

The call of blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)

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Abstract

The story of Blind Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52) displays some traits that are unusual in a synoptic healing miracle and it displays most of the features of a call story. The genesis of the narration may account for the combination of these two genres: the story about the calling of the blind beggar Bartimaeus has been expanded by that of the healing of the blind man, where Jesus focuses attention on his faith. Next, the crowd was introduced to highlight Bartimaeus' faith. Finally, the pericope was adapted to fit into Mark's Gospel. The main editorial contribution of the evangelist is his contextualizing of the scene at the end of the section 8:27-10:52, which deals with Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, to suffering and death. In this episode Jesus calls Bartimaeus to follow him on his way. Mark added significance to the story by contrasting Bartimaeus with other characters, especially Peter, James and John, the foremost three disciples. This contrast may imply some criticism of leadership in the Markan community.

1. INTRODUCTION

More than twenty-five years ago, I published an article on Mark 10:46-52 in a *Festschrift* for the Dutch pastoral theologian Henk Manders (Menken 1978). This book was known only within a limited circle, so that (apart from a single exception) the article was not listed in any of the international New Testament bibliographies and hardly elicited any scholarly response. The gist of my position was that the nucleus from which the Bartimaeus pericope Mark 10:46-52 developed was a story about the *calling* of blind Bartimaeus. From this perspective, it seemed to be possible to explain not only some of the unusual features of what seems to be, at first glance, a healing story, but also the tensions and irregularities that are found in this story.

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With hindsight, it now seems that the notion that the Bartimaeus story can be fruitfully compared to call stories was somehow “in the air” at the time: in the year in which my article appeared and for some time thereafter, several studies were published in which call stories were, in one way or another, used to clarify the pericope (here, I would like to mention Achtemeier 1978; Farla 1978:5-32; Culpepper 1982; Steinhauser 1982-1983, 1986; Droge 1983:252; Butts 1987:213, 217-218; Marshall 1989:140-144; Schlumberger 1993; Van Iersel & Nuchelmans 1995:109-111; Painter 1997; Van Iersel 1998:338-344; Olekamma 1999:253-257; cf Eckstein 1996:40-41). Farla’s (1978) analysis of Mark 10:46-52 in particular came close to mine, in that he also considered a call story as one of the components of the narrative. The invitation to contribute to the present collection of essays seems to be a good opportunity to rethink and to reword the argument that I wrote a quarter of a century ago in the light of more recent literature. My argument consists of three steps:

- a) I start by considering the genre of Mark 10:46-52, in order to demonstrate that it actually contains an almost complete call story.
- b) Next, I reconstruct the genesis of the story. Its earliest traceable layer appears to have been the story of the calling of blind Bartimaeus, and this nucleus has been expanded by a healing story.
- c) Finally, I contextualize this combination of the calling and healing of blind Bartimaeus in Mark’s Gospel as a whole: what is the significance of this short narrative within Mark’s larger composition?

2. FORM CRITICISM

If one judges according to the headings given to the pericope Mark 10:46-52 in various editions and translations of the New Testament, and according to descriptions of the pericope in much exegetical literature, one gets the impression that the Bartimaeus story is a healing story, albeit one in which much attention is given to the person to be healed (see Dibelius 1933:49-50; Bultmann 1970:228; Lohmeyer 1967:223-227; Taylor 1966:446-449; Grundmann 1977:295-299; Hahn 1974:262-264; Burger 1970:42-46, 59-63; Kertelge 1970:179-182; Roloff 1970:121-126; Robbins 1973; Koch 1975:126-132; Schenke 1974:350-369; Theißen 1974; Pesch 1977:167-175; Gnllka 1979:108-112; Den Heyer 1979:89-101; Johnson 1978; Best 1981:139-145; Busemann 1983:161-172, 215-216; Dupont 1985; Lührmann 1987:181-184; Hooker 1991:251-253; Kirchschräger 1992; Eckstein 1996; Olekamma 1999).

However, a close reading of this short narrative shows that it displays several traits that are rather unusual for a healing story in the synoptic tradition.

The first of these features is the circumstance that the person who is to be healed is a named individual: he is “the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus” (v 46). Such naming seldom occurs in other synoptic healing stories. The only comparable cases are Simon’s mother-in-law (Mk 1:30; Lk 4:38; cf Mt 8:14) and Jairus’ little daughter (Mk 5:22-23; Lk 8:41-42).

Secondly, the reader is informed about the occupation by which Bartimaeus earns his living: he is a beggar. Again, few of the other synoptic healing stories provide parallels. In Matthew 8:5-6 and Luke 7:2, we hear that the servant of a centurion is ill, but here the information on the patient’s occupation serves to indicate the relationship between him and the supplicant. The profession of the latter might rather serve as a parallel, but he is not asking for healing for himself.

