

# ***BLIND BARTIMAEUS OF JERICHO***

## ***Lord Have Mercy***

**December 1, 2019**  
**14th Sunday of Luke**  
**Revision D**

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

In the West, today's Gospel lesson is also used in the weeks preceding Easter on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday.

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### **Blind Bartimaeus of Jericho**

The healing of a blind man is covered at two other occasions in the Orthodox lectionary: The man born blind (John 9) on the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha and the two blind men of Galilee (Matthew 9:27-35) on the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. In each case, including today's Gospel, a recurring theme is that some people who are physically blind have spiritual insight and that some who have good physical eyesight are completely blind to spiritual things. As John Chrysostom said<sup>1</sup>, "Let us listen to these blind men, who were better than many that see".

Whereas today's Gospel took place in the Spring of 30 AD just before Holy Week, the man born blind was healed the previous Autumn and the two blind men of Galilee were healed a year before that. All of these have Messianic implications for those who have eyes to see it. Referring to the coming of the Messiah, Isaiah wrote: "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped" (Isaiah 35:5; see also Isaiah 29:18, 42:7).

The context of today's Gospel lesson is the final journey to Jerusalem, 30 AD. Jesus announced to the Twelve that they were going to Jerusalem and that He would be delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, insulted, spit on, scourged and killed. And He would rise on the third day. But this was hidden from them and they understood nothing (Luke 18:31-34).

As they passed by Jericho, they met a blind man who was begging. In the parallel accounts in Matthew and Mark, some additional details are given. In Mark 10:46-52, the blind man was named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. In Matthew 20:29-34, Bartimaeus had a friend with him who was also blind. Together they continuously cried out, "Lord have mercy!" and neither the crowd nor the disciples could shut them up until Jesus responded to their request. Following his healing, Bartimaeus glorified God and so did all the people.

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<sup>1</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVI, 1.

## Bartimaeus Teaches Us About Mercy

Bartimaeus and his friend together continuously cried out, “Lord have mercy!” and neither the crowd nor the disciples could shut them up until Jesus responded to their request. Their persistence teaches us a lot about our relationship with God.

Cyril of Alexandria comments<sup>2</sup> on the Faith of Bartimaeus by examining his use of the term Son of David. He stated that the blind men had some amazing insight into the identity of Christ.

“In what character then do they address to Him their prayer? Is it as to a mere man, according to the babbling of the Jews, who tried to stone Him with stones, saying in their utter folly, ‘for a good work we stone You not, but for blasphemy; because that You being a man make Yourself God?’ (John 10:33). But must not the blind men have understood that the sight of the blind cannot be restored by human means, but requires, on the contrary, a divine power, and an authority such as God only possesses? For with God nothing whatever is impossible. The blind men drew near to Him, therefore, as to the Omnipotent God; but how then did they call Him the Son of David? What therefore can one answer to this? The following is perhaps, as I think the explanation. As they had been brought up in Judaism, and were by birth of that race, the predictions contained in the Law and the Holy Prophets concerning Christ of course had not escaped their knowledge. They had heard in the Temple the chanting of that passage in the book of the Psalms: ‘the Lord has sworn the truth to David, and will not reject it, that of the fruit of Your loins will I set upon Your throne’ (Psalm 131:11). They knew also that the Prophet Isaiah had said, ‘And there shall spring forth a shoot from the root of Jesse, and from his root shall a flower grow up (Isaiah 9:1). And again, this as well: ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and they shall call His Name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us’ (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23). As ones, therefore, who already believed that the Word, being God, had of His Own Will submitted to be born in the flesh of the holy virgin, they drew near to Him as to God, and said, ‘Have mercy upon me, Son of David (Luke 18:38). For Christ bears witness that this was their state of mind in offering their supplication, by saying unto them, ‘Your faith has saved you’” (Luke 18:42).

Cyril also pointed out that Bartimaeus:

- Referred to Jesus as Lord as well as Son of David (Luke 18:41)
- Asked Him to perform an act only God could do (Luke 18:41)
- Confessed his faith in spite of many rebukes (Luke 18:39)
- Glorified God following his healing (Luke 18:43).

John Chrysostom pointed out<sup>3</sup> that Christ did not ask the blind men, “Do you believe?” as He had done with many others (e.g. Mark 5:36, 9:23, 11:22-24, John 11:40). Because their cry and their coming to Him was sufficient to make that obvious.

