

# Blind count



*Matthew 20:29-34; Mark  
10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43*

*Year B Proper 25*

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## Parts by scene

■ = large part   ▲ = medium sized part   ● = small part

		1	2	3
■	<b>James</b> - the most officious disciple, often the most frustrated with Jesus' unconventional decisions (such as his allowing women to join the group)	▲	▲	▲
▲	<b>John</b> - the gentlest and most caring of the disciples	▲	▲	
▲	<b>Andrew</b> - the younger brother of Peter, one of the youngest disciples	▲	●	
▲	<b>Peter</b> - the most headstrong disciple, and the least afraid of a fight, but never the smartest person in the room	▲	●	
▲	<b>Matthew</b> - a former tax collector (i.e. a agent of the Roman occupation of his own people) who in his repentance from that past life is the most religiously fervent of the disciples		▲	
●	<b>Thomas</b> - the skeptic, who really wants to believe because of his emotional bond with the others, but can't simply ignore his doubts			▲
●	<b>Joanna</b> - a wealthy woman with a perceptive and agile intellect who abandons her life as the co-manager of King Herod's household to follow Jesus			●
▲	<b>Mary Magdalene</b> - a 'fallen woman' who became the first female disciple, the humblest member of the group due to her shame about her past			▲

## Scene 1

**Andrew , James , John , Peter**

*{Some of the disciples are sitting around the campfire, two day's journey out of Jericho.}*

**James**      Well that was a bust.

**John**        I wouldn't call it a bust.

**James**      Then what would you call it? No donations, no healings, and no conversions. So we're shaking the dust of that place off our feet.

**John** The rabbi did get to preach to some decent crowds. That can't count for nothing.

**Andrew** Besides, there *was* one healing!

**John** Really? That's wonderful! How did it happen?

**Andrew** You really don't remember? Or you, James?

**James** I think I'd remember something like that.

**Andrew** Weird. I could have sworn we were all there. And all the people were buzzing about it. The guy was kind of famous. Or infamous, anyway, for being such a public nuisance with his begging. "Blind Bartimaeus" they called him.

**Peter** Oh! Was that the guy's name?

**James** [*sharply*] What guy?

**Peter** The blind man that the rabbi healed.

**John** So you saw it, too?

**Peter** Of course. Didn't you?

**James** This is a joke, right? You guys are pulling some kind of lame joke!

**Andrew** No! I swear!

**John** Then it's good news! I wish I *had* seen it.

**James** It must have happened at the house while we were out.

**John** There was also that time he was called away to speak at a private gathering and we didn't go along. But I seem to remember Andrew staying home with us.

**Peter** [*to Andrew*] What are they talking about?

**Andrew** They don't remember it.

**Peter** That's crazy. They were right there.

**James**            *[in frustration]* Right where?

**Peter**            At the gates of the city, so you had to be there. We all entered Jericho together!

**Andrew**        You mean exited.

**Peter**            What?

**Andrew**        You mean, we all *exited* Jericho together.

**Peter**            Well, I guess we did, but what does that have to do with anything?

**Andrew**        We're talking about the healing, remember?

**Peter**            *I* remember. What do *you* remember?

**Andrew**        It happened on our way out of the city. Just yesterday!

**Peter**            It happened on our way *into* the city, two days before that!

**James**        You guys are idiots!

**John**            No they aren't! Don't you see? This is even better news. The rabbi healed *two* blind men!

**James**        But without us even noticing it?

**John**            *[to Peter and Andrew]* Tell us exactly how each one went down. Maybe we can figure out where James and I were when they happened.

**Peter**            Okay. Well, we were walking up to the city gates, and there was a blind beggar there. And the people were pretty excited about the rabbi coming, and the beggar began asking what was happening. And when they told him, I guess he must have heard about the rabbi, too, because he began yelling for the rabbi to have mercy on him.

**Andrew**        Are you sure you're not describing my guy? Because that's exactly what happened on our way out of the city.

**James**        Big deal. *Of course* the crowd was excited. Not that it did us any good. And of course the guy would want to be healed.

**Andrew** But it's not a given that both guys would have known who the rabbi was.

**John** Do you remember exactly what the beggar called out?

**Andrew and Peter together** "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

**Andrew** *[startled]* What? Wow.

**Peter** *[a little spooked]* Dude!

**James** Then it was the same guy, and one of you is way off on when it happened!

**John** What happened next?

**Andrew** Well, the people around him began scolding him, telling him he shouldn't be bothering the rabbi...

**Peter** *[interrupting in a still-awestruck voice]* ...but the rabbi heard him, and called for him to come to him!

**Andrew** Exactly!

**James** See!

**John** How did they go to the rabbi if they were blind?

**Andrew** That's the most touching thing about the whole story! The man threw off his cloak and rose to his feet. Then he began shakily walking toward the rabbi! I guess his sense of hearing must be really good, because he homed right on.