The third unusual point is the end of the pericope: “and he followed him on the way” (v 52). That the healed person follows Jesus is a detail which is, among the synoptic healing stories, unique to the Bartimaeus pericope and the Matthean and Lukan parallels which depend on it (see Mt 20:34; Lk 18:43).² The only comparable passage is the end of the story of the Gerasene demoniac (Mk 5:18-20; Lk 8:38-39), but there the healed person is not allowed to stay with Jesus.

Apart from these details, it must be noted that it is not easy to fit the story as a whole into the common pattern of a healing story, which consists of an exposition, a healing, the establishing of the healing, and a reaction. In the pericope under discussion, the exposition is very elaborate, including a detailed description of the encounter between Jesus and the blind man and the obstacles that hinder the encounter. The healing itself is reported very succinctly (v 52a). The reaction of the audience is missing. Instead, there is the reaction of the healed man, who follows Jesus, in spite of Jesus’ command to go (v 52c).

Not only does this pericope deviate in various respects from the standard form of a healing miracle, it also displays almost all the features of another literary genre, namely the call story. This literary form appears three times in Mark’s Gospel: first in the story of the calling of Simon and his brother Andrew (1:16-18), immediately afterwards in the story of the calling of James and his brother John (1:19-20), and then in the story of the calling of Levi (2:14). Matthew borrowed all three narratives from Mark (4:18-20, 21-22; 9:9). In Luke, the stories about the pairs of brothers from Mark 1 have been recast (5:1-11), and the one about Levi has been copied (5:27-28). There is also a

² Throughout this article, I presuppose that the two-document hypothesis is correct.

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non-synoptic specimen in the calling of Philip in John 1:43. Some of the traits of this genre are also found in the story of the rich man in Mark 10:17-22 (and its parallels Mt 19:16-22; Lk 18:18-23); in this case, however, the outcome is negative.

The pattern of these call stories is evidently a fixed one (see Coutts 1959:152; cf Droge 1983; Butts 1987). In its complete form, a story belonging to this genre consists of seven elements: (1) Jesus passes by; (2) he sees; (3) the object of his seeing is a person (or persons) mentioned by name and sometimes even characterized as the “son of ...” (in view of the abandoning of family ties, see no [6]); (4) this person is performing his duty/task (this is mentioned in view of his later abandonment of his occupation and possessions, see no [6]); (5) Jesus calls him; (6) the person leaves his duty, possessions or family behind; (7) he follows Jesus. The rigidity of the pattern is clear from the following scheme (I used the NRSV):

	Mk 1:16-18	Mk 1:19-20	Mk 2:14	Jn 1:43
1	As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee,	As he went a little farther,	As he was walking along,	The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee.
2	he saw	he saw	he saw	He found
3	Simon and his brother Andrew	James son of Zebedee and his brother John,	Levi son of Alphaeus	Philip
4	casting a net into the lake – for they were fishermen.	who were in their boat mending the nets.	sitting at the tax booth,	
5	And Jesus said to them, Follow me and I will make you fish for people.	Immediately he called them;	and he said to him, Follow me.	and said to him, Follow me.
6	And immediately they left their nets	and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men,		
7	and followed him.	and followed him.	And he got up and followed him.	

In Luke 5:1-11, the same seven elements can be recognized (see vv 1-2, 10-11); in Mark 10:17-22, elements (1) and (5) can be recognized (see vv 17, 21), but there is a variation in element (6): the man is unable to leave his possessions (see v 22). The probable origin of the pattern is to be found in 1 Kings 19:19-21, the calling of Elisha by Elijah. A characteristic difference from the New Testament stories is the delay which Elisha stipulates (cf Lk 9:59-62;

Mt 8:21-22). The pattern of the New Testament stories shows the unconditional and immediate character of the calling by Jesus.

Almost all the elements of this pattern appear in their usual sequence in Mark 10:46-52:

- It is evident from verse 46 that Jesus is passing by: he is leaving Jericho, while Bartimaeus is sitting at the side of the road (this element is emphasised in Mt 20:30; Lk 18:37; cf also Mk 10:49, 52).
- In its present form, the story does not say that Jesus “sees” the blind man. I shall return to this point below, in Section 2.
- This story also agrees with the call stories in that the man is named. Moreover, the name Bartimaeus is a patronymic, as its Greek translation also shows (cf Mk 1:19; 2:14).
- Bartimaeus is performing his duty when Jesus passes by: he is begging at the roadside (v 46; cf Levi’s sitting at the tax booth, Mk 2:14).
- In verse 49, Jesus calls Bartimaeus. In the present form of the story, the calling occurs indirectly, through the crowd. In any case, Jesus commands the crowd to call Bartimaeus, and they tell the beggar: “he is calling you”. The content of the calling is missing here, just as in Mark 1:20. That the verb used here for “calling” is φωνεῖν and not, as in 1:20, καλεῖν, is relatively unimportant: both verbs can be used in a context such as this (see Betz 1973:296). Φωνεῖν to indicate an authoritative call to follow Jesus is also found in John 1:48; 10:3; 11:28 (see further Lk 14:12-13, and the textual variants in Mk 3:31 and Jn 10:3).
- It is clear that Bartimaeus abandons his occupation and his possessions from verse 50a: “and he threw his cloak away” (ὁ δὲ ἀποβαλὼν τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ; see LSJ, s v ἀποβάλλειν 2; also Busemann 1983:170; Schlumberger 1993:78; Olekamma 1999:81-83). According to Exodus 22:25-26 and Deuteronomy 24:12-13, the most essential possession of a poor person (and a beggar would undoubtedly be poor) is his cloak. It is his only shelter, and if it is taken in pledge, it must be returned before evening. For an oriental beggar, moreover, his cloak is the “instrument” with which he performs his duty:

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he puts it down on the road in the hope that passers-by will deposit their gifts on it (see especially Lohmeyer 1967:226). Mark 10:50a is not concerned with a picturesque detail, but with an essential element of a call story: the abandonment of the occupation and possessions of the person who has been called.

- That the person called follows Jesus is evident in this pericope: “and he followed him on the way” (v 52).

Clearly, Mark 10:46-52 displays almost all the features of a call story in their usual sequence and connection.³ In the parallels to this pericope, Matthew 20:29-34 and Luke 18:35-43, these features have been partly erased: it seems as if these evangelists have tried to make Mark’s combination of a healing and a call story into a more univocal healing story. In any case, in Mark we are dealing with a combination of a healing and a call story. There are other examples of such a combination of two genres: Mark 2:1-12 is a combination of a healing story and the story of a controversy, and Luke 5:1-11 combines a gift miracle and a call story.

Thus far, we have analysed our pericope in a synchronic way, by looking for genre characteristics. However, the fact that this healing story contains an almost complete call story suggests that a diachronic explanation is also required: does the genesis of the story account for the combination of two genres?

3. TRADITION HISTORY

The peculiar features, discussed in the above section, which make it difficult to consider Mark 10:46-52 a straightforward healing miracle can be considered in different ways. Depending upon whether one assumes that the complex or the simple story came first in the tradition process, one could be tempted to consider these features either as proof of primitiveness, or as indicating a complicated genesis. It is, however, highly debatable whether one can indeed start from such general principles. Arguably, both options are possible (see Sanders 1969; Theißen 1974:28, 175-189; Eckstein 1996:36-37, 44-45).

³ The connection between throwing away what one needs to perform one’s task and leaping up and following someone is also evident from Lucian, *Cat* 15, where the cobbler Mikyllos tells about his willingness to accompany Atropos, one of the three Fates: ἐγὼ δὲ ... ἄσμενος ἀπορρίψας τὴν σμίλην καὶ τὸ κάττυμα οὐδὲ τὴν μελαντηρίαν ἀποὺν ἰψάμενος ἀναπηδήσας εὐθὺς ἀνυπόδητος ... εἶπομην, “but I threw away with delight knife and sole, I did not even wipe off the shoe polish, I jumped up and immediately followed barefooted”.

There are, in any case, indications that Mark 10:46-52 has a complicated genesis: the pericope contains a series of tensions and irregularities, which raise the suspicion that elements of various provenance have been combined. Below I describe and try to explain these tensions and irregularities (see also Dibelius 1933:49-50; Bultmann 1970:228, 368-369; Lohmeyer 1967:224, 226-227; Grundmann 1977:296-297; Hahn 1974:262 n 1; Reploh 1969:222-224; Burger 1970:43-45; Kertelge 1970:179-181; Roloff 1970:121-123, 126 n 67; Robbins 1973:227-236; Koch 1975:126-131; Schenke 1974:350-361; Theißen 1974:146; Achtemeier 1978:116-120; Farla 1978:5-32; Johnson 1978:191-198; Gnilka 1979:108-109; Busemann 1983:161-172, 204; Steinhauser 1986:588-592; Lührmann 1987:182, 184; Eckstein 1996:43-44; Olekamma 1999:225-246). It then remains to examine how this diachronic approach relates to the results of the synchronic approach, namely the proposition that the pericope contains a call story.