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<sup>2</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Gospel of Luke, Chapter 18, Homily 123, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 499.

<sup>3</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVI, 1.

John Cassian described<sup>4</sup> the bounty of God and how it is actually shaped according to the capacity of man's faith. His aim is to draw mankind to salvation, but this can take different paths for different people. We hear the same words repeated, "Let it be done for you according to your faith". There are many different circumstances where these words appear in the Scriptures, as described below. The bottom line is that God grants His healing not according to the uniform power of His Majesty, but according to the measure of the faith in which He finds each one, or as He Himself has imparted it to each one

"God's 'judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out!' (Romans 11:33), by which He draws mankind to salvation. And this too we can prove by the instances of calls in the Gospels. For He chose Andrew and Peter and the rest of the apostles by the free compassion of His grace when they were thinking nothing of their healing and salvation (Mark 1:16-18). Zacchaeus, when in his faithfulness, he was struggling to see the Lord, and making up for his littleness of stature by the height of the sycamore tree, He not only received, but was actually honored by the blessing of His dwelling with him (Luke 19:2-9). Paul even against his will and resisting He drew to Him (Acts 9:1-6). Another He charged to cleave to Him so closely that when he asked for the shortest possible delay in order to bury his father, He did not grant it (Matthew 8:21-22). To Cornelius when constantly attending to prayers and alms, the way of salvation was shown by way of recompense. By the visitation of an angel he was bidden to summon Peter, and learn from him the words of salvation, whereby he might be saved with all his family (Acts 10:1-8). And so, the manifold wisdom of God grants with manifold and inscrutable kindness salvation to men; and imparts to each one according to his capacity the grace of His bounty. So that He wills to grant His healing not according to the uniform power of His Majesty, but according to the measure of the faith in which He finds each one, or as He Himself has imparted it to each one. For when one believed that for the cure of his leprosy the will of Christ alone was sufficient, He healed him by the simple consent of His will, saying: 'I am willing; be cleansed' (Matthew 8:3). When another prayed that He would come and raise his dead daughter by laying His hands on her, He entered his house as he had hoped, and granted what was asked of Him (Mark 5:22-43). When another believed that what was essential for his salvation depended on His command, and answered: 'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed' (Matthew 8:8). He restored to their former strength the limbs that were relaxed, by the power of a word, saying: 'Go your way; and as you have believed, *so* let it be done for you' (Matthew 8:13). To others hoping for restoration from the touch of His hem, He granted rich gifts of healing (Matthew 9:20-22). To some, when asked, He bestowed remedies for their diseases. To others He afforded the means of healing unasked: others He urged on to hope, saying: 'Do you want to be made well?' (John 5:6) To others when they were without hope He brought help spontaneously. The desires of some He searched out before satisfying their wants, saying: 'What do you want Me to do for you?' (Matthew 20:32). To another who knew not the way to obtain what he

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<sup>4</sup> John Cassian, 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Abbot Chaeremon, II, xiii, 15.

desired, He showed it in His kindness, saying: ‘Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?’ (John 11:40). Among some so richly did He pour forth the mighty works of His cures that of them the Evangelist **says**, ‘And when Jesus went out, He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick’ (Matthew 14:14). But among others the unfathomable depth of Christ’s beneficence was so stopped up, that it was said: ‘Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed *them*. And He marveled because of their unbelief’ (Mark 6:5-6). And so, the bounty of God is actually shaped according to the capacity of man’s faith, so that to one it is said, ‘According to your faith let it be to you’ (Matthew 9:29). And to another: ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, *so* let it be done for you’ (Matthew 8:13); to another ‘O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire’ (Matthew 15:28), and again to another: ‘Receive your sight; your faith has made you well’” (Luke 18:42).

John Chrysostom pointed out<sup>5</sup> how these blind men had nothing else going for them in their poverty and hopelessness. All they had was their fervor and desire for Jesus to heal them.

“Let us learn that though we are very vile and outcast, but yet approach God with earnestness, even by ourselves we shall be able to affect whatever we ask. Notice these men, how, having none of the apostles to plead with them, but rather many to stop their mouths, they were able to pass over the hindrances, and to come to Jesus Himself. Matthew bears witness to no confidence of life in them, but earnestness sufficed them instead of all.”