**Peter** Huh?

**Andrew** Well, okay, he was a little off, but really remarkably close, considering his handicap.

**Peter** No! He didn't..my guy didn't find the rabbi on his own. People guided him.

**James** So there really were two healings!

**John** And we missed them both!

**Andrew** But our stories are so close otherwise! *[to Peter]* What happened next in yours?

**Peter** The rabbi asked him what he wanted...

**Andrew** Yup!

**Peter** And he said, "Lord, I want to see!"

**Andrew** "Lord" or "Rabbi"?

**Peter** "Lord" for sure. I thought it was great that the guy was calling him that.

**John** *[to Andrew]* Your guy said, "Rabbi"?

**Andrew** Yeah. Then the rabbi just said, "Your faith has healed you," and bam! Just like that, the guy could see.

**Peter** That's how mine went down, too.

**John** The rabbi just spoke? He didn't touch them or anything? Like the times he made clay from the mud and anointed people's eyes?

**Peter** Nope. He just said the word.

**James** Are you both sure you're remembering everything right?

**Peter** Absolutely!

**James** So it was two guys. One on our way in, and one on our way out.

**Andrew** But I don't remember the other one. And I was right there!

**Peter** I don't remember *yours*.

**John** I suppose we'll just have to ask the rabbi to sort all this out when we catch up with him in the village tomorrow.

**Andrew** *[to Peter]* Wanna lay a little bet on who's version is right? Ten bucks?

**Peter**            *[cheerfully]* You're on! But what if we're both right? What if there were really two guys?

**Andrew**        Then maybe we should collect from James and John, who are basically saying none of it happened. What do you say, guys?

**James**            Hey, I think there were two guys!

**John**             All right, I'll take the bet. It seems more impossible that I missed seeing two healings than one.

## Scene 2

Andrew , James , John , Matthew , Peter

*{The four disciples continue their conversation.}*

**Andrew**        *[a sudden idea]* Hey! Maybe we don't have to wait for the rabbi. Let's just ask someone else who was there.

**Peter**            Cool. Who else didn't go ahead with the rabbi?

**John**             Thomas, Mary, and Joanna are still up.

**James**            No! Bring them in on this and we'll be arguing all night! Let's just wait until we see the rabbi.

**Peter**            I thought I saw Matthew around earlier. How about him?

**John**             He *is* very observant about these things.

**Andrew**        Sure, I'll accept his ruling.

**Peter**            I'll go get him.

**James**            No! You'll prejudice him. I'll get him! I've got no money in the pot.

*{James exits.}*

**John**             This is quite a mystery!

**Andrew**        I can't believe that neither of you remember "Blind Bartimaeus".

**Peter**            I can't believe that neither of you remember *my* guy.

*{James returns with Matthew.}*

**Matthew** *[to James]* Okay, now tell me: what's going on?

**Andrew** It's like this...

**James** *[interrupting]* No! Let me do the talking! You'll try to influence him.

**Matthew** What on earth?

**John** It's a bet.

**Matthew** Ah.

**James** Okay, here's my first question: were there any particular...highlights you remember from our trip to Jericho?

**Matthew** Absolutely. It would have to be the healing.

**Peter** Hah!

**Andrew** All the bets are still in play!

**James** *[to the others]* Shut up! *[to Matthew]* Okay, when did this healing occur?

**Matthew** Are you guys messing with me?

**John** No, we just want to hear your version of the events.

**Matthew** My version?

**James** *[impatiently]* Just answer the question! We'll explain afterward.

**Matthew** Okay. As you all must know, it happened just yesterday, on our way out of the city.

**Andrew** Hah!

**Peter** No!

**John** Wait! *[carefully to Matthew]* Was that the only time a healing occurred in or around the city?

**Matthew** Yeah, it was a pretty disappointing trip otherwise. Unless he performed some healings I didn't see.

**Andrew**     *[triumphantly]* We have no further questions!

**Matthew**    Okay, so now you can tell me what this is all about.

**James**      They had a bet about when the healing happened, as we were entering the city or leaving it.

**Matthew**    But we were all there...

**James**      *[interrupting impatiently]* Yes, yes! But these guys had different stories, and John and I didn't remember either one.

