

When the Pain is Too Much to Bear

Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 18:35-43

Good morning, men. I thought we would start by giving a shout out welcome to men who are starting new Bible study groups. I thought we would do three of them this morning. Today we want to give shout outs to three new groups. The first one is led by Ian Longest at Quinebaug Valley Alliance Church in Canterbury, Connecticut, and he describes it as a small group that wants to become more discipleship focused.

The second leader is Jeffrey Davidson at Grace Fellowship UMC in Katy, Texas. They are a men's accountability group looking for ways to motivate each other to walk deeper with God.

The third group is Justin Ragsdale from Silverdale Baptist in Chattanooga, Tennessee. They are four young men from different backgrounds just trying to help each other draw closer to God.

I wonder if you would help me in giving them a warm welcome to the Man in the Mirror Bible study with a big shout out right now. Hoorah!

The title of the message this morning is "When the Pain is Too Much to Bear." When I look around this room I see a lot of pain in this room. In fact, in any room I've ever been in where I actually knew the people, I have seen a lot of pain in that room.

I was at a men's retreat a couple of weeks ago with 250 men. I didn't see any pain when I got there but I knew it was there by the end of the three days. I talk to perhaps a hundred men in small groups and one-on-one and such. You could find the pain. It isn't that hard to find.

For some of us it is a marriage that grew cold or got too hot. Or maybe it is a child that has an existential crisis – a crisis of meaning or maybe is in the middle of a spiritual crisis of some kind. It might be health problem or maybe you are underwater on your mortgage or in some other way. Whatever it is there is just so much pain that I am aware of in this room, and I am sure some I am not aware of at all.

This morning's text deals with this. If you feel like you have been juggling hand grenades with the pins pulled, I think this might be very helpful to you. I might add before we get started, that if you are not in pain, then you should also pay special attention to this for at least two reasons. One, so you can help your brothers and comfort others with the comfort you yourself have received as it says in 2 Corinthians 1:4.

Also, so that by pride, you do not end up exchanging the truth of God for a lie and the glory of God for an idol, and leave the door open for Satan. Whether you are in the pain or not in the pain, this is a very special message to take into account.

Let's read the passage. It begins in Mark 10:46. This is recorded in Mark, Matthew and Luke. We will be looking at just Mark.

⁴⁶Then they [meaning Jesus and the disciples] came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” ⁵⁰Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

⁵² “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT MUCH SUFFERING?

The first thing I would like us to see here is can you imagine that much suffering? This is a man who is blind. We don’t know many of the details but we know that he was blind. Perhaps from birth he was blind. Can you imagine the amount of pain just caused by that blindness not only to Him, but also to His mama and his dad? Can you imagine the pain on being one of the siblings and watching this young man with no prospect for ever having gainful employment end up as a beggar on the side of the road? No government safety net. No government assistance programs. No Medicaid. No food stamps. No housing vouchers. He is reduced to being a beggar on the side of the road. There was so much pain. What did he do? He did the only option he had left to do. He called out to Jesus for some mercy. It was his last option; the only thing that he could do.

How did Jesus respond? Jesus stopped and said call him. The man calls out for mercy and Jesus hears him. It is important for us to remember that God hears our prayers. Even over the multitude of the crowd he heard this man crying out for mercy. God hears our prayers whenever we pray. The next thing that happens is that Jesus calls him to Himself. Then He has compassion on him. In the parallel passage in Matthew, which by the way talks about two blind men. Mark and Luke decided to focus on this one man Bartimaeus. He probably had a lot larger personality than the other beggar. It says Jesus had compassion on them. It was the same kind of compassion He had when they were out on the boat and He saw they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd and he had compassion on them. There were several other cases like the rich young ruler that Jesus had compassion on him. There are many instances in the Bible where Jesus has this Greek word that translates as compassion. He had compassion on them, and He said go your faith has healed you. Jesus healed this man. He heard his prayer and He answered his prayer.