“These then let us also emulate. Though God defers the gift, though there be many withdrawing us, let us not desist from asking. For in this way most of all shall we win God to us. See at least even here, how not poverty, not blindness, not their being unheard, not their being rebuked by the multitude, not anything else, impeded their exceeding earnestness. Such is the nature of a fervent and toiling soul.”

Cyril of Alexandria concluded<sup>6</sup>: “Understand from this, my beloved, that faith sets us also in Christ’s presence, and so brings us to God, as for us to be even counted worthy of His words. For when the blind men were brought to Him, He asked them, “What do you want Me to do for you?”” (Luke 18:41). This is an important question in that it directs us to what is our real desire. Do we just want something physical or does our desire go beyond that to true spiritual insight? Do I really want to be free of being enslaved to the passions or do I really like the passions and just want something temporary?

John Cassian pointed out<sup>7</sup> how we are given the grace of opportunities for salvation and prosperous undertakings by God. But it is up to us to follow up the blessings which God gives us with earnestness or indifference. Jesus passed by the blind men; this is grace. That they cried for mercy was an act of their own faith. The ten lepers were all healed after asking for mercy; that

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<sup>5</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVI, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Gospel of Luke, Chapter 18, Homily 123, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 500.

<sup>7</sup> John Cassian, Conference of Abbot Paphnutius, I, iii, 19.

was grace. When one of them returned to give thanks, that was the response of a grateful heart that the Lord looks for.

“Scripture declares that it was the free gift of God that Israel was brought into the land of promise, that many nations were destroyed before them, that nations more numerous and mightier than them were given up into their hands. But whether Israel utterly destroys them, or whether it preserves them alive and spares them, and whether or not it makes a league with them, and makes marriages with them or not, it declares lies in their own power. By this testimony we can clearly see what we ought to ascribe to free will, and what to the design and daily assistance of the Lord. It belongs to divine grace to give us opportunities of salvation and prosperous undertakings and victory: but that it is ours to follow up the blessings which God gives us with earnestness or indifference. This same fact we see is plainly taught in the healing of the blind men. For the fact that Jesus passed by them, was a free gift of Divine providence and condescension. But the fact that they cried out and said ‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!’ (Matthew 20:31), was an act of their own faith and belief. That they received the sight of their eyes was a gift of Divine pity. But that after the reception of any blessing, the grace of God, and the use of free will both remain, the case of the ten lepers (Luke 17:12-19), who were all healed alike, shows us. For when one of them through goodness of will returned thanks, the Lord looking for the nine, and praising the one, showed that He was ever anxious to help even those who were unmindful of His kindness. For even this is a gift of His visitation; that he receives and commends the grateful one, and looks for and censures those who are thankless.”

Cyril of Alexandria referred<sup>8</sup> to Bartimaeus as being freed from a double blindness: first from the blindness of his eyes, and second from a blindness of heart and mind. The vision of his heart was infectious also in that it caused “all the people when they saw it, to give praise to God” (Luke 18:43). Thus, even the people that had rebuked Bartimaeus now began to see spiritually themselves. This happens to us also: as we see and hear from God, we help those around us to do so also. However, there will always be those who refuse to see: like the Scribes and Pharisees who crucified Jesus a few weeks after this.

John Chrysostom stated<sup>9</sup> that Jesus seemed to always ask people what they wanted Him to do for them. This is to demonstrate their virtue and to show that they were worthy. After He healed them, they proved He was right by being grateful for the gift.

“Why does Jesus ask them what they wanted Him to do for them? Lest anyone should think that when they wish to receive one thing, He gives them another thing. This is usual with Him on every occasion, first to make clear and demonstrate to all the virtue of those He is healing, and then to apply the cure, that He might lead on the others likewise to emulation. Another reason He did it this way is to show that they were enjoying the gift worthily. This He did with respect to the Canaanite woman also (Matthew 15:22-28), this too in the case of the centurion (Matthew 8:5-13), this again as to her that had the issue of blood (Mark

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<sup>8</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Gospel of Luke, Chapter 18, Homily 123, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 501.

<sup>9</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVI, 1.

5:25-35), or rather that marvelous woman even anticipated the Lord's inquiry. He didn't pass her by, but even after the cure singles her out. Such earnest care He had on every occasion to proclaim the good deeds of those that came to Him, and to show them to be much greater than they are; and He does this here also."

