



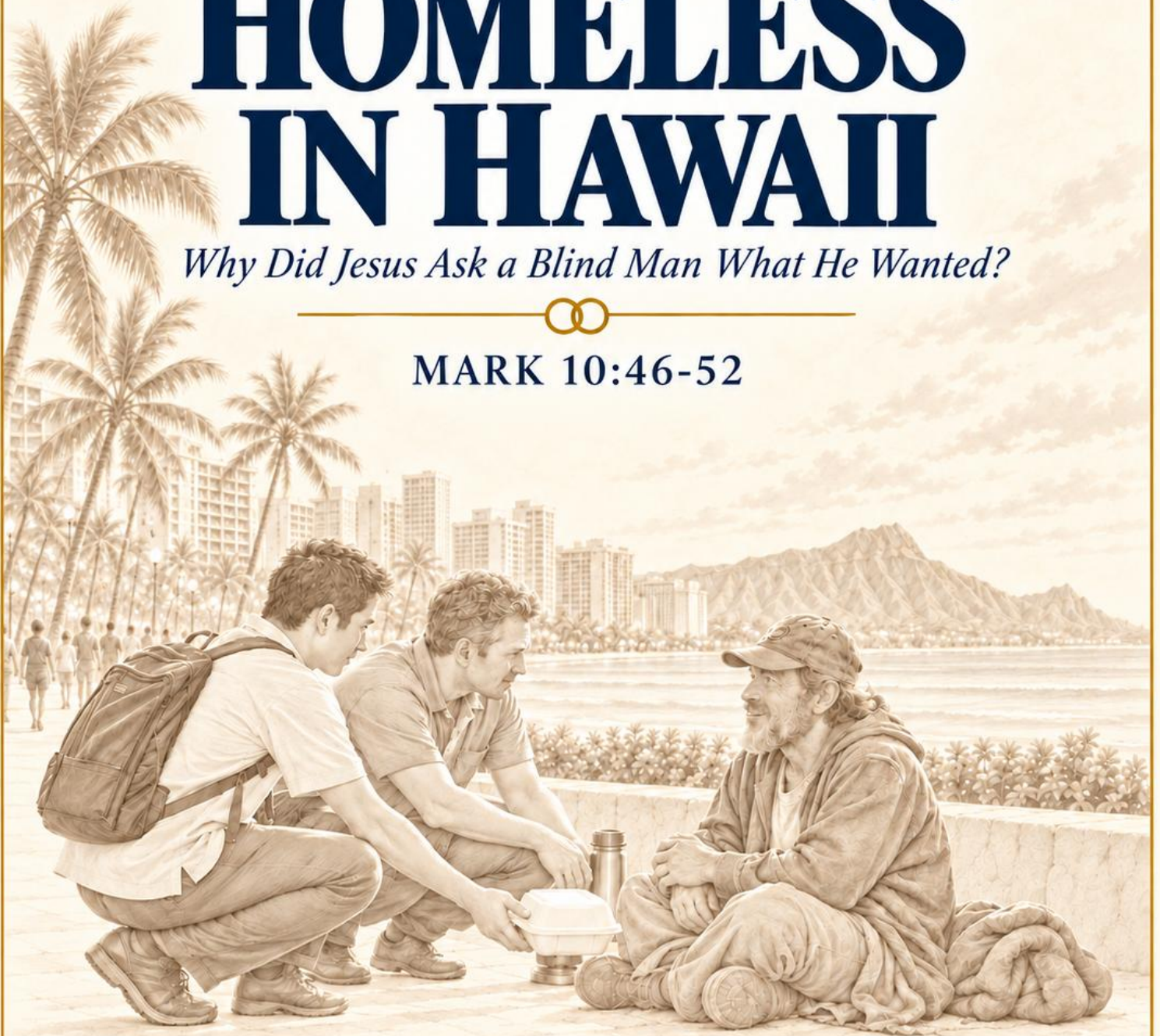
REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

HOMELESS IN HAWAII

Why Did Jesus Ask a Blind Man What He Wanted?



MARK 10:46-52



SERMON & PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

Homeless in Hawaii

Sermon Transcript

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether you have attended church for most of your life, whether this is your first time with us or whether you are not yet sure what you believe, we are glad that you are here.

We especially want to recognize our honored guests.

You are not expected to pretend that you have all the answers.

If you would like us to stay in touch, our guest card asks only for your first name and email address.

You are welcome to complete it, but there is no pressure to do so.

For families with children, our Keiki Kids Center is available, and we are grateful for every child God has brought among us.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

Before we begin, let us pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You for gathering us together today.

Open our eyes to Your Word.

Open our eyes to the people around us.

Forgive us for the times we have been so occupied with where we were going that we failed to see someone sitting beside our path.

Teach us to recognize every person as someone made in Your image.

Give us compassion that does more than feel, wisdom that does more than talk and courage that is willing to stop.

Most of all, help us see Jesus clearly.

In His precious name we pray.

Amen.

Our primary passage today is Mark 10:46-52.

The Bible says:

"And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

"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.

"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.

"And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called.

"And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

"And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?

"The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.

"And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

Before we enter the message, I want to speak briefly about giving.

If you are visiting with us, please understand that you are never expected to give.

If you are a member of another church, we encourage you to support your home church.

Reason Together Church does not pass a plate.

For those who consider this their church and are led by God to give, there is a giving box in the back.

God loves a cheerful giver.

Giving can place something useful into another person's hands.

But today we are going to consider something that may be harder to give than money.

Our time.

Our attention.

Our willingness to listen.

The question before us is simple.

Why did Jesus ask a blind man what he wanted?

Everyone could see that Bartimaeus was blind.

Everyone knew that he was begging.

Why did Jesus ask him to explain his need?

The answer begins beside a highway outside Jericho.

But for me, it also leads to a sidewalk beside Waikiki Beach.

I have loved the Hawaiian Islands for many years.

Long before Hawaii became my home, it was the first place that entered my mind when I thought about a vacation.

Even when I traveled on mission trips throughout Asia, I often arranged my flights so I could spend a few days in Hawaii before or after the preaching trip.

My favorite island has always been Oahu.

And on Oahu, there was one particular place at the quiet end of Waikiki Beach that became special to me.

It was close to the zoo, away from some of the busiest parts of the beach.

There was a small cluster of trees that I called "my spot."

I would unroll a fake bamboo mat.

I would put on my earphones and listen to sermons I had saved for the occasion.

I would pray.

For many years, that place was my oasis.

When I sat there, it seemed as though there were no troubles in the world.

Of course, there were troubles in the world.

There were even troubles on that same beach.

I had simply learned how not to see them.

On one particular trip, a friend named Tim and his family joined my family for an extended vacation in Hawaii and the Philippines.

I had told Tim about my special place.

Naturally, I wanted him to see it.

By the time we checked into the hotel and ate dinner, the sun had gone down.

We walked along the paved pathway in front of the beachfront hotels toward my quiet oasis.

Waikiki is beautiful at night.

The hotels are illuminated.

The air is comfortable.

The ocean continues rolling toward the shore.

But when we reached the area near my trees, I did not know what to say.

The beach was filled with men, women and children who had no other place to sleep.

During earlier visits, I had occasionally seen people sleeping near the public bathrooms and showers.

Each year, there seemed to be more.

This time the difference was impossible to ignore.

During the day, the beach appeared to belong to tourists who had traveled thousands of miles to enjoy paradise.

At night, some of the same sand became a bedroom for people who had nowhere else to go.

