give us second chances and new opportunities. Everything in the kingdom of God flows from mercy. Bart begins there. From mercy flows healing. We start with mercy, and end up with the restoration of sight. It all begins with grace. Everything else in the kingdom of God (service, healing, fellowship, etc.) flows from the center of grace—the proclamation of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

#### IV. Bad News/Good News

A. Hmm . . . hard to pinpoint this one this week. Perhaps the “bad news” is that the world no longer values mercy. Mercy is seen as weakness. Our world values “being on the right side” and demonizing the other side. Those who offer mercy, who look for the good in their opponents, are ridiculed and seen as weak.

The good news is that as followers of Christ we are *free* to offer mercy. We are free to look for the good in all people and all positions. We don’t have to worry about being ridiculed or being seen as weak. We know to whom we belong—Christ! It doesn’t matter as much to us what the world thinks!