"Then, when they said what they wished, He had compassion on them, and touched them. For this alone is the cause of their cure, for which also He came into the world. But nevertheless, although it is mercy and grace, it seeks out the worthy. That they were worthy is clear, both from what they cried out, and from the fact that, when they had received, they did not hasten away, as many do, being ungrateful after the benefits. No, they were not like this, but were both persevering before the gift, and after the gift were grateful, for 'they followed Him'".

In early 30 AD, a few months before He was crucified, Jesus healed this pair of blind men near Jericho. They cried out to Jesus as He passed by, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matthew 20:29-34) Jerome applied<sup>10</sup> the wisdom of these blind men to our everyday life.

"Imitate those blind men for whose sake the Savior left His home and heritage and came to Jericho. They were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death when the light shone upon them (Matthew 4:15-16). When they learned that it was the Lord who was passing by, they began to cry out saying: 'Son of David, have mercy on us' (Matthew 20:30). You too will have your sight restored, if you cry to Him, and cast away your filthy garments (Mark 10:50) at His call. 'When you turn and bewail yourself then you shall be saved, and then you shall be able to see where you have been'. Let Him but touch your scars and pass his hands over your eyeballs. Although you may have been born blind from the womb (John 9:1) and although your mother may have conceived you in sin (John 9:2-3), he will purge you with hyssop and you shall be clean, he will wash you and you shall be whiter than snow (Psalm 51:5, 7).

### **Other Blind Men Are Healed**

Jesus healed other blind men; for example, earlier during His 3-year public ministry, Jesus was followed by two blind men. This event is covered in more detail on the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha.

"When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!' And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord'. Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you'. And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, 'See that no one knows it'. But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country" (Matthew 9:27-31).

These two men were not very well off physically, but were strong in the Faith. The two blind men, whose only lot in life was begging, kept crying out as they followed Jesus (i.e. following the noise of the crowd), "Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matthew 9:27). This expression indicates that they recognized Jesus as Messiah. John Chrysostom stated<sup>11</sup> that the prophets also

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<sup>10</sup> Jerome, Letter to Sabinianus, CXLVII, 9.

<sup>11</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 1.

used the term “Son of David” when addressing the king, whom they wished to honor and declare great (compare Isaiah 37:35). Jesus allowed the blind men to continue crying out to Him along the way as He traveled to the house He was to stay at that evening.

Chrysostom explained<sup>12</sup> that there was a lot going on at this time. Jesus was trying to draw out the faith exhibited by the blind men; also, He was trying to show us to repel the glory that comes from the multitude. He was also instructing the Jewish leaders, who did exactly the opposite of the blind men. We note that the blind men progressed from calling Jesus “Son of David” to calling Him “Lord”. Jesus did similar things for the paralytic, Jairus’ daughter, the centurion, and His disciples from the storm.

Why can it be that Jesus put the blind men off, while they were crying out? Here again, He teaches us utterly to repel the glory that comes from the multitude. For because the house was near, He led them there to heal them in private. This is evident from the fact that He charged them to tell no one.

But this is no light charge against the Jews. When these blind men, though their eyes were struck out, receive the faith by hearing alone, but the Jews beheld the miracles, and having their sight to witness what was happening, do just contrary. Notice the earnestness of the blind men, both by their cry, and by their prayer itself. For they did not merely approach Him, but with loud cries, and saying nothing else but ‘mercy’.

And they called Him ‘Son of David’, because the name was thought to be honorable. In many places, for instance, the prophets likewise so called the kings, whom they wished to honor, and to declare great. Having brought them into the house, Jesus put to them a further question. In many cases He made a point of healing after people asked, lest any should suppose Him to be rushing upon these miracles through vainglory. And not on this account alone, but to indicate also that they deserve healing, and that no one should say, ‘If it was of mere mercy that He saved, all men ought to be saved’. For even His love to man has a kind of proportion; depending on the faith of those that are healed. But not for these causes only does He require faith of them, but since they called Him ‘Son of David’, He wanted to lead them up to what is higher. To teach them to entertain the imaginations they ought of Himself, He said, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ He did not say, ‘Do you believe that I am able to entreat my Father, that I am able to pray’ but, ‘that I am able to do this?’