The beach had not moved.

The needs had not suddenly appeared because I arrived.

What changed was what I could see.

The following morning was Sunday.

We attended Waikiki Baptist Church where a friend of mine was serving as Pastor.

He explained that homelessness in Honolulu had become significantly more visible.

The church was already conducting ministries for people in need, but they needed help.

Tim and I were businessmen.

When businessmen see a large problem, we naturally begin thinking about plans, funding and systems.

We talked about hunger.

We talked about homelessness.

We talked about sharing the Gospel.

We began thinking about what kind of program might provide food and support itself.

Eventually, those thoughts included the possibility of a food wagon that could serve meals to people in need at night and sell food to tourists during the day to help fund the ministry.

There was nothing wrong with thinking about a program.

There was nothing wrong with wanting a sustainable answer.

Church partnerships matter.

Planning matters.

Funding matters.

But a program must always serve people.

People must never become raw material for a program.

After dinner one evening, our families were walking back toward our suite.

The Hilton Hawaiian was adding another tower.

Part of the property was fenced for construction.

The way the fence and the surrounding structure came together created enough protection for one person to lie down beside the sidewalk.

I noticed a man there.

He had a coffee cup in front of him and a cardboard sign asking for help.

I remembered seeing him in the same place the night before.

I did not put money into the cup.

I had the remains of my dinner from Outback Steakhouse.

Without saying anything, I bent down and placed the food beside him.

Tim did the same.

The man saw us.

We saw him.

But no one spoke.

We continued walking.

As we walked away, Tim used the moment to teach his young daughter that Jesus tells us to help people who are less fortunate than we are.

He was right.

The food was useful.

Leaving it was better than throwing it away.

That act should not be treated as meaningless.

But looking back, I understand that we had given something to that man without giving any part of ourselves.

We had noticed his hunger.

We had not learned his name.

Kindness can occur at a distance.

Relationship requires us to come closer.

That takes us back to Bartimaeus.

Mark tells us that Bartimaeus sat beside the highway begging.

He occupied a place where other people passed while going somewhere else.

They knew he was there.

Some of them had probably passed him many times.

As long as Bartimaeus remained quietly beside the road, the crowd could keep moving.

Then he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

He began to cry out:

"Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me."

The crowd did not bring him to Jesus.

The crowd told him to be quiet.

His suffering was tolerable to them as long as it remained in the background.

His voice made his suffering harder to ignore.

People are often tolerated until their need interrupts us.

We may feel sympathy for suffering in general while resenting the actual sufferer who asks us to stop.

Bartimaeus refused to disappear quietly.

The Bible says that he cried out even more:

"Thou son of David, have mercy on me."

Then we read four words that deserve our attention.

"And Jesus stood still."

Jesus was going somewhere.

He was moving toward Jerusalem.

The cross was approaching.

A great crowd surrounded Him.

Yet the cry of one man beside the road caused Jesus to stand still.

The crowd regarded Bartimaeus as an interruption.

Jesus regarded him as a person.

Christlike compassion permits another person's need to interrupt our plans.

That does not mean we can answer every request.

It does not mean we can solve every problem.

But it should cause us to ask whether we have become so busy walking with Jesus that we no longer stop for the people Jesus notices.

The following night in Waikiki, we had already decided that we would bring food to the same man again.

As we bent down to place the evening meal beside him, he spoke.

He said that he remembered us from the night before.

This time, we did not continue walking.

We stopped.

We talked with him.

We listened to his stories.

And we learned his name.

His name was Lanny.

The first night, he was a homeless man.

The second night, he was Lanny.

Nothing about his housing situation had changed overnight.

What changed was our relationship with him.

That is when the question Jesus asked Bartimaeus becomes so important.

Jesus commanded the crowd to call Bartimaeus.

Bartimaeus cast aside his garment, rose and came to Jesus.

Then Jesus said:

"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

It sounds like a strange question.

The man was blind.

He was sitting beside the highway begging.

Surely Jesus already knew what was wrong.

Surely Jesus already knew what Bartimaeus wanted.

But knowing the answer did not prevent Jesus from asking the question.

Jesus allowed Bartimaeus to speak for himself.

For years, other people may have discussed Bartimaeus while he sat close enough to hear them.

They may have spoken about the blind man.

They may have spoken about the beggar.

Jesus spoke to Bartimaeus.

The question acknowledged his dignity.

The question allowed him to express his faith.

The question made him a participant rather than a project.

The question showed that one visible condition does not reveal everything about a human life.

Jesus asked a similar question in John 5.

There was a man beside the pool of Bethesda who had suffered from an infirmity for thirty-eight years.

John 5:6 says:

"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?"

Jesus knew how long the man had suffered.

Jesus could see his condition.

Still, Jesus asked him a question.

We sometimes believe we know exactly what another person needs because we can see one part of that person's life.

We see someone without a house and assume that we know the complete story.

We see an addiction and assume that we know the cause.

We see mental illness and assume that we know the person.

We see poverty and assume that poverty is the person's identity.

We see success and assume that there is no suffering.

Jesus shows us something different.

An obvious condition does not eliminate the need to listen.

There is another detail in Mark 10 that makes this passage even more revealing.

Shortly before Jesus encountered Bartimaeus, James and John approached Him with a request.

They said:

"Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire."

Jesus answered them in Mark 10:36:

"What would ye that I should do for you?"

That is almost the same question Jesus later asked Bartimaeus.

James and John wanted the highest seats in the kingdom.

One wanted to sit on Jesus' right hand.

The other wanted to sit on His left.

They wanted position.

They wanted recognition.

They wanted to be above the others.

Bartimaeus wanted sight.

The disciples had working eyes, but they could not see what service meant.

Bartimaeus was physically blind, yet he recognized Jesus as the Son of David.

Who in Mark 10 was really blind?

That question reaches beyond Jericho.

Perhaps Lanny was not the only man beside that Waikiki sidewalk who needed his eyes opened.

During the following weeks, we continued returning to see him.

We tried to make sure that he had breakfast and lunch.

We shared the Gospel with him.

We shared sermons.

We listened to more of his stories.

Then Lanny explained that he was already a Christian.

He said that he still enjoyed our sermons and did not want us to stop sharing them.

That detail matters.

Lanny was not merely an evangelistic opportunity.

He was not an entry for a ministry report.

He was not an unbeliever waiting for visiting missionaries to bring Jesus to Hawaii.

He was a Christian brother living in circumstances very different from ours.

Christ was already at work in Lanny's life.

We thought we had come to minister to him.

But God was also using him to minister to us.

Did we bring Jesus to Lanny?

Or did Jesus meet us through Lanny?

There is a story Jesus told in Luke 16 about a rich man and a beggar.

The rich man dressed in purple and fine linen.

He ate well every day.

At his gate lay a poor man whose body was covered with sores.

The poor man desired the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

The rich man must have passed him repeatedly.

The beggar was near enough to see but easy enough to ignore.

Jesus did something remarkable in telling that story.

The wealthy man is identified by what he possessed.

The poor man is given a name.

His name was Lazarus.

The world often remembers the names of people with wealth, position and influence.

Jesus told the story so that the suffering man's name would be remembered.

Homelessness was the category.

Lanny was the person.

A count can tell us how many people were found on one particular night.

It cannot tell us all their names.

In May 2026, the City and County of Honolulu reported that its Point-in-Time Count identified 4,539 people experiencing homelessness on Oahu.

That number helps us understand the size of the need.

But there are 4,539 stories represented by that number.