In 10:46, the arrival in Jericho (“and they came to Jericho”) is immediately followed by the departure from Jericho (“as he was leaving Jericho”); the name of the city is mentioned twice in rapid succession. The plural ἔρχονται is followed by the singular ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ, but to this singular *genitivus absolutus* two further subjects have been added (“and his disciples and a large crowd”), with the result that the construction appears overloaded.

The simplest explanation for these tensions is that the pericope originally started with “as he was leaving Jericho”, and that the evangelist added verse 46a⁴ and inserted the disciples in verse 46b. In this way, he was able to integrate a scene that originally took place when Jesus left Jericho and in which the disciples were absent into Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem as depicted in his Gospel. To Mark, the disciples are Jesus’ permanent companions, and the evangelist sometimes introduces them into pericopae in which they were originally absent (cf, e g, 1:21; 5:1; 8:22). The reference to the crowd in the genitive absolute looks like an addition as well, but it may well belong to another literary level, because the crowd plays an active role in verses 48-49.

If we now look at the rest of the story, we observe the following tensions and irregularities:

⁴ Mark likes the historic present, especially with ἔρχεσθαι (see Hawkins 1909:34, 146). He regularly has ἔρχεται (or ἔρχονται) with Jesus (and his disciples) as subject at the beginning of a pericope, see 3:20; 6:1; 8:22; 10:1; 11:15, 27; 14:17, 32. On the other hand, ἐκπορεύεσθαι belongs to Mark’s preferred vocabulary (see Hawkins 1909:12; Dschulnigg 1984:119), so that v 46a could be the original introduction (so Schenke 1974:354; Gnilka 1979:108; Busemann 1983:162-165; cf Mk 10:17); however, this assumption makes it difficult to explain the overloaded *genitivus absolutus*. In Farla’s (1978:9-25) view, vv 46ab, 47-48, as well as part of v 49, all stem from Mark’s pen; this extreme and implausible position is based on the neglect of some tensions, confusion of Markan wording with Markan origin, and an unjustified preference for “pure” forms.

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- Apart from the casual reference in verse 46, the crowd (referred to as “many” in v 48, cf 2:2, 4) is active in verses 48-49 only and is absent from the rest of the pericope. Even a reaction from them at the end of the story, after the miracle, is missing.
- There is a certain tension between the titles with which Jesus is addressed: on the one hand, there is the Messianic title “Son of David” in verses 47-48 and, on the other hand, the more human “Rabbouni” (“Teacher”, see Jn 20:16) in verse 51.
- The plea “Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me” of verse 47 is repeated in verse 48 without “Jesus”.
- Verse 49 gives the impression of being overloaded: three times and with a very small interval, the verb φωνεῖν, “to call” appears. The verse is peculiar in another respect. The crowd address the blind man with the words θάρσει, ἔγειρε, “take heart, get up”. The first imperative is not unusual in miracle stories: the person to be saved is told to take heart (see Mt 9:2; 9:22; 14:27 = Mk 6:50; 3 Kgdms 17:13 LXX; Philostratus, *Vit Apoll* 3:38; 4:10, 34; also see Theißen 1974:68). In all instances, however, the imperative is found on the lips not of the audience but of the miracle worker. Something similar applies to the second imperative: it appears in healing stories, either as a healing command (Mk 2:9, 11 parr; 5:41 = Lk 8:54; Jn 5:8; cf ἐγέρθητι Lk 7:14; ἀνάστηθι Ac 9:34, 40; 14:10) or as a preparation for the miracle (Mk 3:3 = Lk 6:8), but again always on the lips of the miracle worker. Have these two imperatives shifted from Jesus to the public?
- A final point to be noted is the sudden change in the attitude of the crowd: in verse 48 they urge the blind man to be silent, in verse 49 they encourage him.

All these tensions and irregularities point in the same direction and can be plausibly explained by assuming that the crowd did not originally have a part in the story but were introduced at a later stage. Verse 48 in its entirety and verse 49 (as far as the crowd play a role in it) are secondary, just as – as already surmised – the reference to the “large crowd” in verse 46. Before these secondary elements were added, there was only one plea, addressed to “Jesus”, without the title “Son of David”. In verse 49, it was originally Jesus

who called the blind man (cf the end of v 49: “he is calling you”) and said to him “take heart, get up”, as a reaction to his plea “Jesus, have mercy on me” (v 47; for similar conclusions, see especially Burger 1970:45; Robbins 1973:231-236). This transposition of words from Jesus to the crowd became necessary because the introduction of a crowd of people around Jesus created a physical distance between Jesus and the blind man. In order to bridge that distance, the “many” have to act as mediators in the contact between Jesus and the blind man. The reason for the introduction of the crowd is obvious: they have to hinder the blind man from approaching Jesus, so that his persistent faith shows itself all the more clearly (v 52; cf Mk 2:4-5; 7:27-29). Before the crowd was introduced, he only showed his faith by crying for help (v 47); he now does so by not being put off by the crowd (cf Theißen 1974:62-63; Gnilka 1979:108-109; Schlumberger 1993:77; Eckstein 1996:42-43).