What then is their word? ‘Yes, Lord’. They didn’t call Him Son of David any more, but soar higher, and acknowledge His dominion. And then at last He for His part lays His hand on them, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you’. And this He does to confirm their faith, and to show that they are participators in the good work, and to witness that their words were not words of flattery. For neither did He say, ‘Let your eyes be opened’, but, ‘According to your faith let it be to you’; which He said to many of them that came unto Him. Before the healing of their bodies, He wanted to proclaim the faith in their soul; so, as both to make them more approved, and to render others more serious. Thus, with respect to the paralyzed also; for there too before giving nerve to the body, He raised up the fallen

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<sup>12</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 1.

soul, saying, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you’ (Mark 2:3-5). And the young damsel too, when He had raised her up, He detained, and by the food taught her who her Benefactor was (Mark 5:42). In the case of the centurion also He did in like manner, leaving the whole to his faith (Matthew 8:5-13). When delivering His disciples from the storm on the sea, He delivered them first from their lack of faith (Matthew 14:24-32). Just so likewise in this case; He knew, even before their cry, the secrets of their mind; but that He might lead on others also to the same earnestness, He makes them known to the rest as well, by the result of their cure proclaiming their hidden faith.

Irenaeus of Lyons stated<sup>13</sup> that man has free will and that this is under his own control. Man’s faith is his own, just like his opinion is his own. With respect to faith, man is in his own power and we should cultivate that.

“Not merely in works, but also in faith, God has preserved the will of man free and under his own control, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you’ (Matthew 9:29); thus, showing that there is a faith specially belonging to man, since he has an opinion specially his own. And again, ‘If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes’ (Mark 9:23); and, ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, *so* let it be done for you’ (Matthew 8:13). Now all such expressions demonstrate that man is in his own power with respect to faith. And for this reason, ‘He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him’ (John 3:36). In the same manner therefore the Lord, both showing His own goodness, and indicating that man is in his own free will and his own power, said to Jerusalem, ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate”’ (Matthew 23:37-38).

Basil the Great stated<sup>14</sup> that worship follows faith and faith is confirmed by power. The believer knows from what he believes and believes from what he knows. We may not comprehend, but still we know.

When did Abraham worship God? Was it not when he believed? And when did he believe? Was it not when he was called? Where in this place is there any testimony in Scripture to Abraham’s comprehending? When did the disciples worship Him? Was it not when they saw creation subject to Him? It was from the obedience of sea and winds to Him that they recognized His Godhead (Matthew 8:27). Therefore, the knowledge came from the operations, and the worship from the knowledge. ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said to Him, "Yes, Lord”’ (Matthew 9:28); and he worshipped Him. So, worship follows faith, and faith is confirmed by power. But if you say that the believer also knows, he knows from what he believes; and *vice versa* he believes from what he knows. We know God from His power. We, therefore, believe in Him who is known, and we worship Him who is believed in.

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<sup>13</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, IV, xxxvii, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Basil the Great, Letter to Amphilochius, CCXXXIV, 3.



Clement of Alexandria stated<sup>15</sup> that nothing is lacking to faith; it is perfect and complete in itself. Having in anticipation grasped by faith that which is future, after the resurrection we receive it as present, as Christ said, “According to your faith let it be to you”. In illumination (Baptism) what we receive is knowledge, and the end of knowledge is rest.

“He says, ‘He who believes in the Son has everlasting life’ (John 3:36). If, then, those who have believed have life, what remains beyond the possession of eternal life? Nothing is lacking to faith, as it is perfect and complete in itself. If anything is lacking to it, it is not wholly perfect. But faith is not lame in any respect; nor after our departure from this world does it make us wait, who have believed, and received without distinction the earnest of future good. But having in anticipation grasped by faith that which is future, after the resurrection we receive it as present, in order that that may be fulfilled which was spoken, ‘According to your faith let it be to you’ (Matthew 9:29). And where faith is, there is the promise; and the consummation of the promise is rest. So that in illumination what we receive is knowledge, and the end of knowledge is rest — the last thing conceived as the object of aspiration. Just as inexperience comes to an end by experience, and perplexity by finding a clear outlet, so by illumination must darkness disappear. The darkness is ignorance, through which we fall into sins, completely blind as to the truth. Knowledge, then, is the illumination we receive, which makes ignorance disappear, and endows us with clear vision. Further, the abandonment of what is bad is the adopting of what is better. For what ignorance has bound, is by knowledge loosed; those bonds are with all speed slackened by human faith and divine grace, our transgressions being taken away by one Paeonian medicine<sup>16</sup>, the baptism of the Word. We are washed from all our sins, and are no longer entangled in evil. This is the one grace of illumination, that our characters are not the same as before our washing.”