There are sons and daughters.

There are fathers and mothers.

There are veterans.

There are people who worked for years before a crisis overwhelmed them.

There are people struggling with illness.

There are people fighting addiction.

There are people who have made destructive decisions.

There are people who have been harmed by the decisions of others.

There are believers and unbelievers.

There is no single story called "the homeless."

There are people.

Jesus said in Matthew 25:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

The righteous asked when they had done these things for Jesus.

He answered:

"Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Jesus did not speak only about caring for a social category.

He spoke about feeding someone who was hungry.

He spoke about giving a drink to someone who was thirsty.

He spoke about welcoming someone who was a stranger.

He spoke about visiting someone who was sick or imprisoned.

The acts were simple.

The people mattered to Christ.

Jesus also knew what it meant to live without the ordinary security of a settled home.

In Matthew 8:20 He said:

"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

We should not claim that Jesus experienced every feature of modern homelessness in exactly the same way as Lanny.

But we can say that our Savior did not live insulated from vulnerability.

He entered it.

He knew hunger.

He knew weariness.

He knew rejection.

He knew what it was to depend upon hospitality.

The Savior who stopped for a beggar was not looking down from a life untouched by need.

Isaiah 58:7 asks:

"Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?"

Notice that both parts matter.

"Deal thy bread" addresses hunger.

"Bring the poor" addresses exclusion.

People need food.

They also need somewhere they are not treated as unwanted.

James 2 asks what it profits if we see a brother or sister without food or clothing and offer kind words without providing the things needed for the body.

First John 3:18 tells us:

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

We must not replace food with words.

At the same time, we must not use food as the price someone has to pay for listening to our words.

We do not say, "I will feed you only if you first listen to my sermon."

We feed because Christ has loved us.

We share the Gospel because Christ has saved us.

Both are gifts.

Neither is bait.

Acts 3 tells us about another man who lived by begging.

He was carried each day to the gate of the temple called Beautiful.

People passed him as they entered to pray.

When he saw Peter and John, he asked them for money.

Acts 3:4 says:

"And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us."

The man expected to receive silver or gold.

Peter did not have what the man expected.

But before anything else happened, Peter looked at him and invited the man to look back.

There was acknowledgment.

There was a human encounter.

Then Peter offered what Christ had entrusted to him.

Eye contact is not a substitute for practical assistance.

Practical assistance is not a substitute for acknowledgment.

Biblical compassion brings the two together.

There is an early Christian writing called The Shepherd of Hermas.

It is not Scripture and we do not use it to establish doctrine.

But one of its illustrations helps us understand something the early Christians recognized.

It describes an elm tree and a vine.

The vine bears fruit, but it needs the elm for support.

The elm appears unfruitful, but it helps the vine rise from the ground and produce good fruit.

The writer compared the two plants to a believer with wealth and a believer living in poverty.

One could provide material assistance.

The other could provide prayer and spiritual strength.

The point was not that one person had everything and the other had nothing.

The point was that both had something to give.

They became partners in a righteous work.

That is part of what Lanny taught me.

I brought him meals.
He gave me a different way of seeing people.
The giver was also a receiver.
The man I thought needed ministry was also performing ministry.
That does not mean every encounter is simple.
Compassion does not require us to ignore wisdom.
Not every request should be answered in the same way.
Giving money directly may not always be the most helpful response.
Addiction may require treatment.
Mental illness may require trained care.
Medical needs may require professionals.
Housing requires resources that an individual ordinarily cannot provide alone.
Personal safety should not be ignored.
Listening to someone does not mean promising something we cannot deliver.
The Good Samaritan gives us a helpful pattern.
He stopped beside the injured man.
He treated the man's wounds.
He placed him on his own animal.
He brought him to an inn.
Then he involved the innkeeper in the continuing care.
The Samaritan accepted personal responsibility, but he did not attempt to perform every part of the care alone.
That is why partnerships with churches, shelters, outreach workers, medical providers and experienced organizations matter.
Compassion is not a choice between careless giving and doing nothing.
We can stop.
We can listen.
We can respond to an immediate need when we are able.
We can help connect someone with people equipped to provide continuing assistance.
And we can remember that the person is more than the need we are trying to address.
Those weeks in Hawaii passed quickly.
Soon we returned to our businesses, schedules and responsibilities.

Several years later, Tim and I began talking about Lanny again.
I had attempted to locate him through the church in Waikiki.
The hotel construction had been completed.
The temporary shelter formed by the construction area was gone.
Lanny had moved somewhere else.
I never learned the conclusion of his story.
I cannot tell you that our meals led to permanent housing.
I cannot tell you that a program solved all his problems.
I cannot report his conversion because he had already placed his faith in Christ.
I cannot even tell you where he went.
We often want ministry stories to have clean endings.
We want the person to be rescued.
We want the prayer to be answered in a way everyone can see.
We want a result that can be photographed, measured and placed into a report.
But many acts of faithfulness have endings that only God sees.
Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:6:

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

Our responsibility is faithfulness.
God remains responsible for the increase.
An unfinished encounter is not necessarily an unsuccessful encounter.
Some ministry changes the person receiving help.
Some ministry changes the person who came intending to help.
Sometimes it changes both.
I do not know what finally happened to Lanny.
But I know that God used him as part of something that continued growing in me.
Those early experiences in Waikiki helped deepen a concern that would follow me for years.
They contributed to later ministry in Hawaii.
They taught me the value of partnering with local churches.
They became part of the long road that eventually led to Project 860 Waikiki and Reason Together Church.
Even our desire to offer coffee and conversation is connected to the conviction that people need places where they can be heard.

Free coffee is useful.

Free refills on conversations may matter even more.

This is not a story about everything I accomplished after helping Lanny.

It is a story about something God began teaching me through Lanny.

I do not know what happened to him.

But God used him to begin something in me that never ended.

Now we must bring the question home.

Who is the Lanny whom God has placed along your ordinary path?

That person may be living without housing.

That person may be a lonely neighbor.

It may be an elderly person who rarely receives a visitor.

It may be an employee whose work has declined because of a struggle no one has asked about.

It may be someone sitting alone at church.

It may be someone known primarily by a diagnosis, a failure, a criminal record or a reputation.

It may be a person you have passed repeatedly without learning a name.

You may not be able to solve the person's greatest problem.

You may not possess what the person expects.

But perhaps you can stop.

Perhaps you can introduce yourself.

Perhaps you can learn a name.

Perhaps you can ask a respectful question.

Perhaps you can listen without rushing to provide an answer.

Perhaps you can offer something appropriate.

Perhaps you can help connect that person with someone better equipped to address the need.

Perhaps you can return if God provides another opportunity.

There is also a deeper and more uncomfortable question.

Whom have I helped without ever allowing that person to become more than someone I helped?

Has service ever become a duty I completed?

A program I administered?

A photograph I took?

A report I submitted?

A number I counted?

A way to reassure myself that I am generous?

Those questions are not intended to produce guilt without action.

They are intended to open our eyes.

The first evening, leaving food beside Lanny was good.

It was simply incomplete.

The next evening, the food was joined by attention.

The encounter became a conversation.

The category became a name.

The person receiving help became a brother.

The person intending to teach became a student.

And that brings us back to Bartimaeus.

The story is not only about how Christians should treat people experiencing homelessness.

It is also about every one of us.

Apart from Christ, we are spiritually blind.

We cannot see the holiness of God clearly.

We cannot see the full seriousness of our sin.

We cannot repair our broken relationship with God through our own effort.

