



# SUNDAY SCHOOL FEBRUARY 23, 2025

Prayer:

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Old Testament.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>PSALM 37:1-11, 39-40 .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Exhortation to Patience and Trust of David .....	2
Overview .....	2
Biblical Context.....	2
Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context .....	3
Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe .....	3
Scholarly Metaphorical & Modern-Day Interpretation .....	3
Summary .....	3
<b>New Testament (Gospel) .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>LUKE 10:46-52.....</b>	<b>4</b>
The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus .....	4
Overview .....	4
Biblical Context.....	4
Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context .....	4
Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe .....	5
Scholarly Metaphorical & Modern-Day Interpretation .....	5
Summary .....	5
<b>Addendum.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Acrostic Structure .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Disciples Misunderstanding Jesus' Mission .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Jericho .....</b>	<b>8</b>



## OLD TESTAMENT

### PSALM 37:1-11, 39-40

#### *EXHORTATION TO PATIENCE AND TRUST OF DAVID*

Do not fret because of the wicked;  
do not be envious of wrongdoers,  
for they will soon fade like the grass  
and wither like the green herb.

Trust in the Lord and do good;  
live in the land and enjoy security.  
Take delight in the Lord,  
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord;  
trust in him, and he will act.  
He will make your vindication shine like the light  
and the justice of your cause like the noonday.

Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him;  
do not fret over those who prosper in their way,  
over those who carry out evil devices.

Refrain from anger and forsake wrath.  
Do not fret—it leads only to evil.  
For the wicked shall be cut off,  
but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more;  
though you look diligently for their place, they will not be there.  
But the meek shall inherit the land  
and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord;  
he is their refuge in the time of trouble.  
The Lord helps them and rescues them;  
he rescues them from the wicked and saves them  
because they take refuge in him.

#### *OVERVIEW*

Psalm 37 is a wisdom psalm attributed to David, offering guidance on how to live righteously and trust in God's justice despite the apparent success of the wicked. The selected verses focus on **patience, trust in the Lord, and the promise of eventual deliverance** for the righteous. It encourages believers not to fret over evildoers but to find peace and fulfillment through faith, humility, and obedience.

#### *BIBLICAL CONTEXT*

Psalm 37 is part of the Wisdom Psalms, similar in style to Proverbs, emphasizing God's justice and the eventual downfall of the wicked. It uses an **acrostic structure**, with each stanza



beginning with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Theologically, it reflects Deuteronomic principles: obedience brings blessing, while disobedience leads to judgment. Jesus' Beatitudes, particularly "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5), echo Psalm 37:11, highlighting its enduring moral and spiritual relevance.

*See Addendum on Acrostic Structure.*

### *HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT*

This psalm likely emerged during a period of social and economic inequality in ancient Israel, when the righteous often struggled while the wicked prospered. The broader Ancient Near Eastern context reflects similar concerns across cultures about justice, divine retribution, and the challenges of maintaining faith amid societal injustice. Politically, Israel's covenant theology underpinned its national identity, reinforcing trust in God's eventual justice even under foreign oppression.

### *HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME*

- **Estimated Composition:** Traditionally attributed to King David (circa 1000 BCE).
- **Cultural Context:** Monarchic period of ancient Israel, possibly during or after times of internal or external unrest.
- **Thematic Connection:** Reflects the enduring wisdom tradition in Israel, with parallels in Proverbs and connections to Jesus' teachings in the New Testament.

### *SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL & MODERN-DAY INTERPRETATION*

Metaphorically, Psalm 37 represents the spiritual battle between fleeting, worldly success and enduring, divine reward. The "wicked" symbolize individuals or systems prioritizing power, greed, and injustice, while the "meek" embody those who act with humility, integrity, and faith. In a modern context, the psalm encourages patience and trust in justice amid societal inequalities, echoing principles relevant in discussions about social justice, ethical leadership, and personal spiritual growth.

### *SUMMARY*

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40 advises believers not to envy the wicked but to trust God's justice. The righteous are assured peace, provision, and eventual vindication. Patience, humility, and faith are central virtues, with a promise that God will deliver the faithful. Its wisdom resonates today, offering hope and guidance amid injustice.



## NEW TESTAMENT (GOSPEL)

### LUKE 10:46-52

#### THE HEALING OF BLIND BARTIMAEUS

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside.

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here."

And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you."

So, throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again."

Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well."

Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

#### OVERVIEW

Mark 10:46–52 tells the story of Bartimaeus, a blind beggar sitting by the roadside near Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples pass by, Bartimaeus cries out, calling Jesus the "Son of David," a messianic title. Despite being rebuked by the crowd, he persistently calls for Jesus' mercy. Jesus responds, asking what Bartimaeus wants. Bartimaeus requests to see again, and Jesus tells him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Bartimaeus immediately regains his sight and follows Jesus on the way.

