

That We All Might See
October 24, 2021, Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Gospel of Mark 10:46-52
Fr. Brad

At this point in Jesus' ministry he has throngs of people following him and watching what he is going to do next. Remember these throngs will gradually thin out to next to nobody save for his mother and a few others who follow him right to the foot of the cross.

Our Gospel account tells of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar who has probably been on the fringes for a long time if not his whole life. We don't know exactly. But we do know that he was bold and persistent. Maybe he felt he had nothing to lose, probably used to being belittled and ignored, - - what's one more public humiliation, right? But more importantly, He saw in Jesus his only hope and was not going to let this opportunity slip by. Through the grace of God HE KNEW EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTED and verbalized it when asked by Jesus what He could do for him. In this response, Jesus puts the responsibility back on Bartimaeus.

Do we know exactly what we would tell Jesus if he asked us the same question? Do we know what we want? Are we wise enough to know what we truly need? Are we willing to boldly ask for what we need, knowing in our hearts that God wants the very same thing for us - - to be healed and to belong with Him.

We may see ourselves as still completely blind in many ways, and we all are. Bartimaeus represents the vulnerable person within each of us, hoping for any act of mercy or tenderness from God especially living in a world where exclusion is rampant. We may be feeling stuck and even empty and discouraged because we are still concealing that part of ourselves. Maybe we are afraid of the implications of turning our entire selves over to the mercy and love of God. Maybe we need to ask ourselves, as Peter did, *"To whom shall we go?"* Maybe we can ponder this statement for our selves and then imagine again Jesus asking us, *"What do you want me to do for you?"*

Jeremiah articulates the narrative of Israel's life journey - - 'they departed in tears but God will console them and guide them on a level road so that no one shall stumble.' Division and brokenness is not the last word. St. Paul in his letter to the Hebrews speaks of God's call and of the grace to **be patient with the ignorant and erring for those called are themselves beset by weakness. All of humanity knows brokenness.** In different ways we have all felt the darkness of feeling on the fringes, of being on the outside. Our seniors are particularly hard hit and this pandemic has exacerbated the isolation and taken its toll. In so many ways, we all long to see again. So what can we learn from our Gospel?

The first step to seeing is to pray, **pray for the wisdom to know what we truly need** and to call out to the Lord.

Secondly, **be persistent** - - when Bartimaeus first calls Jesus doesn't respond immediately. How urgently do we want to see? There is that inner negative voice within that says it's a waste of time asking. Externally as well, there may be skepticism and resistance from outside. WE NEED TO PERSEVERE THROUGH THE NEGATIVITY.

'Success is not final, and failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts.'
Winston Churchill

Thirdly he 'threw off his cloak' (his security blanket) as he was called forward. WE need to **let go of the securities**, the defenses the devices that the world recommends. We need to let go of all that is unnecessary. The old cloak would no longer be needed, for this former blind man, going his own way no longer had meaning.

Bartimaeus has nothing to bargain with, no way of paying Jesus back. Perhaps Mark is reminding us here that we have nothing to offer except our need for Him. That takes humility.

The **greatest calamity** that can befall people is not that they should be blind but, that **they have eyes yet fail to see**. Bartimaeus came to see and would go on to follow the One who made it happen. In Jesus' response to him and to us, "*Go your faith has made you well*", there is **both a healing and an invitation**. Over and above his eyesight, his entire vision was restored. Bartimaeus proved himself not just a consumer of God's grace but he allowed his healing to make him **a partner in the ministry of Jesus**.

Jesus wants us to do for others what He did for Bartimaeus. We must not overlook the lonely person outside of us and within us. We must never lose sight of those on the margins. There is a part of ourselves that lives on the margins that has been neglected.

In this Eucharist, let's pray now for vision, for insight into ourselves, for all those on the edges, for the elderly, the poor, the physically and mentally disabled, the abused, and the traumatised, for all the most vulnerable. And may we persevere in faith and, through God's grace, courageously ask for what we truly need. At each stage of life there is a way we can open our eyes and ears to ways we can be a partner in Jesus' ministry. Jesus stands before each of us each day with open arms eager to tell us that our faith has saved us. May we all ultimately choose Him and so come to see. Amen