



Into the Neighborhood
4 – Jesus and Bartimaeus
Shay Robbins

Good morning, neighbors. How are y'all feeling? My name is Shay Robbins; I'm part of the teaching team here at Woodland Hills Family Church. I'm excited to be here. It's Part 4 of *Into the Neighborhood*. Has it been good so far? It's pretty challenging. I'm excited to share what God has been stirring up in me.

As you know, as part of our service, we take an offering. We're getting more and more normal every week. We're still not passing baskets, but we've got some boxes out in the foyer, and then we love to welcome those of you who are in the Chapel, The Gathering Place, outside, watching online, and here in the Castle. We're excited that you guys are here.

I actually have a word for you today. The word is *adventure*. As I've been thinking... By a show of hands, who loves a good adventure? This is the message for you. I've been thinking about adventures for the last couple of weeks.

I had a really great childhood. My parents gave us a lot of leash and let us run. Every time I was out of school, on the weekend, or all summer long, we were out in the woods. We were out fishing and hunting and shooting squirrels and building forts and going on adventures and making spears and catching turtles. My life was just an adventure. As a young boy, I obviously had a huge appetite for it.

I want to share a song that happens to be one of favorites with regard to adventure and it's going to kind of set the tone for our message this morning. The song is *Little Boy Heart Alive* by Andrew Peterson. It goes like this:

Open the door and run outside
Your little boy heart alive
Into the morning light
Into the deep and wide

Dinosaur bones in the flowerbed
Rockets in the clouds
In a fight with a spider's web

*Tunnels in the ground
Winding to China
To the mist of the distant shore
Better be home by supertime
Back through the planet core
Feel the beat of a distant thunder
It's the sound of an ancient song
This is the Kingdom calling
Come now and tread the dawn*

*Come to the father
Come to the deeper well
Drink of the water
And come to live a tale to tell*

*Pages are turning now
This is abundant life
The joy in the journey
Is enough to make a grown man cry
With a little boy heart alive*

Isn't that beautiful? So, at the Robbins household, we believe in adventure. We're doing everything we can to foster adventure in the life of our kids. I have a little video of our latest adventure to share with you.

[video plays] Children playing with goats.

The Robbins family is bottle feeding baby goats. They are Nigerian Dwarf Goats; they're the greatest ever. At 6:30am, 8:00am, 12:00pm, 4:00pm, and 8:00p. It is such an awesome adventure. Do you know what happens when you bottle feed a little critter like that? You become mommy and daddy. When my kids take off running through the pasture, these little kids will run after them and bounce and squeal all the way throughout the woods and through our pasture area. It is just an awesome, awesome sight.

I believe that as kids, our default is adventure. It's natural for a kid to get up and to begin to go on an adventure of some kind. If we leave them to their own, that's what they do. But for those of us who have grown up and taken the beatings that life had to offer, we've got to grow up, get our life together. I always hear Ted in my head always saying, "Get a job!" What happens is you start to lose margin for adventure. You start to lose margin for spontaneity in your life and your focus turns from those great adventures to paying the bills, getting through the day, trying to accomplish everything that's on the to-do list, trying not to fall behind.

Sadly, I think we miss out on a lot as we allow life to kind of beat us down. So, this morning, that's really what we're going to talk about. We're going to look at story that circled around the life of Jesus. The

whole conversation we're having is going into the neighborhood. What does it look like to be on mission in your neighborhood? So, we look to the life of Christ.

The story we're looking at specifically is the story of Jesus and Bartimaeus. I think you're going to see, through that story, some real practical examples of how we live like Jesus and go on an adventure daily.

Before we jump into that, I want to ask you a question. Do you allow things to interrupt your schedule? Specifically, do you allow people to interrupt your schedule? This has been convicting for me because as I'm actively processing this message, I'm realizing that I'm walking from my office to the bathroom, texting. As soon as I park my truck, I check how many red dots I have and try to kill a couple. Then I get out and walk up the hill to my office and I'm checking my phone and I'm trying to take care of things.

For some reason, I live under such an urgency that the quiet spaces in my life are getting gobbled up. God has really gotten my attention as I've been really attempting to be more available and more interruptible just in the last week. God gave me an opportunity for two grown men who absolutely broke down and wept with me. I would say a month ago, before this series started, there was a really good chance that I would have missed both of those opportunities.

I think the sad reality is there are a lot of people who are crying alone. For those of you who are willing and desire to go on an adventure, I believe that God wants to draw us into people's lives and to use us in significant, powerful, and important ways in the lives of the people he has put around us.

That's kind of the thought process that I want you to take as we look at the story of Bartimaeus. Let's jump into Mark 10: 46. Our story starts like this. **46 And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside.** Let me set the context for you here. We're looking at Jericho, which, obviously, is an historical city in the life of Israel. Thousands of years before that, like 1,300 to 1,500 years before this time frame, Jericho was a fortified city in enemy territory and the people of God had been wandering in the desert.

