

# Rise! He Calleth Thee

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*Of the Seventy*

The gospel is not a way to avoid challenges and problems but a solution to increase our faith and learn how to deal with them.

Some time ago I asked my wife, “Can you tell me why, as far as I remember, we have never had any major problems in our lives?”

She looked at me and said, “Sure. I’ll tell you why we have never had any major problems; it’s because you have a very short memory!”

Her quick and smart answer made me realize once again that living the gospel of Jesus Christ does not remove pain and trials, which are necessary to grow.

The gospel is not a way to avoid challenges and problems but a solution to increase our faith and learn how to deal with them.

I had a sense of this truth a few months ago when I was walking one day and suddenly my sight became blurry, dark, and wavy. I was scared. Then the doctors told me, “If you don’t begin treatment immediately, you may lose your sight even in a matter of weeks.” I was even more scared.

And then they said, “You need intravitreal injections—injections right in the eye, wide-open eye—every four weeks for the rest of your life.”

That was an uncomfortable wake-up call.

Then a reflection came in the form of a question. I asked myself, “OK! My physical sight is not good, but what about my spiritual vision? Do I need any treatment there? And what does it mean to have a clear spiritual vision?”

I pondered about the story of a blind man called Bartimaeus, described in the Gospel of Mark. The scripture says, “And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”<sup>1</sup>

Technically, in the eyes of many, Jesus was just the son of Joseph, so why did Bartimaeus call Him “Son of David”? Simply because he recognized that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, who was prophesied to be born as a descendant of David.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting that this blind man, who didn’t have physical sight, recognized Jesus. He saw spiritually what he couldn’t see physically, while many others could see Jesus physically but were totally blind spiritually.

From this story we learn more about clear spiritual vision.

We read, “And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”<sup>3</sup>

All around him were telling him to be quiet, but he cried out even more because he knew who Jesus really was. He ignored those voices and screamed even louder.

He acted instead of being acted upon. Despite his limited circumstances, he used his faith to go beyond his limitations.

So, the *first principle* we learn is *we keep a clear spiritual vision when we focus on Jesus Christ and stay true to what we know to be true.*

Brothers and sisters, to keep our spiritual sight intact, we need to decide not to listen to the voices of the world around us. In this confusing and confused world, we must stay faithful to what we know, faithful to our covenants, faithful in keeping the commandments and reaffirm our beliefs even stronger, like this man did. We need to cry even louder our testimony of the Lord to the world. This man knew Jesus, stayed faithful to what he believed, and was not distracted by the voices around him.

There are many voices today trying to lower our voices as disciples of Jesus Christ. The voices of the world are trying to silence us, but that’s exactly why we must declare our testimony of the Savior louder and stronger. Among all the voices of the world, the Lord is counting on me and you to declare our testimonies, to raise our voice, and to become His voice. If we don’t do it, who will testify of Jesus Christ? Who will speak His name and declare His divine mission?

We have a spiritual charge that comes from our knowledge of Jesus Christ.

But what did Bartimaeus do after that?

At the Lord’s command to *rise*, he acted again in faith.

The scripture says, “And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.”<sup>4</sup>

This humble and faithful man understood that he could rise to a better life at Jesus’s command. He knew that he was better than his circumstances, and the very first thing he did when he heard Jesus calling him was to throw away his beggar’s coat.

Again he acted instead of being acted upon.

He might have thought, “I don’t need this anymore, now that Jesus has come into my life. This is a new day. I’m done with this life of misery. With Jesus I can start a new life of happiness and joy in Him, with Him, and through Him. And I don’t care what the world thinks of me. Jesus is calling me, and He will help me live a new life.”

What a remarkable change!

As he threw away his beggar’s coat, he got rid of all excuses.

And this is a *second principle*: *we keep a clear spiritual vision when we leave the natural man behind, repent, and begin a new life in Christ.*

The way to do it is by making and keeping covenants to rise to a better life through Jesus Christ.

As long as we make excuses to feel sorry for ourselves, sorry for our circumstances and problems, and sorry for all the bad things happening in our lives and even all the bad people who *we think* make us unhappy, we keep the beggar's coat on our shoulders. It is true that, at times, people (consciously or not) hurt us. But we need to decide to act with faith in Christ by removing the mental and emotional coat that we might still wear to hide excuses or sin and throw it away, knowing that He can and will heal us.

There is never a good excuse to say, "I am the way I am because of some unfortunate and unpleasant circumstances. And I cannot change, and I am justified."

When we think that way, we decide to be acted upon.

We keep the beggar's coat.

Acting in faith means to rely on our Savior, believing that through His Atonement, we can *rise* above everything at His command.

The third principle is in the last four words: "[he] came to Jesus."

How could he go to Jesus since he was blind? The only way was to walk toward Jesus by hearing His voice.

And this is a *third principle: we keep a clear spiritual vision when we hear the voice of the Lord and allow Him to guide us.*

Just as this man raised his voice over the voices around him, he was able to listen to the voice of the Lord in the middle of all other voices.

This is the same faith that allowed Peter to walk on water as long as he kept his spiritual focus on the Lord and was not distracted by the winds around him.

Then the story of this blind man ends with the words "he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."<sup>5</sup>

One of the most important lessons in this story is that this man exercised true faith in Jesus Christ and received a miracle because he asked with *real intent*, the *real intent* to follow Him.

And this is the ultimate reason for the blessings we receive in our lives, which is to follow Jesus Christ. It is about recognizing *Him*, making and keeping covenants with God *because of Him*, changing our very nature *through Him*, and enduring to the end by following *Him*.

For me, keeping a clear spiritual vision is all about focusing on Jesus Christ.

So is my spiritual sight clear as I get my eye injections? Well, who am I to say? But I am grateful for what I see.

I clearly see the hand of the Lord in this sacred work and in my life.

I see the faith of many wherever I go who strengthen my own faith.

I see angels all around me.

I see the faith of many who don't see the Lord physically but recognize Him spiritually, because they know Him intimately.

I testify that this gospel is the answer for everything, because Jesus Christ is the answer for everyone. I am grateful for what I can see as I follow my Savior.

I promise that as we hear the voice of the Lord and allow Him to guide us on the Savior's covenant path, we will be blessed with clear vision, spiritual understanding, and peace of heart and mind throughout our lives.

May we cry our testimony of Him louder than the voices around us in a world that needs to hear more of Jesus Christ and not less. May we remove the beggar's coat that we might still wear and rise above the world to a better life in and through Christ. May we get rid of all excuses not to follow Jesus Christ and find all good reasons to follow Him as we hear His voice. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. Mark 10:47.
2. See Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; Matthew 21:9.
3. Mark 10:48.
4. Mark 10:50.
5. Mark 10:52.