



# DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

JOHN 3:3

JANUARY 2023

## THE TRUE REVOLUTION

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*Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."  
(John 3:3 ESV)*

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The Bible, and particularly the gospels, illustrates the profound conflict between those who see and those who demand that reality fit their perception. In John's account of the gospel, Jesus made it very clear to Nicodemus that the kingdom of God was all about **seeing**: "*Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God'*" (John 3:3 ESV). Similarly, the gospel writer, Mark, writes his account of Jesus in the framework of the kingdom coming in Him and the conflict that resulted among those who could see and those who could not. It was the **unseeing** who crucified Jesus, thinking that they were actually doing the work of God. Mark structured his treatise to demonstrate this in two distinct people: Bartimaeus the blind man and Caiaphas the high priest.

**Blind Bartimaeus:** In Mark 10:46-52,

Bartimaeus was the last person added to the crowd that was following Jesus on His last journey to Jerusalem. He was sitting on a mat beside the road outside Jericho, begging. He represents those who enter the kingdom of God. He has nothing to offer God but his own need, yet he cried out for help. His plea was completely for mercy. He had no claim otherwise. We don't know what he had heard about Jesus, but he correctly identified Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise to David that his son would ultimately come and reign over God's kingdom. "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me*" (Mark 10:47 ESV). Whether Bartimaeus knew it or not, he had found the magic key. God's nature is mercy and when someone makes a plea for it, He does not and cannot resist.

A little background might help us here. In the book of Exodus, Moses had seen the

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mighty hand of God displayed in mocking Pharaoh's rule and religion. But he wanted to know the true nature of God and asked for a meeting. God caused His glory to pass by and His name to be declared:

*The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and children's children, to the third and fourth generation.* (Exodus 34:5-7 ESV)

Seeing the true nature of God, Moses was able to trust Him and follow Him as the leader of Israel through the wilderness. The God of mercy is the one who brought Israel out and led them through. He is the one who made a covenant and guaranteed that He would get done what He began in the Garden of Eden. When Israel would lose sight of who He is, they would go after other gods and experience destruction. When Jesus came, He came to reveal the true nature of God in His own flesh. He has never changed. He loves to show mercy. Jesus clearly declares the way to know God and find the rest of peace. Total satisfaction is available to those who come to Him as the dispenser of mercy:

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

(Matthew 11:28-29 ESV)

We see His works and marvel. We see His heart and melt. We see His righteous justice and shrink back. We see His heart and run to Him. How did Bartimaeus know to make that plea? Many blind people did not. We don't really know, but we can easily see that he was desperate and had nothing to lose. Some might say he lost his dignity by calling out loudly in the crowd when there was such a prestigious parade going on. But what is such dignity worth? He wanted to see—and, strangely, he could see the truth better than most. He responded to what he could see and found mercy. Jesus customarily gives more than we ask, and He did so in this case. The encounter not only healed Bartimaeus' physical eyes, but caused him to follow Jesus on the way. The fact that Mark knew his name and his father's name probably shows that he became a part of the early church. He was captured with a mission bigger than he ever imagined. He had purpose and a reason to live. That is the way mercy works. Those who receive it are changed by what they receive and begin to be demonstrations of mercy to the world around them. On the contrary, those who try to change the world around them before experienc-

ing such mercy become self-righteous and religious. Good works that are not motivated by mercy usually glorify the doer. When we walk in the good works designed for us by mercy, the glory goes to God (see Ephesians 2:8-10).

I might mention that qualifying for mercy is not very comfortable. Our flesh fights against it viciously. We tend to try to arrange our lives in such a way that we never need mercy. We like self-sufficiency, and religion is a good substitute for the life of displaying the glory of God through our plea for mercy. For several decades, Billy Graham ended each of his crusade services with the choir singing: *"Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee, Oh Lamb of God, I come."* It is the only way to come to Jesus, and it is the only way to continue to live with Him.

**Caiaphas, The High Priest:** On the night of His trial, Jesus was brought before Caiaphas who could see clearly with his physical eyes, but his spiritual eyes were blind (see Mark 14:53-65). He did not need mercy. He had a good reputation as a religious authority and a prestigious position in the Jewish religion as well as among the occupying Romans. Caiaphas judged based on what his physical eyes could see. He listened to many witnesses trying to find a way to confirm his decision to eliminate Jesus. His fears were on high alert. What if Jesus was the Messi-

ah, the Son of God, the final high priest? He would be without all that made his life significant. He would be replaced. Jesus as king would have His own administration, and it would be radically different from the one Caiaphas ruled in.

When a new administration comes to power, the list of values of that administration will be different than the previous one. For example, when I was a freshman on the high school football team, we lost 9 games and won 1. A new coach and a new administration came in. At the first meeting, a new list was put on the board in front of us. He had new values. Winning games was way down the list, but the qualities that were emphasized would get you there. Two years later, we were champs and didn't lose any games until the bowl game. The same thing happened when I went to the college level. After the first year, a new coach and new value list came in. A few years later, we won the national championship for our classification. When Jesus came on the scene, He announced that a new administration (kingdom) had come (see Mark 1:14-15). It was different from when Babylon replaced Assyria, when Persia replaced Babylon, when Greece replaced Persia, and when Rome replaced Greece. This administration was the final one. No other power would ever rise to replace it (see Daniel 2 and 7). Jesus said it had come. But it was so different. All the other administrations had featured power, money, prestige, me-

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dia control, and fear. Way down the list were things like justice, mercy, kindness, suffering, and sacrifice. Jesus came helping the oppressed, healing the lame, and spending time with the outcast. He then gave Himself as a sacrificial substitute for sinners. When He could have called all the angels in heaven to come to His aid, He displayed the nature of a lamb. When He described His administration, He mentioned that it was the poor who were blessed, the hungry that would be satisfied, the weeping who would laugh, the persecuted who would be getting the kind of rewards that all humanity wanted (see Luke 6:20-23). Jesus also declared that those who had riches at the top of the list would never get any richer than they were on earth, that the full would be hungry, that those laughing now would weep, and those who are celebrated for their values now would ultimately be rejected.

How is that kind of administration going to survive? By mercy! When the poor cry for mercy, God comes on the scene with His supply. When the weeping cry for mercy, God's supply of joy is at the door. It is in our neediness that His sufficiency is magnified. The apostle Paul learned this truth by having a "thorn in the flesh." It was a bother to him, and he asked God to remove it. God's answer is so instructive: "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness*" (2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV).

Paul's response? To glory in his own weakness so that God's nature can be displayed in his life. Wow! It is truly a radical administration, and to embrace it is to join a new kind of revolution.

Through the centuries, there have been radical revolutionaries who have kept the administration going. Multiple millions have been captured by mercy and have become trophies of mercy on display. The church has prospered through the persecution of its members, and the kingdom of God has lurched forward at the death of each martyr. We desperately need to radically embrace the new administration today. It will permeate the whole of creation as people acknowledge their own need of mercy and encounter the eagerness of the Father to give us sight and repurpose our lives. Societies can change, but not by might and power. Mercy rules. We are in for a true revolution.



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