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **Mark's Gospel:** Mark 10 is part of Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem, and this event serves as a transition point into the Passion narrative. The healing of Bartimaeus is the last recorded miracle in Mark before Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11).
- **Discipleship Theme:** Bartimaeus' persistent faith and immediate decision to follow Jesus symbolize true discipleship, *contrasting with the disciples' repeated misunderstandings of Jesus' mission*.
- **Messianic Recognition:** Bartimaeus calls Jesus "Son of David," acknowledging Jesus' messianic identity—a significant moment in Mark's Gospel.

*See Addendum on the Disciples Misunderstanding Jesus' Mission.*

#### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Jericho's Significance:** Jericho was a bustling city during Jesus' time, known for its palm forests, balsam groves, and a strategic position along trade routes. It was also a city of political significance under Herodian rule.



- **Blindness and Disability in the Ancient World:** Blindness was a common affliction in the ancient world due to disease, malnutrition, and unsanitary conditions. **The blind were often marginalized and forced to beg.**
- **Messianic Expectation:** Many Jews of the time were awaiting a Messiah who would restore Israel's political and social standing. Bartimaeus' use of "Son of David" reflects these messianic hopes, though Jesus' mission was not to establish a political kingdom.

#### *HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME*

- **Timeframe:** Approximately 30 CE, during Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem before his crucifixion.
- **Geographic Setting:** Jericho, about 18 miles northeast of Jerusalem.
- **Religious Climate:** Increasing tension between Jesus and religious leaders as he approaches Jerusalem.

*See Addendum on Jericho.*

#### *SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL & MODERN-DAY INTERPRETATION*

- **Spiritual Blindness and Sight:** Bartimaeus represents those who recognize their need for Jesus and seek him with persistence. His physical blindness parallels the spiritual blindness of the religious leaders and even the disciples.
- **Faith in Action:** Bartimaeus' actions model the call for active, vocal faith, even in the face of societal opposition. Today, this can inspire believers to persist in faith amid challenges.
- **Following Jesus:** Bartimaeus' immediate decision to follow Jesus illustrates the transformative power of faith, urging modern readers to move from receiving spiritual insight to active discipleship.

#### *SUMMARY*

Mark 10:46–52 recounts the healing of Bartimaeus, a blind man whose persistent faith leads to his physical and spiritual transformation. This passage highlights themes of faith, discipleship, and recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. Bartimaeus' journey from blindness to sight and from the roadside to following Jesus mirrors the spiritual journey believers are invited to undertake. The story challenges modern readers to persist in faith, acknowledge Jesus' role as the Messiah, and respond by actively following him in daily life.



## ADDENDUM

### Acrostic Structure

An **acrostic structure** is a literary technique where each line, verse, or section begins with a **successive letter of the alphabet**. In Hebrew poetry, like Psalm 37, each stanza often starts with consecutive letters of the Hebrew alphabet (Aleph, Bet, Gimel, etc.). This structure served several purposes:

1. **Memory Aid:** It made it easier for people to memorize the text.
2. **Symbolic Completeness:** Using the full alphabet symbolized the completeness or comprehensiveness of the message.
3. **Artistic Expression:** It added a level of poetic artistry and intentionality to the composition.

#### Examples of Acrostic Psalms:

- **Psalm 37** (the passage we are studying)
- **Psalm 119** (the longest psalm, with eight verses for each Hebrew letter)
- **Proverbs 31:10-31** (the acrostic poem about the "wife of noble character")

#### Example using Psalm 37

Psalm 37 follows an acrostic pattern based on the Hebrew alphabet, where each stanza begins with a successive Hebrew letter. Here's an example of the first few letters and corresponding verses (transliterated for clarity):

1. **Aleph (א)** – Verse 1:  
*"Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong."*  
(*'al-tithar bamere'im*) – "'Aleph" sound begins the opening verb "'al" (Do not).
2. **Bet (ב)** – Verse 3:  
*"Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture."*  
(*bittah ba'adonai*) – "Bet" begins *bittah* (Trust).
3. **Gimel (ג)** – Verse 5:  
*"Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this."*  
(*gal 'al-'adonai darkeka*) – "Gimel" starts with *gal* (Commit).
4. **Dalet (ד)** – Verse 7:  
*"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways."*  
(*dom l'adonai*) – "Dalet" begins with *dom* (Be still).

#### Why It Matters:

This pattern was not just a linguistic exercise but reflected the psalmist's intent to convey timeless truths about God's justice in a structured, memorable way. It symbolized the completeness of the message—that God's justice and care cover everything from Aleph to Tav, the Hebrew equivalent of "A to Z."