It is so interesting because people tend to say God helps those who help themselves. In fact, people will often say the Bible says God helps those who help themselves. But the more common experience in Scripture is God helps those who cannot help themselves. Never despair if you are in a situation that is beyond hope, because Jesus is on the other side of beyond hope. God will help those as we see in Scripture, those who cannot help themselves. There was nothing left for this man to do. He was out of options. He was at the end of his rope. That is one of the benefits of suffering. That is one of the benefits of being in deep pain. That is the big idea this morning: **Suffering compels us to seek the mercy that success makes us think we don't need.**

When you are blowing and going, and on top of the world, the tendency is to think I have everything I need. I don't need God right now. I don't need Jesus. I don't need to depend on Christ. I can depend on myself. There is a tremendous tendency when things are going well for us to depend on self-reliance; on determination; on grit. In fact, when you are doing the best you can and it is working the best you can seems like it is enough, and you don't really need Christ.

One of the joys of suffering is that it leads us back to Jesus. It compels us to seek the mercy that success makes us think we do not need.

THE FORCES AGAINST ASKING FOR HELP

The forces against asking for help. Let's talk a little bit about this crowd that was with them. Bartimaeus is crying out, "Son of David have mercy on me." It says in Verse 48, many rebuked him and told him to be quiet. What did he do? He shouted all the more Son of David have mercy on me. He had the right response to the crowd. But you know that many times the crowd is people that are content with you being in misery. That is because they don't have the compassion of a Christian.

If you have put yourself into a crowd that is not a crowd of brothers who are men who really care about you – brothers and sisters – a community, a church community, a body of Christ where people really care about you if your crowd is just here at Bible study morning and then you are off with the other crowd, you are putting yourself at great risk. When you say maybe I need to just pray about this, maybe I just need to turn to Jesus, if you are in a crowd that rebukes you when you say that, you are in the wrong crowd. That is not just back then, that is today too.

I spent some time, about an hour on Saturday with a man who told me this story. He said, six months ago I was on top of the world. I was making big money, and we were living large. We had a house too big to be a home. We had real estate investments. We were eating at the most expensive restaurants in town. We were hanging out at Luma, even though we were the only married couple at Luma. My wife was wearing clothing that was a little too tight and I encouraged her to do it. Then my company cut my commission almost in half. Suddenly, we were in over our heads. We were hopelessly in debt. Things began to unravel. One day my wife said to me, I just don't know if you are the man I need in my life anymore. Two months later, she left. Last Saturday he said I haven't seen my children in two weeks. I don't know how this is

going to turn out. I don't know where this is going. I just don't get it. I believe in Jesus. I really do. I have been doing the best I can. And there it is. I have been doing the best I can.

Do you see it? There is the problem. He has been lured into a success that has convinced him that he doesn't need to cry out for mercy. What he has done, I told him, because I happened to lead this man to Jesus 31 years ago. We became friends. He was part of this Bible study for a short time. My wife and I attended his wedding. I have an ongoing relationship with him. We don't see each other that much.

I asked him, do you want a hug, or do you want me to tell you the truth? He said tell me the truth. I said are you sure? He said, yeah. I said, not real name, Jason, you have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and the glory of God for idols. You have become worldly. You have gotten caught up in the world and you lost your first love. God gave you this gift of this pain to bring you back to Himself. Instantly, bam! Just like that. The Spirit spoke to his heart, because I was really just quoting the Word of God to him. Instantly, Bam! He had been blinded by his enemy. He had been blinded to what was going on. As soon as he heard me say it, he understood what had happened to him, but he had been blinded by the angel of light.

What had happened is that Satan had put a huge piece of bait on the hook, so juicy, so desirable, even though he knew there was a hook attached to it, he resisted for quite some time, many years, but then one day the bait just looked too good. He bit down hard and Satan sunk the hook. Then all that was left to do was to reel him in. But that is not the end of the story, because this is the big idea. **Suffering compels us to seek the mercy that success makes us think we don't need.**

The suffering compelled him to seek mercy. On that day, we were able to reach over, we couldn't get the hook out, the hook is too deep, but we reached over and cut the line and set him free. That is what God wants to do for all of us. Either if you are in the suffering, or if you see someone else suffering. He either wants you to get somebody to help you cut the line or he wants you to be the one to cut the line. That is the big idea for today – **suffering compels us to seek the mercy that success makes us think we don't need.**

“WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?”

What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asks Bartimaeus, once he does call out for mercy, what do you want me to do for you? That is the question that is always out there. It is like Jesus has taken a sky-writing plane and writes it in mile-long letters up in the sky, they are always there and all we have to do is look up and there is the question. Jesus is constantly sky-writing this question. What do you want me to do for you? But, if you are following the crowd you are not looking up. If you are following the crowd you are not looking up. That is why it is good to have some brothers who will say hey, look up! Jesus is asking you, what do you want me to do for you?

