

THE TWO BLIND MEN OF JERICO.

READ ST. MATTHEW XX. 29-34.

JESUS was going to Jerusalem, not by the direct way through Samaria, but through the country on the other side of the river Jordan. Hence it was that He had to pass through Jericho, which lay between the Jordan and Jerusalem, eighteen or twenty miles distant from Jerusalem. It was as He was leaving Jericho, having passed through it, that this happened.

"A great multitude followed Him." Beside the disciples, numbers usually went about with Him, and now doubtless many of the people of Jericho were with Him too. It is so now also. Numbers follow Him outwardly who are not His disciples. Let us not be content to follow Him so. Let us join ourselves to Him heartily as His disciples. Let us learn of Him, believe in Him, love Him, and serve Him. Let us be His altogether.

It seems likely that the two blind men took their place by the wayside on purpose to speak to Jesus as He passed. At all events, when they heard Him come, their whole desire was to make themselves heard by Him: "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David." Perhaps if they had not been blind, they would never have sought Him at all. How many have been brought to Jesus by affliction! Loss of sight, ill-health, sickness and bereavement are grievous in themselves; but when they bring our hearts to God, then they are blessings. All sanctified affliction is blessing.

Jesus had compassion on the blind men. He pities the blind still, for He is not changed. He knows their case. He sees them as plainly as He saw these two. He knows all they feel, and has compassion on them in their blindness. How full of comfort is this thought! Even though the blindness may continue, yet the very thought that He knows and pities is comforting. In this case He touched their eyes, and gave them sight; but He has compassion, even when He does not see it good to do this.

It was hard to get a hearing in that crowd, and the multitude tried to stop their cries, for man is not so compassionate as Jesus is. But no crowd can really hinder prayer. Jesus heard, and stopped, and called the blind men. We may sometimes have outward difficulties about prayer. We may not be able to be alone, for instance. But this need not hinder us from praying. We can pray even in a crowd, and our Saviour will hear us. He will hear us, even though we do not speak a word. He will hear, and attend to, the cry of our hearts.

How urgent real prayer is! The more the people rebuked them, the more the blind men cried, for there was no time to lose; Jesus was passing on, and would soon be gone. Let but a man feel his need, and believe that there is mercy for him in Christ, and no discouragement will stop his praying. Our time is short too. Jesus is near now; but time is passing, and with it our opportunity for prayer. Let us cry to Him for mercy while we may; let us be urgent in prayer.

But what is the mercy that we want? Mercy of every kind, for we are sinners. We want to be looked upon with pity by our Saviour in all our need; in our sinfulness, our ignorance, our weakness; in our greater temptations, in our little daily difficulties, in the worries and vexations of common life. We want mercy to pardon us, to guide us, to strengthen us, to comfort and sanctify us by the Spirit. We may ask for mercy in this general way. We may cry to our Lord, as the blind men did, "Have mercy on us," feeling sure that He knows our necessities before we ask.

Yet He invites us also to lay our special wants before Him. Did He not know what the blind men wanted? Yet He said, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" He knew, yet He would have them tell Him. He knows what we want, all that we desire, and all that we stand in need of; yet He bids us tell Him of it in prayer. The blind may even now tell Him of that trouble, and seek His mercy; and He will give them such relief and blessing as is best. But in another way we are all blind. We want spiritual sight. We want to know more of God in Christ, to have clearer views and deeper experience. And sometimes we want guidance in a great difficulty, a light on our path when all seems dark. We may lay this want before our Lord. When we have drawn near to the throne of grace, then we may hear our Lord saying to us, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" and our answer may be, "Lord, that my eyes may be opened! Lord, that I may know Thy will, and see Thy truth, and experience Thy grace, and find a light from Thee to shine upon my path."

He who had compassion on the blind men will never turn away from such a prayer. "Their eyes received sight, and they followed Him." Mercy received binds us more closely than ever to our Lord. That true light, which is given from above, enlightens not the understanding merely, but the heart; and leads us to follow Christ.

Rev. F. Bourdillon.

THE TWO ROADS.

Two roads stretch out before us,
One "Broad," one "Narrow" way;
In one of these we're treading,
Both you and I to-day.

The "Broad" road seems the easiest,
But it will lead to hell;
The "Narrow" ends in heaven,
Where God and angels dwell.

Which is the path *you're* chosen?
A solemn question this!
Oh! may it be the "Narrow,"
That leads to heavenly bliss.

But if you cannot say, "*It is,*"
Then may these lines be blest;
Help you to seek the Saviour,
And find in Him your rest.