Was Mark responsible for the introduction of the crowd, or did it already occur at the pre-Markan level? Some stylistic peculiarities in verses 47-48⁵ and the apparent presence of the characteristically Markan “Messianic secret” in verse 48 have led some scholars to suspect that Mark was responsible for the addition (Burger 1970:59-63; Robbins 1973:231-236; Schenke 1974:358-361; Farla 1978:24). However, stylistic peculiarities are not a sufficient basis for assuming a Markan *origin* for this part of the story; besides, the phrase ὄχλος ἰκανός in verse 46 is not Markan (it is used only here in Mark). As for the Messianic secret, it is very doubtful whether verse 48 should be related to it (so already Wrede 1901:278-279): the crowd seems to know Jesus’ dignity, it is not Jesus who urges the blind man to be silent, and it is not clear whether the command to be silent concerns the title “Son of David”. One can even doubt whether Mark attaches much value to the title “Son of David” (see Achtemeier 1978:125-133; Johnson 1978:196; Gnilka 1979:108; Steinhauser 1986:590). In 12:35-37, it is very much relativized in favour of “Christ”, and in the story of the entry into Jerusalem, the Markan Jesus is not hailed as “the Son of David” (as the Matthean one is, Mt 21:9); instead, the crowd shout: “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” I conclude that the crowd was probably introduced at the pre-Markan level.

We have now removed two literary layers: Mark’s redaction, and all that concerns the crowd. What is left is a story that must have run more or less as follows:

As he was leaving Jericho, the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was

⁵ Ἀρχεσθαι + infinitive, the tautology κράζειν καὶ λέγειν, ἐπιτιμᾶν (cf especially Mk 8:32; 10:13), ἵνα + subjunctive to indicate the contents of a command, πολλοί, σιωπᾶν.

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Jesus the Nazarene, he began to shout out and say: Jesus, have mercy on me! And Jesus stood still and called him, saying: Take heart, get up. He threw his cloak away, jumped up and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said to him: What do you want me to do for you? The blind man said to him: Rabbouni, that I may see! And Jesus said to him: Go, your faith has saved you. And immediately he regained his sight, and he followed him.⁶

I do not claim precision for this reconstruction: an exact reconstruction is impossible, especially when the development took place during the stage of oral tradition, in which the form of a story is much more constant than its actual phrasing. What is notable, however, is that all the elements of a call story, as we found them to be present in Mark 10:46-52, are in the above reconstruction. The rest of the reconstructed text constitutes a complete healing story: the blind man cries for help, Jesus encourages him, the man comes to Jesus, Jesus asks him what he wants him to do, the man requests that he may regain his sight, Jesus sends him away and confirms that his faith has saved him, the man regains his sight. If we subtract, so to speak, the elements that belong to a healing story, we retain a fairly straightforward call story:

As he was leaving Jericho, the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside (or maybe: he saw Bartimaeus sitting by the roadside; see below). And Jesus stood still and called him. He threw his cloak away, jumped up and followed him.

From a diachronic point of view, we have here what is apparently a call story combined with a healing story. The combination is not original: the two genres are very different and they normally occur separately and, in verse 52, there is a tension between command and execution. The story of the calling of the blind beggar Bartimaeus very probably stands at the beginning of the development: a story about the calling of a *blind* man is easily expanded with a story of the healing of a blind man, but the reverse, namely that a healing story is expanded with a call story, is less plausible. Moreover, the call story provides the (spatial) pattern: Jesus passes the blind man who is sitting at the roadside and he stops, Bartimaeus jumps up and follows Jesus. The only call story item that is absent in the story in its present form is Jesus' seeing the person who is to be called, but this was probably caused by the circumstance that in a healing story the disabled person has to draw the attention of the

⁶ We shall see later that the words ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, "on the way", at the end of 52, are probably also due to Markan editing. The editorial character of these words can be shown only if the Markan context of the pericope is taken into account.

miracle worker. Here, the blind man draws attention to himself by calling to Jesus for help, thereby showing his faith.⁷

The tradition history of Mark 10:46-52 can now be reconstructed. A story about the call of the blind beggar Bartimaeus has been expanded with a story about the healing of the blind man; in the latter story, Jesus focuses attention on the man's faith, which is shown by his plea. In the next phase, the crowd has been introduced, to make the man's faith stand out more strongly: they hinder the man from reaching Jesus, and his plea is doubled. Finally, Mark has slightly adapted the story to fit it into his Gospel. Even in the form which the story now has in Mark, the pattern of the call story can still be recognized.