**Matthew**    *[beginning the same objection, then stopping himself]* But...

**John**        So then we thought that maybe there had really been two healings, so both Peter and Andrew were right.

**Matthew**    Well, I guess in a sense, there *were* two healings.

**Andrew**     What?

**Peter**        Ah ha! So I was right, too!

**John**        *[to Matthew]* Are you saying that the rabbi *did* also heal a blind man as we were entering the city?

**Matthew**    No! I'm talking about when we were leaving.

**James**      But you said there were two healings!

**Matthew**    Yeah. As we were leaving the city. Isn't that what Andrew said?

**Andrew**     No! I only saw one guy healed! Blind Bartimaeus. Don't you remember him?

**Matthew**    I didn't really get either name, so I guess one of them might have been named Bartimaeus.

**John**        You're saying that as we were leaving the city, the rabbi healed *two* blind men?

**Matthew**    Are you sure you're not kidding me? Everybody saw it! The crowd, the other beggars, everybody! We all saw it!

**James**      This is crazy!



**Peter**        *[to Matthew]* You better tell your whole story.

**Matthew**    As we were leaving the city, a couple of blind beggars heard the ruckus and asked who was passing by. When they heard it was the rabbi, they began calling out for help, even though the crowd tried to shush them. The rabbi heard their calls and asked them to come over to him, and when they did, he touched their eyes and healed them!

**John**        He touched their eyes?

**Matthew**    Yeah.

**John**        Did he say anything?

**Matthew**    Not that I could hear. He just touched their eyes.

### Scene 3

James , Joanna , Mary , Thomas

*{Much later that night, James sits muttering beside the campfire.}*

**James**        *[muttering to himself]* Okay. That had to be it. That had to be. It all fits together. You just have to piece it together.

*{Thomas, Joanna, and Mary enter.}*

**Thomas**      Hey, how's it going?

**James**        *[too defensively]* Fine! Fine. It's going fine.

**Joanna**       *[a little sarcastically]* Well, that's good.

**James**        *[glumly as he gets up]* I'm going to bed. Good night.

**Mary**         *[after a pause, just as James is about to start walking off]* James! Please stay! We're sorry if we interrupted your solitude. We can go somewhere else.

**James**        *[grudgingly as he sits back down]* No, no, it's okay. Have a seat.

**Thomas**      Beautiful night.

**James**        *[glumly]* Yeah.

**Joanna** But confusing.

**James** What?

**Thomas** John was just asking us about our memories of Jericho.

**James** *[with a groan]* Oh, God. What did you tell him? What's the story?

**Joanna** Uncertain. We all had different stories.

**James** *[bitterly]* Surprise, surprise.

**Mary** *[gently self-deprecating]* I was so sure I was right!

**James** *[firmly]* Well it doesn't matter any more, because I've figured it out!

**Thomas** You figured out what "really" happened?

**James** Exactly. The rabbi healed three blind men all together. One on our way into the city, which Peter saw but nobody else did, and two on our way out, which most of us also missed, but Andrew saw. Except that Andrew was so moved by the story of "Blind Bartimaeus" that that was the only part of it he remembered.

*{A pause while they mull this over.}*

**Joanna** *[lightly]* That certainly covers everything.

**James** *[firmly]* Damn right it does.

**Thomas** *[tentatively]* It's just so odd, how similar all three stories were. They all followed the same pattern, except for a few minor details, down to the words that were uttered. The blind men hearing the commotion, the crowd trying to quiet them, the rabbi hearing them.

**James** That's not impossible!

**Joanna** No, no. Just...odd.

**James** *[stubbornly]* Well then it's odd! It happens to be the truth. It's the only possible truth, so it must be!

**Thomas**      *[gently]* Well...it's also possible that people are just remembering it wrong. That does happen.

**James**      *[bursting suddenly into vehemence]* Yes, yes, it happens, but only over small things! What was he wearing, what exactly did she say, how many camels were there in the caravan? But whether there were two beggars or one? Whether it happened while we were coming or going? Men don't get things like that wrong! Unless they're lying, or crazy, or...or...

**Joanna**      Women?

**Thomas**      Or Doubters like me?

*{There's a long tense pause.}*

**James**      *[stiffly]* As I said, I'm going to bed.

**Mary**      *[suddenly, as he gets up to go]* James? *[pauses to think, continuing in a quiet and shy way]* I hope you're right that there were three beggars, because that means three people were helped. I knew a blind man once who was healed by the rabbi. That's how I found out about him. My friend was so miserable. Maybe more miserable than me! But afterward, he was so happy, I forgot all about my own sorrows. He kept shouting, "He gave the world back to me! He gave the world back to me!" I hope there are three men shouting that now, and not just one.

**James**      *[in a shaken and humbled tone, after a long pause]* That's...that's a good way of thinking about it. Mary.

**everybody**    Amen.

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*You can read my thoughts about this play and respond with your own at  
[www.WineskinProject.net/blog/bartimaeus](http://www.WineskinProject.net/blog/bartimaeus)*

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