We may possess education, money, influence or religious knowledge and still be unable to save ourselves.

Like Bartimaeus, we need mercy.

Romans 3:23 says:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 6:23 tells us:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

God loves us so completely that He sent His only begotten Son.

Jesus lived the sinless life we could not live.

He died on the cross and paid the penalty for our sins.

He was buried.

On the third day, He rose from the dead.

Salvation is not earned by good works.

It is not earned by helping enough people.

It is not earned by giving enough money.

It is not earned by attending church.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

"Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Bartimaeus cried:

"Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me."

Jesus heard him.

Jesus stood still.

Jesus called him.

Jesus asked:

"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

If Jesus placed that question before you today, how would you answer?

Would you say, "Lord, forgive me"?

Would you say, "Lord, save me"?

Would you say, "Lord, open my eyes"?

Would you say, "Lord, give me a new heart and take control of my life"?

Romans 10:9 says:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you can call upon Him today.

You are not saved by repeating certain words.

You are saved by God's grace when you place your faith in Jesus Christ.

If this prayer expresses the sincere desire of your heart, pray with me now.

Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner.

I know that I cannot save myself.

I believe that You died on the cross for my sins.

I believe that You were buried and rose again.

I turn from my sin and place my trust in You alone.

Please forgive me.

Come into my life.

Be my Lord and Savior.

Give me a new heart and help me follow You.

Thank You for Your gift of eternal life.

In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen.

If you prayed that prayer sincerely today, please speak with me after the service.

I would be honored to pray with you, answer your questions and help you begin growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

If you already know Christ but God has shown you someone you have passed without truly seeing, do not ignore that conviction.

You do not need to promise that you will solve everything.

Begin with the next faithful step.

Stand still.

Learn a name.

Ask a question.

Listen to the answer.

Then do what God has equipped and called you to do.

After our closing prayer, everyone is invited to join us at the Reason Together Cafe.

The coffee is free.

So are the refills on conversations.

If you have a question about today's message, if you need prayer or if you simply need someone to listen, please stay and talk with us.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You that Jesus hears those who cry for mercy.

Thank You that He stood still for Bartimaeus.

Thank You that He knows our names, hears our voices and understands needs that others cannot see.

Forgive us for reducing people to categories.

Forgive us for speaking about people when we should have spoken with them.

Forgive us for the times we offered words without practical help and for the times we offered something material while withholding our attention.

Give us open hands, wise minds and compassionate hearts.

Help us recognize the people You place beside our ordinary paths.

Protect those who will sleep outside tonight.

Provide food for the hungry, shelter for those without housing, care for the sick and freedom for those bound by addiction.

Strengthen the churches, outreach workers and organizations serving them.

And show each of us the part You have called us to fulfill.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

The hotels still shine along Waikiki Beach.

Visitors still walk beside the ocean.

Somewhere beyond what many of them notice, another person may be searching for a place to sleep.

The church cannot solve every problem in one evening.

But no follower of Jesus should become so busy walking that he can no longer stand still.

The first night, I left food beside a homeless man.

The next night, I stopped and listened to Lanny.

Years later, I still do not know what finally happened to him.

But I know what happened to me.

God used a man sleeping beside a Waikiki sidewalk to open the eyes of a man who thought he could already see.

Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

Homeless in Hawaii

Why Did Jesus Ask a Blind Man What He Wanted?

Mark 10:46-52

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

www.ReasonTogether.Church

*Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.*

Introduction

The story behind this study begins with a familiar temptation. We see a visible need, decide what the need must mean and move quickly toward a response. On a quiet sidewalk near Waikiki, the first response was a restaurant container placed beside a sleeping man. The food was useful. The gesture was not cruel. Yet the man remained almost entirely unknown to the giver. He was first perceived as an instance of homelessness rather than as a neighbor with a name, a voice, a history and a faith.

The following night changed the story. The man remembered the visitors. They stopped. They listened. They learned that his name was Lanny. Over the following weeks breakfast and lunch were shared, sermons were offered and conversation developed. Then came the discovery that unsettled the original assumptions: Lanny already confessed Christ and wanted the sermons to continue. The person who had seemed to be merely a recipient of ministry was a Christian brother whose testimony could instruct the people who approached him.

Mark 10:46 through 52 supplies the controlling doorway. Bartimaeus is blind, poor and seated beside the road. His need appears obvious, yet Jesus asks him, 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' The question does not reveal ignorance in Christ. It reveals the dignity of a person whom the crowd had attempted to silence. Jesus permits Bartimaeus to speak his own request. The encounter therefore helps the Church distinguish compassionate action from paternalism and a human being from a category.

Controlling conclusion

Compassion may begin with what we give, but Christlike ministry begins when we stop, look, listen and allow a person to speak. Jesus did not treat Bartimaeus as a diagnosis, a social class or an interruption. He called him, heard him and responded to his stated desire. Christian care should meet real needs while honoring the voice, agency and spiritual identity of the person before us.

1. The Story Behind the Question

A Quiet Place Near Waikiki

The supplied magazine article describes repeated stays on Oahu and a quiet place near the Waikiki zoo where Dr. Hawksley would pray and think. It was a small place of retreat within a busy tourist district. During a later visit with his friend Tim and their families, that familiar

location looked different after dark. People were sleeping along the beach and sidewalks. A place remembered as peaceful was also a place where neighbors were living without secure shelter.

That contrast belongs in the study because it exposes selective sight. A person may know a location well and still fail to see everyone who inhabits it. Visitors can see Waikiki as beauty, leisure and escape. Residents can see work, traffic and ordinary routine. A person sleeping outside experiences the same geography through questions of safety, rest, food, privacy, weather and displacement. The physical place has not changed, but the observer's moral attention has.

The First Night: Food Beside a Man

After eating at Outback Steakhouse, the two friends carried leftover food. They saw a man sleeping outside and left the food beside him without waking him or speaking with him. The sermon does not condemn this act. Hungry people need food, and a quiet gift may be kind. The episode is important precisely because it was good but incomplete. Material generosity can relieve an immediate need while leaving the giver's assumptions entirely untouched.

The phrase beside him captures the distance. Food was placed near the man's body, but no relationship yet crossed the space between giver and receiver. He could be helped without being heard. He could receive something without being recognized. This is one reason the sermon does not ask whether Christians should help homeless people. Scripture already gives abundant instruction about generosity. The sharper question is whether help can become impersonal even when it is sincere.

The Second Night: The Man Becomes Lanny

The following evening, the man remembered them. This time the travelers stopped. They listened and learned his name. The change appears small, but it governs the whole narrative. The first night, the central object in the encounter was leftover food. The second night, the central subject was Lanny. A name resists abstraction. It tells the conscience that this person cannot be reduced to the condition in which he was found.

Learning a name does not automatically create wisdom or solve a complex problem. It can even become sentimental if it is treated as a substitute for practical care. Yet a name establishes the beginning of moral accountability. Once Lanny spoke, the visitors could no longer pretend that their first impression was the whole story. Ministry moved from a unilateral act toward a relationship in which knowledge could travel in both directions.

Weeks of Food, Sermons and Conversation

The relationship continued beyond one dramatic moment. Breakfast and lunch were provided during the remaining weeks. Sermons were shared. Lanny disclosed that he was already a

Christian and asked that the sermons continue. These details protect the story from a rescuer narrative. The visitors did not bring Christ into a spiritually empty life. They encountered a man who already claimed faith and who could express what kind of spiritual encouragement he wanted.