I conclude this section with a few remarks on form, meaning and function of the pre-Markan story. Call and healing have been intercalated here in a very specific way. The actual healing takes place between the penultimate and the last element of the call story: between the negative aspect of the reaction to Jesus' call, the abandonment of his occupation and possessions by the person who is called, and its positive aspect, the following of Jesus. Bartimaeus throws his cloak away while he is still blind, and only after his eyes have been opened does he follow Jesus. Apparently, abandoning the old ties and following Jesus do not simply coincide: the latter is only possible when one's eyes have been opened. This succession of narrative elements suggests that in this pericope blindness and seeing should be understood symbolically (cf Jn 9). Besides, the combination of a calling and the healing and the addition of verse 48 have made Bartimaeus and his faith the centre of attention. In preaching and teaching, his attitude is presented as an example of a faith which overcomes boundaries, of prompt reaction to Jesus' call, of having one's eyes opened by Jesus and following him. The location in Jericho, the Aramaic name Bartimaeus, the titles "Son of David" and "Rabbouni" – all point to a Palestinian setting for this preaching and teaching.

4. MARK 10:46-52 IN THE CONTEXT OF MARK'S GOSPEL

The final question to be asked is what the significance of the short narrative Mark 10:46-52 within Mark's composition is. In his role of editor, Mark has not interfered very much with the story of the calling and healing of Bartimaeus itself; we have seen that there are only a few interventions in the text that can be ascribed with some certainty to the evangelist. Mark's editorial contribution

⁷ According to Farla (1978:27-30), Mark would have "shredded" a complete call story over the narrative. To my mind, this would have been a most unusual way of editing for this evangelist. Farla's own survey of tradition and redaction in Mk 10:46-12:40 (Farla 1978:523-529) shows that it would be a unique case indeed.

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is to be found mainly in his contextualizing of the Bartimaeus story. I would like to proceed here in two steps. First, I describe the main lines of the section of Mark's Gospel that concerns Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and look at the significance of Mark 10:46-52 at the end of this section. Next, I focus on a series of contrasts which Mark has created between Bartimaeus and other characters that appear in his Gospel.

4.1 Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in Mark, and the Bartimaeus story as its conclusion

There is a certain *communis opinio* on the most important caesurae and turning points in the Gospel of Mark (see, e.g. Lang 1977:1-2; Dupont 1985:351-357; Eckstein 1996:45-50; Olekamma 1999:31-34). Peter's confession in the neighbourhood of Caesarea Philippi (8:27-30) is generally considered to be the major turning point: there, Jesus enters upon his journey to Jerusalem, the journey to suffering and death, and he starts to explain this to his disciples, together with the consequences it will have for them. In 11:1-11, Jerusalem, the destination of the journey, is reached and the final and decisive conflict with the Jewish authorities begins.

From a geographical point of view, Jesus' journey to Jerusalem is marked by a series of indications of towns and regions: Jesus and his disciples go to the villages of Caesarea Philippi (8:27), through Galilee (9:30), to Capernaum (9:33), to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan (10:1), to Jerusalem (10:32), through Jericho (10:46). Besides, the reader is regularly informed that Jesus and his disciples are ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, "on the road": 8:27; 9:33, 34; 10:32, 52 (cf also 10:17, 46).

From a theological point of view, the section 8:27-10:52 is clearly marked by the three predictions of the passion, death and resurrection of the Son of Man (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; cf Van Iersel 1998:270-277). All three predictions are followed by a series of sayings of Jesus or a dialogue with Jesus in which he makes clear that the fate of his disciples will not be different from his own fate; his utterances to this effect are always provoked by a misunderstanding on the part of the disciples. After the first passion prediction, Peter begins to rebuke Jesus (8:32). Jesus puts Peter in his place again, after him (8:33), that is, following him (cf ὀπίσω μου / αὐτοῦ, "after me/him", 8:34; 1:17, 20). He then continues to show the crowd and his disciples what the cost of discipleship is: "If any one wants to follow after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (8:34, see also 8:35-9:13). To the second passion prediction, the disciples react with incomprehension (9:32); afterwards, it appears that on the way, they have argued with one another as to who is the greatest (9:33-34). Jesus answers this with the words: "If any one wants to be first, he must be last of all and

servant of all” (9:35). Mark 10:35-45 moves along the same lines: after the third passion prediction, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, demonstrate their incomprehension by requesting a position of power in Jesus’ glory (10:35-37). Jesus tells them that their first priority should be to follow him in his passion (10:38-40). Next, he opposes the greatness of his followers to the greatness of those in power: whoever wants to be great among his disciples must be the servant and slave to all, “for the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:41-45). From all these Markan passages, it is evident that what is demanded from the disciples is to follow Jesus on the way of service – to the death, if necessary. The message of Jesus to his disciples is at the same time the message of Mark to his community: Mark’s audience would no doubt have recognized themselves primarily in the disciples as depicted in the Gospel narrative (see, for example, Reploh 1969; Malbon 2000; Van Oyen 2000). Several Markan passages (4:17; 8:34-38; 10:30; 13:9-13) indicate that Mark’s community suffers persecution.