God raised up a leader named Joshua and he sent Joshua over into the land to take over the Promised Land. The first city they pursued was the city of Jericho. As I said, it was sitting on a mound, it was fortified, and God gave them the specific instruction. He said, "I want you to march around the city once per day for six days. Then on the seventh day, I want you to march around it seven times and on the seventh time around, you're going to let out a battle cry." And the walls came tumbling down and the people of God raced in there and took over the city and it was the first victory of many to follow as they took over the Promised Land.

So, the people of Jericho are literally living in a relic, a legend of God's goodness and his strength and his power. And as a sidenote, if you go to Jericho today, you can see with your own eyes the archaeological evidence that supports the biblical narrative.

The Book of Mark was written to Roman and Gentile audiences. You going to see a lot less references to the Old Testament. In fact, Jesus's actual speaking, or his words, are recorded less in Mark than the

other gospels because the Roman audience was concerned not with what he was saying but what he was doing. It also makes mention of the size of the crowds that were following Jesus. These were questions that the Roman audience wanted answered. Who is this man moving through the wilderness, followed by thousands and thousands of people? Mark is writing to this audience who he is trying to compel. "I want to introduce you to the person of Christ."

Now, to drill a little bit further, Jericho itself is out in an arid desert. The only reason Jericho was a city out there in the desert is because it happened to be an oasis; there were some springs there. You build your city around your springs and outside of the city is where all the outcasts sat – those who were blind, with leprosy, those who were thrown out of town, had a bad reputation – they were all seated to the left and the right of the road that led into the City of Jericho. It would have been dusty, it would have been sunny, it would have been hot. Specifically, for a blind man, it would have been very difficult. While there were probably other handicaps around them, he lost the benefit of his eyes and seeing opportunities as they walked up.

But on this particular day, he heard the sound of many footsteps. In fact, it was a mob, a multitude of people coming up. I'm sure he turned to his left and to his right, wondering what was going on. The people began to murmur, "It's Jesus of Nazareth."

I also want to point out that at that time, there were probably a handful of historians that we regard today, but the number one in many people's mind was a guy names Josephus. He was a secular historian, and he wrote about this person of Jesus. So, it hadn't just spread throughout Israel itself, but it spread throughout the surrounding towns and communities and areas; everyone was talking about Jesus of Nazareth.

Here's what Josephus said. "Now there was about this time Jesus, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works." – Titus Flavius Josephus. Watch what Bartimaeus does when he hears about Jesus of Nazareth coming into his little neck of the woods. **47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"** Bartimaeus hears it's Jesus of Nazareth and he calls out, "Jesus, Son of David." That phrase, "Son of David," was a messianic reference. It was referring to the Davidic Covenant, when God said to David in 2 Samuel, he promised him that he would always have a king setting in Jerusalem because, for eternity, someone from his line would maintain the throne of Israel. And Bartimaeus heard about this man, Jesus of Nazareth, and he believed. It shows his faith when he says, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

48 And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" You see, the people were shushing him. In Luke's account, it actually explains more clearly that the people who are leading Jesus' group, the people who were with Jesus were the ones that were shushing him. We need to understand this. This was one week before Jesus was betrayed, murdered, and rose again. It was Holy Week. In Jesus entire life he had one mission and that was to make it to the cross and to die for all the sins of the whole world. So, you can imagine the urgency that would have been on Jesus at this time. His disciples are all excited. "We're going to Jerusalem. Jesus is super popular right now. This is going to be an awesome party." So, they're telling Bartimaeus, "Hey,

Bartimaeus, shut up. We have places to go. We got a party to catch. They're getting dinner ready. We have to get to Holy Week." They are in a hurry.

How many times do we find ourselves making similar justifications? "Sorry, I'm late. I've got to get work." "I've got to get the groceries." "I've got a long list today." "I've got a tee time at Big Cedar. I've got things to do, people to see, babies to kiss, books to write. I gotta go." "Sorry, Bart, it's not that we don't love you, we're just in a big hurry today." Y'all been there? Oh, yeah, we're all nodding our heads. But look what Jesus does.

49 And Jesus stopped... Y'all here that? and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." 50 And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." This word *well* in the Greek, it's the word *soso*. It means a complete physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. Bartimaeus was healed from the inside out. **And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.**

This is a really important point. Jesus was willing to be interrupted but he was never distracted. Clearly, he was on a mission, but because Jesus' mission was people, he was willing to be interrupted with them. Y'all, I believe that this is where an adventure starts. Adventures with God start with interruptions.