Jesus answers our prayers. It is interesting because this question is the exact same question if you were here last week, the exact same question, that Jesus asked James and John and their mother when they came and asked for the two seats of honor at the right and left hand of Jesus in glory. They came to Jesus, and He is always asking that question what do you want me to do

for you? They ask for the wrong thing. They ask for something that was at least poor judgment. Let's just leave it there. Jesus did not give them the thing which they asked. 1 John 5:14-15: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."

Think about Jesus' suffering when we do ask. Jesus is in the garden and prays, Father, if You are willing take away this... not what I will but what You will be done. There is always this sense when Jesus asks the question, what do you want me to do for you, we are bringing our requests in to submission to the will of God. Because we know that whatever we ask of Him, if it is of His will He hears and answers, but bring it in submission because we don't know if we are asking the right thing.

When He says, what do you want me to do for you, we are not quite sure we are asking for something we are asking for. He knows. Whatever it is that you need, whatever kind of pain that you are in, bring that pain to Jesus. Just look up. Stop listening to the crowd. Look up. What do you want Me to do for you? Son of David, Lord Jesus, have pity on me. You are asking for a good thing and He will have pity on you. He will have compassion, pity; it is the same word. He will have compassion for you. He will take mercy on you.

I am also looking around this room, this pain filled room and I am seeing a lot of mercy. I am seeing a lot of second chances. I am seeing a lot of third chances. I am seeing a hope-filled a hope-drenched room. This room is drenched in grace. It is like God has taken this big giant water balloon of grace, He has dropped it on this civic center, it has exploded, and all of you are soaking in grace, right along with the pain.

It is like the AA or the 12-step programs. The first step in getting out of pain is to admit you are in pain and you cannot do it by yourself. Hi. My name is Pat and I'm an addict. Every man in this room who will listen, is listening or will ever listen to this – that is the way out. Suffering compels us to seek the mercy that success makes us think we don't need.

Every man here should be saying often, what do you want me to do for you? Hi, my name is Pat and I'm an addict. I have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and the glory of God for an idol. Here is the thing. You don't ever get over that. Maybe you think you did that. I did cry out for mercy. He did heal me. I'm good. Guess what? You have just taken the next piece of bait and sunk your teeth into the next hook. Instead what every one of us should do every day is say Lord, Jesus, have mercy on me. Have pity on me. Take compassion. Because I'm an addict and every day if I don't come to You every day, and ask you for help, I'm going to go out and get intoxicated on the world. I am going to let the smell of success lure me into its lair. Jesus says ask Me anything.

What should you do if you are up against it this morning? Physical pain is a warning that you have either been injured or you are about to be injured. Physical pain is a warning is that you either have been injured or you are about to be injured and pain is a gift that God built into our physical bodies so we will respond to its pain. The spiritual, emotional and psychological pain – all the inner pains we have, whatever they are – have been given to us as a warning that we either have been injured or we are about to be injured. The only sane response to all of this is to let pain bring you to faith in Jesus or back to faith in Jesus. Every day. The only response, the

only wise response to pain is to allow it to bring you to faith in Jesus or back to faith in Jesus, every day. Why? Because this is the big idea: **suffering is a gift from God that compels us to seek the mercy that success makes us think we don't need.**

What do you do if you are successful right now and you don't need this mercy? Here it is. If you don't do the ministry, you will become the ministry. God will not tolerate strong Christians retreating to themselves and ignoring the problems of other people. If you don't do the ministry, you will become the ministry. In exhortation, reach out and help these brothers in pain here, at work, people at home, in your church community. The big idea today is this: **suffering compels us to seek the mercy that success makes us think we don't need.** Therefore, the kind of suffering we are talking about is a gracious gift of God. We know that Bartimaeus was born blind. Jesus said of the blind man in John 9 that this was not because of his sin, this was so that God may receive glory. Let God receive glory for whatever you are going through. Let's pray.

CLOSING PRAYER

Our dearest Father, there are many of us today who are suffering from pains too much to bear. We can't do it so Lord, help us to look up and see the writing in the sky. The question You ask – what do you want Me to do for you? Let us call out to you. Let us allow a brother who wants to cut the line and set us free. Let's let him do that. Lord, if we don't need the ministry, help us to do the ministry. Let us be the one that cuts the line. We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.