### **Lord Have Mercy**

The Church has taken the persistence of Bartimaeus and his friend to heart and the term “Lord have mercy” appears frequently in the Orthodox Liturgy. But there is a depth to this usage that often goes unappreciated.

The Greek word *eleos* meaning compassion or mercy is used widely in the New Testament as a noun, verb (to have mercy), adjective (merciful) and as a noun directed toward someone (compassionateness). This latter use of the root word *eleos* is often translated “*alms!*” Following is a summary of the use of *eleos*:

#### **People Continuously Crying Out “Lord Have Mercy”:**

- Blind Bartimaeus and companion
- Two blind men: (Matthew 9:27-31)

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<sup>15</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, I, 6.

<sup>16</sup> This term comes from ancient Mesopotamia where the goddess Gula presided over health and healing. The rod, intertwined with serpents, which today is the insignia of the medical profession, originated with her son, Ninazu. See <https://www.ancient.eu/article/687/health-care-in-ancient-mesopotamia/>.

- Canaanite woman for her daughter; (Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30)
- Ten lepers: (Luke 17:11-19)

**People Begging, Imploring, Trembling, Prostrating:**

- Man for epileptic son: (Matthew 17:14-21, Mark 9:14-29, Luke 9:37-42)
- Jairus for daughter: (Luke 8:40-56, Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43)
- Woman with hemorrhage: (Luke 8:43-48, Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34)
- One leper: (Luke 5:12-16, Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45)

In these last three cases, *eleos* isn't mentioned but is implied.

**Many Times, the Lord Shows Mercy Without Specific Requests:**

- Virgin Mary at Incarnation (Luke 1:46-55)
- Elizabeth at the birth of John (Luke 1:57-58)
- Zachariah, regarding John's mission (Luke 1:67-79)
- The Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 7:25, 1 Timothy 1:13-16)
- The Gadarene Demoniac (Mark 5:19)
- Epiphroditus (Philippians 2:27)
- The Gentiles (Romans 15:9, 1 Peter 2:10)
- All believers (Romans 11:30-32, 2 Corinthians 4:1, Ephesians 2:4, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:3, Jude 21)
- God has mercy on whom He will (Romans 9:15-18)

**The Lord Desires Mercy, Not Sacrifice:**

Under the Old Testament Law, animal sacrifice was required for forgiveness of sins. The animal sacrifice represented judgment on the animal in place of the offeror, and this foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice for us. However, without mercy in one's heart, sacrifice is pointless. For example:

- The Prophets Hosea and Micah had said it (Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6-8)
- The Scribes and Pharisees didn't understand it (Matthew 9:13, 12:7, 23:23)
- Judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy (James 2:13)
- The wisdom from above is full of mercy (James 3:17)

**Mercy is Often Called "Alms":**

Exploring further the depth of the word *eleos*, it is often translated "alms" from its use in context. But "alms" are merely mercy shown from one person to another in terms of money. Following are some examples where *eleos* could be translated either "mercy" or "alms":

- The Good Samaritan showed mercy (Luke 10:37)
- Dorcas of Lydda was full of good works and of mercy (Acts 9:36)
- Cornelius of Caesarea showed much mercy to the people (Acts 10:1-2). His mercy went up as a memorial before God, (Acts 10:4) and was remembered in the sight of God (Acts 10:31).
- Paul took a collection in Achaia and Macedonia (Romans 15:25-28) at the end of his third missionary journey. He called this mercies and offerings for his nation (Acts 24:17).

- By showing mercy, we gain treasure in heaven (Luke 12:31-33)
- Jesus spoke to the Pharisees: “You clean the outside of the cup or dish, but the inside is full of robbery and wickedness. Give mercy and the inside is clean also” (Luke 11:39-41). Showing mercy cleans out our insides also.
- When we show mercy, we are exhorted to do so cheerfully (Romans 12:8). There is a lot to be cheerful about.
- And also, secretly, that our Father who sees in secret will reward us openly (Matthew 6:1-4), where only God sees the good stuff.

All this is quite a depth to the simple request, “Lord have mercy” that we say so often for ourselves and others. Mercy was a major focus of the message of the Twelve Apostles. We see this in their greetings in their writings: “Grace, mercy and peace...” (2 John 3, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4). “Mercy, peace and love...” (Jude 2). “Peace and mercy on the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16). With this as a background, it’s hard to imagine that we could say “Lord have mercy” too often.