This distinction matters for Christian ministry among people experiencing homelessness. A person without stable housing may be an unbeliever, a mature believer, a wounded church member, a new Christian, a skeptic or someone still discerning. Housing status cannot answer a spiritual question. The Gospel should be offered clearly, but it should not be used to erase a person's testimony or to presume that the materially secure giver must also be the spiritually superior person.

The Unfinished Ending

After construction work was completed in the area, Dr. Hawksley could no longer locate Lanny. The article does not provide a reunion or a verified account of what happened next. That absence should remain. Ministry stories are often edited into clean endings in which every gift produces a visible outcome. Real relationships do not always grant that closure. A person may move, enter shelter, reconnect with family, be hospitalized, leave the island or remain nearby but unseen. The responsible storyteller does not invent the missing chapter.

First Corinthians 3:6 provides an appropriate restraint: 'I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.' Faithfulness is not measured only by the outcomes a minister is permitted to witness. The loss of contact can become a form of grief and a summons to prayer. It also reminds the Church that a person was never ours to manage. Lanny belonged to God before the visitors learned his name and remained in God's sight after they lost his location.

2. Bartimaeus Beside the Highway

Mark 10:46-52

And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. 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. 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. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

A Named Man in a Crowd

Mark identifies Bartimaeus by name and then explains the name as the son of Timaeus. The doubled identification may reflect a person known to the early Christian community. Whatever the precise reason for Mark's wording, the literary effect is unmistakable. A condition is reported, but the condition does not swallow the person. Bartimaeus is blind. He also has a name, a family connection, a voice, a confession and a future beyond the roadside.

This makes Bartimaeus especially important for the Lanny story. Scripture does not allow the reader to speak only about the blind or the poor while ignoring the named man in the passage. In the same way, the study cannot remain about the homeless as though all people without housing possess one story. The movement from category to person is already present in the Gospel text.

The Highway Side and the Movement of Jesus

Bartimaeus sits beside the highway while Jesus and a great number of people are moving out of Jericho toward Jerusalem. The setting contains a moral tension. The crowd is on the way with Jesus, but one man is positioned at the edge of their movement. It is possible to be physically close to Jesus, excited about His journey and still become impatient with the voice of a vulnerable person.

The roadside is not incidental. Begging depends upon access to passersby, yet the same crowd upon whom Bartimaeus depends can treat him as an obstruction. People who sleep or ask for help in visible public places often encounter the same contradiction. Their visibility makes aid

possible, but it can also provoke efforts to move them from view. The Gospel turns attention toward the person whom the procession would prefer to pass.

The Cry That the Crowd Tried to Silence

Bartimaeus cries, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.' Many charge him to be quiet. Their rebuke may arise from annoyance, social prejudice, concern for order or the assumption that Jesus should not be delayed. Mark does not provide their private motives. He does show that the crowd becomes a barrier between Jesus and the man who is calling upon Him.

Bartimaeus responds by crying more. His persistence is not merely loudness. It is faith refusing to accept the crowd's verdict about his access to Christ. Churches must hear the warning. Ministry structures, schedules and even well-intended volunteers can become part of the silencing crowd when efficiency matters more than listening. A person may need to tell the same story more than once before anyone truly hears it.

Jesus Stood Still

The turning point arrives in four words: 'And Jesus stood still.' The journey matters. Jerusalem and the cross are before Him. The crowd is large. Nevertheless, the cry of Bartimaeus is not treated as an interruption beneath Christ's mission. The stop is itself part of the mission. Jesus gives undivided moral attention before He gives physical sight.

Stopping is costly because it surrenders control of pace. It permits another person's need and voice to rearrange the moment. The first night of the Hawaii story required only a placement of food. The second night required time. The difference is not that food ceased to matter. The difference is that compassion accepted interruption. Many ministries can distribute goods quickly. Fewer are designed to let the recipient's words affect what happens next.

The Crowd Is Corrected and Recruited

Jesus commands Bartimaeus to be called. The same people who had attempted to silence him now say, 'Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.' Christ does more than bypass the crowd's failure. He changes the crowd's role. They become participants in welcoming the man they had discouraged. This is a model of communal correction that does not end with accusation.

A church may discover that its habits have made access difficult for people who are poor, disabled, ashamed, mentally distressed or socially unfamiliar. Repentance should produce a changed practice. The corrected crowd can make space, communicate welcome and help a person approach without seizing control of that person's response. Christ's command creates a community that carries His invitation rather than guarding His attention.

3. Why Ask What Appears Obvious?

The Question Is Not a Request for Information

Jesus asks, 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' The answer seems visible. Bartimaeus is identified as blind and is begging beside the road. Christ also possesses divine knowledge. The question therefore cannot be explained as though Jesus needs help diagnosing the situation. He asks for the man's articulated desire.

The question gives Bartimaeus a public voice after others had tried to suppress it. He is not merely spoken about. He speaks. He is not turned into an illustration before he is treated as a person. The Lord's question establishes consent and participation within the encounter. Bartimaeus names the request: 'Lord, that I might receive my sight.'

Visible Need Is Not the Whole Need

Observers often assume that the most visible condition defines the entire person. Yet a blind man might ask for food, protection, reconciliation, forgiveness, healing or simply access to Jesus. A person without stable housing might want a meal, identification documents, medical care, a safe place for belongings, transportation, prayer, work, rest or help contacting family. The observer does not know merely by looking.

Asking does not guarantee that every requested action is wise, possible or lawful. Christian love is not passive compliance. It may require boundaries, discernment and referral to people with appropriate expertise. The point is not that the recipient always knows every solution. The point is that no responsible solution should treat the person's own knowledge, desire and agency as irrelevant.

John 5 and Another Apparently Obvious Question

John 5:6

When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

At Bethesda, Jesus sees a man who has lived with infirmity for thirty-eight years and asks whether he wants to be made whole. Again, the question is not evidence of ignorance. The man's answer reveals the social dimension of his condition: 'Sir, I have no man.' His need involves not only a body but also isolation, failed access and repeated disappointment.

Jesus' question allows information to emerge that observation alone could not supply. The same discipline belongs in ministry. A church may identify a need for shelter while missing a person's

lack of documents. It may provide food while ignoring dental pain. It may offer a program while failing to notice fear created by a previous institution. Listening does not replace action. It guides action toward the actual person.

4. The Paired Question in Mark 10

Jesus Asks James and John

Mark 10:36

And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

Shortly before the encounter with Bartimaeus, James and John approach Jesus with an ambitious request. They want Him to promise that they may sit on His right hand and left hand in glory. Jesus asks them, 'What would ye that I should do for you?' Their eyes function, yet they do not understand the shape of Christ's kingdom or the road toward the cross.

The question exposes desire. James and John seek status. Bartimaeus seeks sight. The sighted disciples are spiritually confused, while the blind beggar recognizes Jesus as the Son of David and cries for mercy. Mark's arrangement warns against using physical blindness as a careless metaphor for moral failure. Bartimaeus is the character who perceives most clearly.

Jesus Asks Bartimaeus

Mark 10:51

And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?

The near repetition places the powerful disciples and the powerless beggar before the same Lord. Jesus does not ask only people with influence what they want. He directs serious attention to the man the crowd would silence. The kingdom does not reserve voice for those who possess status, education, money, housing or proximity to leadership.

The parallel also tests the minister. We may imagine ourselves standing beside Jesus while quietly behaving like James and John, seeking visible roles and recognition. Bartimaeus may then become material for our ministry story rather than a neighbor. The question turns back toward the giver: What do we want from the encounter? Do we want the person's good, or do we want evidence that we are good people?