Mark has placed the Bartimaeus pericope at the end of the section 8:27-10:52. An obvious reason to put it there was, of course, the location in Jericho; another, more important reason was that it offered Mark an opportunity to include an example of following Jesus on his way of suffering and death. In the present context, the final clause of the pericope is crucial: “and he followed him *on the way*”. The words “on the way” (ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ) are, as we have already observed, frequently used in the section 8:27-10:52 and function as a connecting factor, but they are not necessary to conclude a call story (cf Mk 1:18, 20; 2:14). This suggests that in 10:52, they are redactional and that Mark has used them to give his own interpretation to the pericope (so, e.g., Reploh 1969:223; Koch 1975:131; Farla 1978:10, 25; Best 1981:15-18; Schlumberger 1993:75; Eckstein 1996:44; ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ in the sense of “on the journey” is considered to be a characteristic of the Markan style by Hawkins 1909:12; Dschulnigg 1984:121-122).⁸ The “way” that determines the entire section Mark 8:27-10:52, is the way to Jerusalem, and this is the way to Jesus’ passion and death, as 10:32-34 in particular shows. Bartimaeus is called by Jesus to follow him on *this* way. Bartimaeus is presented as an example to Mark’s community: they are also called to go the way of service and, if necessary, of martyrdom, following in the footsteps of the Son of Man (cf 10:45).

⁸ There are also interpreters who consider the entire clause καὶ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ as redactional (Kertelge 1970:180; Robbins 1973:227-228; Schenke 1974:355; Johnson 1978:197-198; Gnllka 1979:109, 111; Best 1981:139; Busemann 1983:163-166; Olekamma 1999:244-245). As the conclusion to the call story, however, the words καὶ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ must have belonged to the material which Mark had at his disposal. By adding ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, Mark created an inclusion with v 46 (see Neiryck 1988:132).

4.2 Bartimaeus in contrast with other Markan characters

Mark has also given significance to the Bartimaeus story by placing the figure of Bartimaeus in contrast to some other Markan characters (see Farla 1978:30-32). For a start, there is a contrast between Bartimaeus and the rich man of the nearby pericope in 10:17-22 (see Dupont 1985:354-355). As I already explained in Section 1 of this article (on form criticism), the story about the rich man displays some traits which make it a “failed call story”.

Bartimaeus succeeds where the rich man fails.

Another, more elaborate contrast is that between Bartimaeus on the one hand, and Peter, James and John as the three foremost disciples on the other. It seems that Mark considers “the twelve” as the nucleus of the larger group of “the disciples”, and within “the twelve”, the three just mentioned constitute a kind of “core group” which accompany Jesus on important occasions and receive special instruction from him. Within this small group, Peter is the central figure (see Schmahl 1974:128-140; Dschulnigg 1984:388-410). On a few occasions, Andrew is also part of it, but he only plays a modest role as Peter’s brother. At the beginning of the Gospel, the call of Simon, Andrew, James and John is narrated (1:16-20); they are Jesus’ first companions (1:29-31, 36-38). In the catalogue of the twelve, they come first, and Simon, James and John receive new names (3:16-18). These three witness the resurrection of Jairus’ little daughter (5:37). In 8:29, Peter speaks on behalf of all disciples. Peter, James and John witness the transfiguration of Jesus (9:2-8). In 10:28 and 11:21, Peter acts as spokesman of the disciples. The eschatological discourse is addressed to Peter, James, John and Andrew (13:3). Jesus takes Peter, James and John with him in Gethsemane (14:33). In 16:7, finally, Peter is mentioned separately in addition to “his disciples”, as addressee of the message that they will see the risen one in Galilee. At the same time, the core group of three, and within it again Peter in particular, appear negatively in the second half of Mark’s Gospel (from 8:27 onward). We have already observed that Peter and the sons of Zebedee misunderstand the fate that awaits both Jesus and themselves (8:30-33; 10:35-40). At the transfiguration Peter speaks on behalf of all three (9:5), “because he did not know what to answer” (9:6), and they do not understand Jesus’ words on the resurrection of the Son of Man (9:10). On another occasion, John manifests (on behalf of the disciples) his incomprehension about following Jesus (9:38-41). In Gethsemane, Peter, James and John fall asleep; Jesus calls Peter to account for this (14:37-42). Peter denies his Master (14:54, 66-72), although he had proclaimed earlier that he would never do so (14:29-31).