## Disciples Misunderstanding Jesus' Mission

The contrast between Bartimaeus' faith and the disciples' misunderstandings of Jesus' mission is a key narrative device in the Gospel of Mark, particularly in the latter chapters. Here's a deeper look:

### 1. The Disciples' Misunderstandings in Mark

Throughout Mark's Gospel, Jesus repeatedly teaches about his mission, particularly his impending suffering, death, and resurrection. However, the disciples often fail to grasp these teachings.

- **Mark 8:31–33 (Peter's Rebuke)**  
After Jesus predicts his suffering, death, and resurrection, Peter rebukes him. Jesus then rebukes Peter, saying, *"Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."* Peter's response illustrates the disciples' expectation of a triumphant, political Messiah rather than a suffering servant.
- **Mark 9:30–37 (The Greatest in the Kingdom)**  
While Jesus again predicts his suffering, death, and resurrection, the disciples argue about who among them is the greatest. **Jesus responds by teaching about humility and servanthood—core aspects of his mission that the disciples struggle to accept.**
- **Mark 10:35–45 (James and John's Request)**  
Right before the Bartimaeus account, James and John ask Jesus for positions of honor in his kingdom, still envisioning a political kingdom rather than the kingdom of God defined by service and sacrifice. **Jesus corrects them by teaching that greatness in his kingdom comes through serving others.**

### 2. Bartimaeus as a Model of Understanding

Bartimaeus stands in stark contrast to the disciples in several ways:

- **Recognizes Jesus' Identity:** Bartimaeus calls Jesus "Son of David," a messianic title, demonstrating a theological insight that the disciples often lack or fail to articulate. While the disciples wrestle with Jesus' identity and mission, Bartimaeus boldly acknowledges it.
- **Persistent Faith:** Bartimaeus persistently cries out for mercy despite the crowd's rebuke, illustrating the kind of unwavering faith that Jesus commends. The disciples, by contrast, frequently express doubt and fear, especially during storms (Mark 4:35–41) and when confronted with the idea of Jesus' suffering.
- **Immediate Response and Discipleship:** When Jesus heals Bartimaeus, he immediately follows Jesus "on the way" (Mark 10:52). The phrase "on the way" can be read metaphorically, referring to Bartimaeus joining Jesus on the path to the cross—something the disciples struggle to comprehend.

### 3. Narrative Function in Mark

Mark uses the story of Bartimaeus to underscore the theme of spiritual sight versus spiritual blindness:

- **Spiritual Blindness of the Disciples:** Even though the disciples physically follow Jesus, they often display spiritual blindness regarding his mission. They expect glory and power, not suffering and servanthood.



- **Spiritual Sight of Bartimaeus:** Despite his physical blindness, Bartimaeus sees Jesus more clearly than the disciples do. His faith opens his eyes physically and spiritually, allowing him to grasp Jesus' true mission as the suffering servant Messiah.

#### 4. Modern-Day Application

Bartimaeus' contrast with the disciples serves as a reminder for believers today:

- **It's possible to be physically close to Jesus (like the disciples) yet misunderstand his mission.**
- True discipleship requires spiritual insight, persistent faith, and a willingness to follow Jesus, even into difficult or uncertain territory.
- Recognizing Jesus as the "Son of David" implies **acknowledging him as a merciful, servant-Messiah rather than a political or earthly ruler**—a lesson that remains relevant in discussions about faith and power today.

#### Jericho

Jericho still exists today. It is located in the West Bank and is part of the Palestinian Territories. Known as one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, Jericho has undergone significant transformations over the millennia. Here's a brief overview:

- **Ancient Jericho:** Archaeological evidence suggests settlement as early as **9000 BCE**. It was a significant Canaanite city and later mentioned multiple times in the Bible (e.g., the Battle of Jericho in Joshua 6 and the story of Bartimaeus in Mark 10).
- **Classical and Byzantine Periods:** Jericho thrived under various empires, including the Romans and Byzantines, and became a notable agricultural and administrative center.
- **Islamic and Crusader Eras:** The city saw periods of growth and decline, with changing rulers from early Islamic caliphates to Crusader forces.
- **Modern Jericho:** Today, it is a small but vibrant city with a population of around **20,000** people. It relies heavily on tourism due to its biblical and archaeological significance, including sites like Tell es-Sultan, Hisham's Palace, and the Monastery of the Temptation.
- **Political Dynamics:** Jericho became part of the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords and remains a symbol of the area's complex historical and political landscape.
  - The **Oslo Accords** were a series of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 1990s, aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Jericho was one of the first cities to come under Palestinian Authority control. While the accords were initially seen as a breakthrough, they ultimately left many core issues unresolved, including borders, Jerusalem's status, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees, contributing to ongoing tensions in the region.

Jericho has morphed from an ancient walled city into a modern community that balances tourism, agriculture (notably date palms and bananas), and historical preservation amid ongoing geopolitical tensions.