Restored Sight Leads to Following

Jesus tells Bartimaeus, 'Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.' Mark immediately adds that he followed Jesus in the way. The man is not retained as a dependent exhibit. Christ restores him and releases him. Bartimaeus then acts. His following is a response of faith, not a condition imposed by the crowd before mercy could be given.

This protects Christian service from coercion. Assistance should not become leverage for attendance, testimony, publicity or religious conformity. The Gospel may be shared plainly and invitations may be sincere. Food, safety and ordinary kindness should never be made conditional upon a profession of faith. Jesus is worthy of genuine trust, not a response produced by control over someone's immediate necessities.

5. Names, Categories and Spiritual Identity

Lazarus Has a Name

In Luke 16:19 through 31, Jesus tells of a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. The wealthy man is described by clothing and feasting. The poor man lying at his gate is named. Whatever interpretive questions surround the account, the naming contributes to its moral force. The person overlooked at the gate is fully known in heaven.

The rich man's failure is not simply that poverty existed somewhere in the city. Lazarus was laid at his gate. Proximity created knowledge and responsibility. The Hawaii story carries a similar challenge. It is easy to discuss homelessness as a distant policy problem. Lanny transformed the question because he was no longer distant. His name made general concern particular.

A Category Can Inform Without Defining

Words such as homeless, blind, poor, disabled, veteran or addict may communicate information relevant to care. They become harmful when the category is treated as the person's complete identity. Scripture speaks honestly about conditions while repeatedly presenting people as moral and spiritual agents who can call, believe, refuse, receive, teach and follow.

For this reason the commentary normally uses the phrase people experiencing homelessness when discussing the larger population. The phrase is not a demand for perfect terminology. It is a reminder that homelessness is a circumstance, not a species of human being. When referring to the supplied story, the simplest and strongest word remains Lanny.

The Giver Does Not Automatically Hold Spiritual Rank

Material security can create an unspoken hierarchy. The housed person arrives with food, transportation or money and assumes the role of spiritual teacher. The person receiving help is assigned the role of spiritual beginner. Lanny's testimony disrupts that arrangement. He was already a Christian and requested continued sermons. He could receive material help while also offering spiritual correction through his presence and words.

James 2 warns against respect of persons based upon visible wealth. The same principle applies when generosity subtly becomes superiority. A giver may possess resources the recipient lacks. The recipient may possess endurance, insight, faith or knowledge the giver lacks. Christian fellowship does not deny asymmetry in a particular need. It refuses to turn that asymmetry into a verdict about human worth.

6. Compassion That Draws Near

The Good Samaritan Sees, Comes and Acts

Luke 10 describes a wounded man left half dead. A priest and Levite see him and pass by. The Samaritan sees him and has compassion. The text then gives compassion verbs: he goes to him, binds wounds, pours in oil and wine, places him on his own beast, brings him to an inn and provides continuing care. Biblical compassion is not mere feeling. It moves toward practical action.

The sermon therefore does not replace food with conversation. It rejects the false choice. Lanny needed to eat, and he deserved to be heard. The Samaritan's care is material, personal and costly. He does not preach at the wounded man before binding him. Neither does he abandon responsibility after a single emotional moment. He makes provision for the next stage of care.

Acts 3: Look on Us

Acts 3:4-6

And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

At the temple gate, Peter and John direct attention toward a man who has been carried there repeatedly. 'Look on us' creates a moment of mutual recognition. The apostles do not possess the money the man expects, but they do not use spiritual speech to excuse indifference. God performs a healing that restores strength, movement and access to the worshipping community.

The passage does not promise that every Christian can reproduce an apostolic sign at will. It does establish that ministry does not require pretending to possess what we lack. Faithful service begins with truthful presence: this is what I have, this is what I do not have and this is the Lord upon whom we depend. Referral, collaboration and honest limits can be forms of love.

Isaiah 58: Bread and Welcome

Isaiah 58 condemns religious performance that coexists with oppression and withheld care. The fast God chooses includes loosening wicked burdens, freeing the oppressed, sharing bread with the hungry, bringing the poor who are cast out into the house and covering the naked. Worship and neighbor love cannot be separated.

The text should not be flattened into a single modern program. It does establish that Biblical spirituality reaches bodies, homes and social relationships. Prayer beside a hungry person may be sincere, but prayer cannot become an excuse to withhold food that is available. Conversely, food should not be distributed in a manner that communicates contempt. The manner of giving belongs to the moral act.

An Open Hand Without an Ownership Claim

Deuteronomy 15 commands Israel not to harden the heart or shut the hand against a poor brother. The hand is to be opened wide. The passage acknowledges that poverty will remain present and therefore requires recurring generosity rather than a brief campaign followed by indifference.

An open hand differs from a controlling hand. It gives without closing around the recipient. Christian generosity should not purchase the right to direct another adult's life, disclose a story or demand gratitude. Accountability is appropriate when administering shared resources. It should be aimed at wise stewardship rather than domination.

7. Dignity, Agency and the Limits of Helping

Agency Is Not Independence

Agency means that a person can speak, choose and participate rather than being treated only as a passive object. It does not mean that every person is fully independent or that every choice is safe. All human beings live through dependence upon God and interdependence with others. Illness, trauma, disability, age and emergency can temporarily narrow a person's ability to decide or act.

Good ministry honors the greatest responsible participation available. A person who cannot solve every problem can still express priorities. Someone in crisis may need protection, patient

repetition or professional intervention. Listening is not abandonment. It is part of discerning how to help without taking more control than love requires.

Do Not Romanticize Homelessness

A sermon about dignity can accidentally romanticize life without shelter. Homelessness exposes people to violence, interrupted sleep, theft, illness, heat, rain, sanitation problems and repeated displacement. Privacy becomes scarce. Ordinary tasks such as keeping identification, charging a telephone, storing medicine or maintaining employment become difficult. The study should never imply that relationship alone removes these burdens.

Nor should the study suggest that every person without housing is spiritually wiser than the people who offer help. Lanny's Christian testimony corrects one assumption in one encounter. It does not create a reverse stereotype. Dignity requires freedom from both contempt and romantic projection.

Do Not Reduce People to a Cause

Visible homelessness can arise through housing costs, job loss, disability, family fracture, domestic violence, mental illness, substance dependence, release from institutions, migration or combinations of causes. The person before us may not fit the explanation we prefer. A sermon is not a clinical assessment or a housing-policy manual.

The Church can still act responsibly. It can know local referral options, maintain relationships with experienced providers, establish boundaries for volunteers and create opportunities for conversation that do not require a person to perform gratitude. It can also support structural responses without allowing systems language to erase the neighbor standing nearby.

Unfinished Ministry Is Not Necessarily Failed Ministry

The lack of a final report about Lanny prevents the story from becoming a formula. There is no proof that meals led to housing, sermons produced a particular decision or the proposed food-wagon idea developed exactly as imagined. The enduring fruit may include consequences known only to God, including the transformation of the giver's sight.

This does not make outcomes irrelevant. Ministries should ask whether promises were kept, resources reached people and practices caused harm. Faithfulness and evaluation belong together. What must be refused is the claim that every life can be reduced to a success statistic or that only completed stories were worth entering.

8. Christ Among the Vulnerable

Matthew 25 Requires Reverence and Care

In Matthew 25:31 through 46, the Son of Man identifies Himself with the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick and imprisoned. The passage gives extraordinary weight to ordinary acts of mercy. Food, drink, welcome, clothing and visitation become encounters in which conduct toward vulnerable people is conduct toward Christ.