I want to ask you a question just for the sake of introspection. What is the driving force of your day? What's your mission? As you go throughout your day, when you wake up and you started heading out, what are you setting out to accomplish? I think probably the majority of us in here have good intention, right? You would say *I want my mission to be God's mission. I want to be God's man. I want to be God's woman today.* But in reality, what is it? "I just have so many things to do I'm going to cross one off. And my goal is to do all these things today." Or, perhaps, "I'm going to make a certain amount of money today." Or, perhaps, it's more the tyranny of the urgent like, "I've got bills to pay and I've got to figure out a way to pay them by the end of the day."

There's a thing in the corporate world they call *mission drift*. The idea is that a company is really good at making do dads. They are phenomenal at it; they've got great systems, their profit margins are fantastic, their sales are excellent, their supply chains are efficient. That's what they do, this is who they are; they make do dads and when they do that, they provide for their company and they are blessing to their community.

Mission drift is when perhaps one of your best clients says, "We love your do dads, but we really would like you to make a thingamajig too." You say to yourself, Well, you know what? We can make a thingamajig, but our profit margins are going to be way less, but this client is so important that we'd hate to lose them. Let's go ahead and do them a favor and make these thingamajigs for them."

Then another client hears that you are making thingamajigs and do dads for them. They want some thingamajigs. The next thing you know, your profit margins have been slashed. The water has gotten

muddy of who you are and what you do and then you end up laying off people because your business is suffering.

The same thing happens in our Christian walk. You see, if I were the devil, I would approach you and I would try and get you distracted. I'd get you busy. I'd make you anxious. I would stress you out with specific relationships. Then I'd try and get you to compromise just a little bit. And with one little compromise, once you're kind of broken in and went for it, I'd give you a little time, enough time to justify yourself. And then I'd send you another compromise. Maybe just a little bit bigger. And little by little, I'd draw you off course until your mission had completely veered off what was most important to you. I think that's the way it happens. I know, if I'm honest with myself, that's the way it happens with me.

I want to ask you. What would it look like if you began to be open to interruptions every day? Strategically, like you woke up and you said, "Lord, I'm going to set out on an adventure with you. In fact, I believe that the greatest life I could live is one that is willing to be interrupted by the great adventures that you've prepared for me." What would that look like? How would that be different?

What would it look like for you to be open to interruptions? How would it change your relationships? How do you think you'd begin to interact with your loved ones, your immediate family? For those of you who have kiddos out of the home, maybe even have grandkids, what's your role in your family's life right now? Would you take time for a phone call? Would you cancel golf and go spend time with your grandson or, even better, bring our grandson golfing? Would you consider moving to where your family is at so you can support your kids and grandkids? Would you be around on a weekly basis and watch the grandkids so that your daughter and son-in-law could go on a date night and you could help strengthen their marriage in that way?

Or for those of us who have kids or teenagers that are driving your crazy, would you take the time to go do something that they are passionate about, to go on an adventure, make a memory? Maybe even sacrifice making a little bit more money? Or maybe you are in my phase of life and you're doing everything you can just to get them in bed so you can enjoy five minutes of peace and quiet. Would you take more time tucking them in at night? Would you ask better questions on the way home from school? Would you pull them up into your lap when they're sheading some tears?

What about your extended family? What about that person that really drives you nuts? Maybe the one that pushes your buttons. It's probably a good likelihood that that's the person who needs you the most in their life. How would you deal with those interruptions? What about those who serve you – teachers, employees, employers, waitresses, mechanics? I'm due for an oil change and I keep driving around with it nagging at me and I just don't want to deal with it; it's a waste of time; I'm too busy. Well, maybe this is the season that God timed it where I'd role over 3,000 miles because my mechanic needs somebody to see him and to care about him.

What about your neighbors? This is another one I'm super convicted on. I've got neighbors that I drive past a couple of times a day and I haven't talked to them face to face in months. What about the body of Christ? Each one of you guys who are indwelled with the holy spirits have been given a gift and that

gift is specifically meant to build up the body of Christ. Who are you speaking encouragement into? Who are you lifting up? Who are you helping grow in their faith? Who are you disciplining? I think it changes the way we look at our day. **If we have too much to do to be interrupted, then maybe we've got too much to do.**

A couple of years ago, I had seven things specifically outside of my family, that were taking up emotional energy. So, I was applying myself to seven different things. I really felt God nudging me to let go of number seven. Number seven required about 1% - 3% of my emotional energy, which was very little. I just thought to myself, *Oh, it's not that big of a deal. It doesn't require that much.* God kept nagging at me. I finally followed through with it, had some hard conversations, and got off the board of a great organization. Would you believe it, it took up 1% - 3% of my emotional energy, but I felt like I gained 100% capacity. It was too much.