The present position of the Bartimaeus scene means that Mark has achieved the effect that Jesus' ministry, from its start in Galilee until the arrival in Jerusalem, is framed by call stories (cf Marshall 1989:135-144). At the sea of Galilee, the "core group" are the first to be called (1:16-20); in Jericho, just before the entry into Jerusalem, Bartimaeus is the last to be called. The contrast between Peter, James and John on the one hand, and Bartimaeus on the other consists in the fact that those who have been called first do not understand that they have to follow Jesus on his way to suffering and death, whereas the one who is called last follows him on his way. As far as James and John are concerned, the contrast is readily perceptible. The Bartimaeus pericope is immediately preceded by the pericope in which James and John ask Jesus that they might sit at his right and left hand in his glory (10:35-45). Bartimaeus follows Jesus on his way of suffering, which is a way of service (10:45), but this is a way of which the sons of Zebedee seem to understand little. The contrast is reinforced because, in both pericopae, Jesus asks the same question ("What do you want me to do for you?" 10:36, 52) but receives completely different answers (cf Den Heyer 1979:90, 99-100; Dupont 1985:355; Marshall 1989:140; Olekamma 1999:163-182).

The contrast between Bartimaeus and Peter is slightly more complex. Bartimaeus sets foot on the way of suffering after Jesus as soon as he has gained sight. It is probably not coincidental that Peter's confession and the first prediction of the passion are preceded by another healing of a blind man (8:22-26). Just before this healing, Jesus has denounced the incomprehension of the disciples: they do not see, although they have eyes; and they do not hear, although they have ears (8:18). This sequence makes a symbolic interpretation of the healing story obvious (see, for example, Kertelge 1970:163-165; Schenke 1974:312-313; Best 1981:134-137; Dupont 1985:355-357; Marshall 1989:139-140): the disciples must be cured from their blindness. One of the remarkable characteristics of this story is that the healing occurs in two stages (8:24-25), and in what immediately follows, the "seeing" of the disciples, and of Peter in particular, has two stages as well. As the *primus inter pares* among the disciples, to whom the question "But you, who do you say that I am?" (8:29) was addressed, Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ; Jesus subsequently makes clear to them that his Messiahship is that of the Son of Man who must suffer, die and rise, and such a Messiah is rejected by Peter. Peter and the other disciples "see" that Jesus is the Christ; but they do not yet "see" that, both for Jesus and for themselves, the way to glory leads through suffering and death.

At the end of the instruction to the disciples, Bartimaeus becomes sighted, and he does indeed follow Jesus on his way. The programme of

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discipleship which has been drawn in 8:34 is rejected by Peter, but is carried out by Bartimaeus. Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ without realizing that as the Son of Man, this Christ must suffer, die and rise; Bartimaeus calls on him as the Son of David and follows him on the way to Jerusalem (the traditional identity of the titles “Christ/Messiah” and “Son of David” is clear from *Ps Sal* 17:21-46, especially vv 21, 32; 4QpGen^a v 3-4, and we may assume that Mark knew about this, although he does not appear particularly interested in the title “Son of David”). After the first passion prediction, Peter starts to rebuke Jesus (8:32); the crowd rebuke Bartimaeus in order to silence him (10:48).

What does the contrast between the core disciples and Bartimaeus imply? The importance of Peter, James and John in Mark undoubtedly reflects historical reality (see Ac 12:2; 1 Cor 15:5; Gl 1:18; 2:9), but there is more to it. If Mark intended his community to recognize themselves primarily in the disciples, so that the structure of the group of disciples somehow mirrored the structure of Mark’s community,⁹ then the leaders of this community were obviously supposed to recognize themselves in the core group (in which again one occupies the central position; cf Reploh 1969:50, 147, 169-170). The remarkable thing is then that it is precisely the leaders who appear to fail in the matter of following on the way of suffering, which is a way of service. Bartimaeus, on the other hand, represents those members of the community who simply do what a Christian has been called to do (cf Lk 14:27).

The contrast which Mark has created between Bartimaeus and the three core disciples indirectly shows us an aspect of Mark’s view of leadership in the Christian community: leadership appears to be no guarantee for discipleship. Mark even suggests that, especially for the leaders, the way of service is hard: people prefer to be served rather than to serve. It seems that since Mark, things have not changed very much.¹⁰

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⁹ The Qumran community knew a council of “twelve men and three priests” (1QS viii 1).

¹⁰ I would like to thank Dr J M Court for checking my English idiom.

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