Interpreters debate the precise referent of 'the least of these my brethren.' Some understand the phrase primarily as Christ's disciples, especially vulnerable messengers. Others apply it more broadly to needy neighbors. The sermon need not pretend that the debate does not exist. Canonical teaching elsewhere already establishes care for the poor and stranger. Matthew 25 adds the warning that Christ will not permit religious identity to be separated from merciful conduct.

Mercy Does Not Purchase Salvation

The call to care must remain within the Gospel of grace. Almsgiving does not earn forgiveness, erase sin or place God in our debt. Ephesians 2:8 through 10 holds the order together: salvation is by grace through faith, not of works, and those who are saved are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Mercy is fruit, not payment.

This safeguard is especially important when using early Jewish and Christian writings that speak strongly about almsgiving. Their moral urgency can sharpen the conscience, but any wording that appears to assign saving power to a charitable act must be tested by canonical Scripture. Christ alone saves through His death and resurrection.

The Son of Man Had Not Where to Lay His Head

Matthew 8:20 records Jesus saying that foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. The verse should not be turned into a simplistic claim that Jesus experienced modern chronic homelessness in every respect. His first-century itinerant ministry has a distinct setting and purpose.

The verse does reveal that the incarnate Son accepted vulnerability, dependence and uncertain lodging. Christian compassion is therefore not bestowed from a distant God who has never entered human precarity. The Savior knows hunger, weariness, rejection and exposure. He approaches vulnerable people without disgust because He came near to vulnerable humanity.

9. Early Witnesses Beyond the Canon

Canonical Authority Comes First

The KJV text of canonical Scripture controls the doctrine of this study. Sirach, Tobit, the Didache, the Shepherd of Hermas and later sermons are not used to establish doctrine equal to Scripture. They are historical witnesses to how Jewish and Christian communities reasoned about generosity, dignity and the responsibilities created by another person's need.

This distinction permits careful use without either dismissing the historical record or confusing levels of authority. A noncanonical writing may preserve an insightful warning. It may also contain language that requires correction. The Bible remains the standard by which the witness is received, qualified or refused.

Sirach: Do Not Grieve the Needy

Sirach 4:1 through 10 warns against depriving a poor person of necessities, making needy eyes wait and turning away from someone who asks. Its most useful contribution to this study is the attention it gives to the manner of response. Delay, harshness and humiliation can injure even when some material assistance is eventually supplied.

The warning harmonizes with the sermon when it urges the giver to see the person before the task. A ministry can distribute many meals while communicating that recipients are burdens. Christian care should examine tone, waiting practices, privacy and whether people are allowed to ask questions without being punished for slowing the process.

Tobit: Give According to What You Have

Tobit 4 urges generosity according to one's means and warns against turning the face from the poor. The proportional principle is pastorally useful. A person need not possess great wealth to practice mercy. Time, attention, transportation, food and informed referral may all be genuine gifts.

Some translations and interpretations of Tobit use almsgiving language that can sound salvific. The commentary therefore receives its exhortation to generosity but does not use it to define salvation. Romans, Galatians and Ephesians make clear that sinners are justified through faith in Christ rather than charitable merit.

The Didache: Generosity With Discernment

The Didache commends giving and also reflects concern about exploitation. That combination is valuable. Fear of being deceived can harden the heart, while generosity without discernment can

harm both giver and recipient. Mature compassion is neither suspicious withdrawal nor thoughtless distribution.

Discernment should remain humble. A volunteer rarely knows the whole story from a brief encounter. Policies can protect safety and stewardship while leaving room for human judgment. The goal is not to force a person to prove worthiness through humiliation. It is to make care honest, sustainable and attentive to consequences.

The Shepherd of Hermas: Mutual Dependence

In the Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude 2 uses the elm and vine to picture a relationship in which the rich and poor serve one another. The person with resources supplies material assistance. The person in need offers prayer and spiritual benefit. The writing does not erase inequality, but it refuses a one-directional picture in which only the wealthy person has something to give.

That image provides a historical parallel to Lanny's role. Meals moved in one direction, but spiritual instruction did not. Lanny's testimony and request changed the ministers' understanding. Relationship exposed that giver and recipient were not fixed spiritual ranks. Both could receive.

Chrysostom: Meet Christ at the Door

John Chrysostom repeatedly preached from Matthew 25 about recognizing Christ in the poor. His rhetoric can be severe because he confronted Christians who adorned churches while ignoring people suffering nearby. His enduring contribution is the refusal to separate reverence for Christ from conduct toward a vulnerable neighbor.

Historical preaching should not be copied without context, but it can correct selective devotion. A congregation may love Biblical language, music and religious beauty while remaining impatient with the person whose need disrupts the doorway. Christ's honor is not protected by hiding vulnerable people from sight.

10. Comparable Sermons and a Pastoral Caution

Spurgeon's 'The Blind Beggar'

Charles H. Spurgeon preached from Mark 10:46 through 52 with close attention to Bartimaeus's cry, the crowd's rebuke and Christ's response. His preaching emphasizes earnest faith and the readiness of Jesus to receive the person who calls upon Him. The sermon tradition helps preserve the passage's evangelistic center.

A contemporary study should retain that center while speaking carefully about disability. Physical blindness is not itself a moral failure and should not be used as a casual insult.

Bartimaeus already demonstrates spiritual perception when he identifies Jesus as the Son of David. The deeper blindness in the narrative appears among people who can see him physically yet do not recognize the importance of his voice.

Spurgeon's 'Reasons for a Singular Question'

Spurgeon also addressed the apparent strangeness of Jesus asking a blind man what he wanted. He observed that Christ's questions draw desire into the open. The point is useful for the governing question because it keeps attention on the man's own request rather than the observer's assumption.

The sermon for this study extends that insight pastorally. Asking is not a technique for gathering better data while keeping complete control. It is an act of recognition. The answer may reveal a need we did not expect, a boundary we must respect or a gift the person can offer. Genuine questions create the possibility that the helper will also be changed.

Do Not Make Lanny a Sermon Object

A testimony can honor someone or consume him. The difference often lies in what the storyteller claims. This story should report only what the article supports: the first food, the remembered return, the name, the meals, the sermons, Lanny's Christian testimony, the later loss of contact and the food-wagon proposal. It should not invent a diagnosis, criminal history, addiction, conversion or final outcome.

The story's moral center is not that the narrator rescued Lanny. It is that the narrator's sight was corrected through relationship. Lanny remains a person whose full life belongs to God, not a character created for a preacher's conclusion. The unresolved ending guards his dignity.

11. Homelessness in Contemporary Oahu

A Dated Snapshot, Not a Complete Census

The City and County of Honolulu reported that the May 21, 2026 Point-in-Time Count identified 4,539 people experiencing homelessness on Oahu. The total was nearly unchanged from 2024, while the official release reported a 20 percent decrease in unsheltered individuals and a 35 percent increase in sheltered individuals.

A Point-in-Time Count is a one-night estimate produced through outreach and administrative records. It cannot identify every person whose housing is unstable, every family temporarily staying with others or every person who avoids contact. The number is useful for context, planning and comparison. It must not be treated as a complete inventory of human lives.

Why the Statistic Must Not Dominate the Sermon

A current statistic shows that the issue remains near the Church, but the sermon is not a report about annual totals. Its purpose is to examine how Christ sees and hears one person. The numerical context should therefore remain brief and dated. It should never make Lanny representative of every person counted on Oahu.