I'd be willing to bet there is just stuff in our life that needs to go. Some of them are good things, some of them are bad habits, some are just a flat-out waste of time. But what can we do to create space to live an interruptible life? **You see, having a schedule is responsible, but allowing it to be interrupted is spiritual.**

Jesus, the perfect example, on mission, Holy Week, but he was ready to step into somebody's life. This is what's really fascinating to me, gang. Jesus, when he was born, he sacrificed his power of God and he took on humanity. In other words, the power of being God, he laid it aside and he took on humanity. And he used the Holy Spirit to be his prompting and to be his power and to be his healing. And he did that with purpose so that you and I have an example of how we're supposed to function because we have the same Holy Spirit that dwelled through the person of Jesus that did all these miraculous things. That same spirit is the one that wants to prompt you to go on an adventure today.

So, that begs the question: How do we open ourselves up for this adventure? The Story of David and Goliath has four characters. One character is Goliath: he's the bully in direct opposition to God. His eternal destination, for the sake of our conversation, was eternal damnation and hell. Then you have all the Philistines. They were the friends of the enemy. Same destination, less abrasive, but certainly an enemy to God. Then the next character you have are the Israelites, God's people, God's army. They were standing there in battle array, but they were frozen on the sidelines because they were afraid. They weren't willing to go on an adventure with God. But then the fourth character God introduces is an audacious teenage boy, probably the least capable of all the people aforementioned, and yet he had the faith to see an opportunity where God's people needed a hero. On that day, David chose to go on an adventure with God. And here we are 3,000 years later, telling his story.

So, the first question I think we have to ask is who do I want to be? What role do I want to play in this story? We get to decide. For those of you who choose to play the role of the hero and to go on an adventure with God, then after that, it's actually not that complicated. It starts with just prayerful living. "God, who do you have for me today? Who do I need to be aware of? Who do I need to find? Who needs me? Where's is my adventure waiting?"

As I've been processing this, I've been sitting right where you are. One day I went out. I went to a lumberyard. I'm not going to tell who it is because I don't want to share specifically the person, but for those of you who have been there, I bet you know exactly who I'm talking about. I was at a lumber yard and I got a specific product, which is painful in the beginning because buying wood is like sacrificing my children's education. I think they are going to start selling it by the ounce. But I had an order, and I went to pick it up. I then drove away and went to the next store on my list. I realized I had ordered six-foot T stakes for a fence. They were marked six foot, they had six foot on the labels, and lo and behold, they were five- and half-foot T stakes. I'm thinking, You've got to be kidding me! So, I go all the way back to this place, I stand in the service line, and I was in a miserable mood.

I have the interaction with the lady at the desk, then I come out of there, go back, drop off the stuff, pick up more, and have to bring in some piece of paper work to her. I'm standing in line and I'm in a grumpy attitude. I sit there and God opens my eyes. I realize I've watched this lady work this desk... Every time I'm in there, she's there. She is joyful, she is fast and efficient, she's really good at her job, and she navigates difficult people all day long because they are upset.

I had to sit there and just repent. I had the presence of mind to get up there and when she started my interaction, I said, "I need to tell you something before we do this." I looked her in the eyes and said, "I just want you to know you have one of the hardest jobs in the store. You are always joyful, you are always excellent, you're fast, you're efficient. You are phenomenal at your job. I just want you to know I'm grateful for you."

Guess what happened? Tears started falling. She looked at me and said, "You don't know how much this means to me. This morning, I prayed, and I just asked God to show me if what I was doing was right."

I want to make sure that you guys don't give me any credit for this. This was God prompting a moron who just happened to be writing a sermon about this very thing. I'm just so glad I got to go on that adventure with God. That's what I live for. That's what I want. The greatest moments in your life are rarely on the calendar. Yes, your wedding day. You have an approximate idea of when kids are going to be born. You know birthdays. But beyond that, is it not the sweet surprises of life that are not on the calendar? That's the life I want to live.

Last Thursday night... I want to give credit to my wife. It was draft night, round one. I was extremely motivated to get the kids to bed. We're on the last two kids and Ashley lays down in bed with Lulu. I'm like, *We're the twentieth pick! We gotta go!* I sit there impatiently, and Ashley gets those girls giggling. They start laughing and they have the sweetest, most amazing conversation and at the end, Lulu says, "Mom, that was so fun." I thought, *Ugh... Moron!*

But really and truly, is that not the greatest life to live? The one that's just on the precipice of what God's doing. If you need a jolt in your spiritual life, this is it. This is the answer. This is the doorway to the abundant life. Slow down, step up, be a hero and go on an adventure with God.

Lord, you're good. Thank you for being patient with us. Thank you, God, for the power of your spirit. Thanks for choosing each one of us to do your work. Ephesians 2: 10 – For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which you prepared in advance for us to do. God, empower us to do it. I pray that our soul and our heart and our mind and our strength would be stirred to love our neighbor as ourselves.

In Jesus name we pray... Amen.