The temptation works in both directions. One moving individual story can obscure the scale and diversity of homelessness. One large statistic can obscure the individual person. Responsible ministry needs both: enough public knowledge to support wise systems and enough personal attention to remember that every count is composed of names.

Housing First and Client Choice

The City and County's public description of Housing First emphasizes permanent housing without preconditions and services shaped by client choice. This is a civil policy model rather than a Biblical text, yet its attention to choice provides a useful practical parallel. Stable help is often more effective when people participate in setting goals rather than being treated as objects moved through a program.

The Church need not adopt every policy framework uncritically. It should recognize sound observations wherever they appear. Listening to what a person wants does not abandon truth or accountability. It can produce more accurate care, reduce wasted effort and honor the moral agency Christ acknowledged in Bartimaeus.

12. Pastoral Practice for the Local Church

Begin With Presence

A congregation does not need a large program before practicing the lesson. It can begin by training volunteers to make eye contact without staring, introduce themselves, ask a person's name when appropriate and listen without rushing to a conclusion. Presence should be calm, respectful and aware of safety.

Not every encounter permits extended conversation. A person may be asleep, distressed, intoxicated, fearful or uninterested. Respect includes accepting a refusal and knowing when professional help is needed. The command to love a neighbor does not require volunteers to ignore risk, work alone in unsafe conditions or attempt services for which they are not trained.

Ask Useful Questions

'What would be helpful today?' is often better than 'Why are you homeless?' The first question attends to an immediate need without demanding a private history as the price of kindness. Other useful questions may include whether the person has eaten, whether medical attention is needed, whether there is someone to contact and whether the person wants information about available services.

Questions should not become an interrogation disguised as compassion. Personal stories belong to the speaker. A ministry may need limited information for a referral or safe distribution process, but it should collect only what is necessary. Reason Together Church's preference for asking guests only for a first name and email reflects the same broader respect for privacy and voluntary relationship.

Offer What Is Real

Peter's words at the temple gate model honesty about resources. A church should not promise housing, employment, treatment or long-term support it cannot provide. It can state clearly what is available, connect people with trustworthy services and keep the commitments it does make. A small reliable promise is more loving than a dramatic promise that disappears.

The person who brings coffee, organizes supplies, maintains a referral list, drives a volunteer or listens quietly may perform as important a service as the visible speaker. This is consistent with Dr. Hawksley's own preference for meaningful work behind the scenes. Christlike ministry is not measured by who receives public credit.

Separate Assistance From Religious Pressure

The Gospel should never be hidden. Christians serve in the name of Jesus and should be ready to explain the hope within them. Yet immediate necessities must not be used as leverage. A hungry person should not have to endure a sermon to receive food. A person should not be photographed, added to a mailing list or asked to repeat a prayer as an unstated condition of care.

When spiritual conversation is welcomed, the Gospel must be clear. All have sinned. Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again. Salvation is the gift of God received through faith in Jesus Christ, not payment for good behavior or participation in a program. A prayer may express faith, but words do not mechanically save. Christ saves.

Design Programs That Can Be Corrected

The original story included discussion of a food wagon that could distribute meals and sell food in tourist areas to support the work. The proposal shows entrepreneurial effort, but the article

does not establish that it was completed. The strongest lesson is not the specific vehicle. It is the need to let direct relationships correct program design.

Church initiatives should include ways for people receiving services to describe what is useful, wasteful, unsafe or demeaning. Feedback should be possible without risking the loss of help. Leaders should also consult experienced local providers, protect volunteers, comply with applicable rules and evaluate whether the ministry unintentionally duplicates or disrupts existing work.

Remember Names Without Claiming Ownership

Remembering a name is a beginning, not a trophy. The goal is not to prove that a ministry is relational by displaying personal stories. Confidentiality matters. Permission should be obtained before sharing identifying details beyond what is already public, especially when health, family conflict, trauma or legal issues are involved.

Lanny's name appears because it is central to the published first-person account and to the moral movement of the study. Even then, the story should be told with restraint. The Church honors a person not only by saying his name but also by refusing to fill the silence around that name with speculation.

Pastoral Summary

Why did Jesus ask a blind man what he wanted? He did not ask because the Lord lacked knowledge. He asked in a way that brought Bartimaeus's voice into the center of the encounter. The crowd had tried to silence him. Jesus stood still, called him and allowed him to name his desire. Christ's question honored agency without surrendering divine authority.

The question interprets the Hawaii story. The first night, food was left beside a man. The second night, the travelers stopped and listened to Lanny. The food mattered on both nights. What changed was the relationship. A category became a person. A presumed recipient became a Christian brother. An act of generosity became an encounter capable of correcting the giver.

The Church should therefore resist two errors. It must not offer spiritual language while ignoring material need. It must not offer material assistance while ignoring the person. Biblical compassion joins bread with welcome, truth with humility, action with listening and generosity with freedom from coercion.

Not every story will receive a finished ending. Lanny's later location and circumstances remain unknown. The Church can grieve what it does not know, evaluate what it did and entrust the

hidden outcome to God. Faithfulness may plant or water without being permitted to see the increase.

The final question turns toward every believer: Who is still only a category to me? Who have I helped without hearing? Where is Jesus asking me to stand still? The answer should not be sentimental guilt. It should be one faithful movement toward a real person: stop, look, listen, ask, act and remain humble enough to receive.

The Gospel at the center

Jesus Christ is more than the example of compassionate listening. He is the Son of David who went to the cross for sinners and rose again. Every person, housed or unhoused, giver or receiver, needs His mercy. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. Those who receive mercy are then called to practice mercy without pride, coercion or partiality.

Selected Biblical References

Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 24:19-22; Proverbs 19:17; Isaiah 58:6-12

Matthew 8:18-22; 20:20-34; 25:31-46; Mark 10:35-52

Luke 10:25-37; 16:19-31; John 5:1-9

Acts 3:1-10; Romans 3:23; 5:8; 10:9-13

First Corinthians 3:5-9; 15:1-4; Second Corinthians 4:1-7

Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:1-17; First John 3:16-18; Hebrews 13:1-3

Selected Sources

Hawksley, Thomas W. "Homeless in Hawaii." Supplied Ministry magazine PDF, printed pages 42-43. First-person source for the originating story.

City and County of Honolulu, Office of the Mayor. "New Point in Time Count shows a 20% drop in unsheltered homeless individuals on Oahu." May 21, 2026. <https://www.honolulu.gov/mayor/new-point-in-time-count-shows-a-20-drop-in-unsheltered-homeless-individuals-on-oahu/>

City and County of Honolulu, Department of Community Services. "Homeless." <https://www.honolulu.gov/dcs/homeless/>

City and County of Honolulu. "Housing First." <https://www.honolulu.gov/housing/housing-first/>

Sirach 4:1-10. Historical Jewish witness concerning the treatment of the poor.

Tobit 4:7-11. Historical Jewish witness concerning generosity, used with canonical safeguards regarding salvation.

The Didache, chapter 1. Early Christian witness concerning generosity and discernment.

The Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude 2. Early Christian image of mutual dependence between rich and poor.

John Chrysostom. Homily 79 on Matthew. Historical Christian preaching on receiving Christ in the poor.

Spurgeon, Charles H. "The Blind Beggar." New Park Street Pulpit, Volume 5, August 7, 1859. Mark 10:46-52.

Spurgeon, Charles H. "Reasons for a Singular Question." Mark 10:51.