**30th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Cycle B**

**Jeremiah 31: 7-9**

**Hebrews 5: 1-6**

**Mark 10: 46-52**

**Theme: Be mindful of those who look and act different from “followers” of Jesus. The fact they are different doesn’t mean they aren’t followers!**

The first reading, from the book of Jeremiah, describes the return of the Babylonian captives as they are led on their joyful journey home to Jerusalem. The passage foretells God’s promise to give His people life in all its fullness. Through their exile and suffering, the people had learned to humble themselves and turn to God with sincere repentance.  The returnees included not only the healthy, but the blind, the lame, and the vulnerable. Jeremiah’s attention is directed to *God's* desire to make the journey as easy as possible, “brooks of water, on a level road, so that no one should stumble.”

The Gospel story of Bartimaeus is the last healing miracle recorded in the Gospel of Mark and, it too, is a “journey story”.**Jesus is on “the way” to Jerusalem for the celebration of Passover and for His Passion.** Bartimaeus is strategically located at the roadside where he can beg for alms from passing pilgrims. In contrast to the festive crowds walking along, he sits, emphasizing his social isolation as a disabled person. **When the people told Bartimaeus the news of Jesus’ passage through the city, he began to shout his remarkable statement of faith: *"Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me."*** Jesus was surrounded by a large crowd.   Jesus’ followers rebuked him and told him to be quiet but Bartemaeus kept calling out all the more, ***"Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me."***Amid the noise and dust, people were jostling for attention, and beggars cried out for alms. In spite of this tumult Jesus heard Bartemaeus’ voice crying out through the noise of the crowd. **Jesus instructs His followers to “Call him.”** Who would have expected a messianic greeting (“Jesus, son of David”) from a blind beggar?  **When we follow the Lord, we should not be surprised when we encounter people who are “silent followers” sitting along “the way.” Rather, this passage invites us to see them as potential disciples and to serve their needs as an opportunity to awaken the gift of faith.**

**In spite of the crowd's objections, Jesus stopped and, recognizing Bartimaeus’ faith, the blind man is called to Jesus. As so often happens there are impediments in the way of coming to Jesus: “many rebuked him, telling him to be silent.” Those following Jesus have not yet learned to bring people to him instead of sending them away. The first response of the disciples cautions us to be careful about the ways in which we can be exclusive or restrictive in our attitude towards others. Any time we think that others don’t have a right to call out for God’s mercy, we become obstacles to that mercy and to the encounter Jesus wants to have with all who seek Him.**

**Once Jesus’ followers call to Bartimaeus, they reassure him with the words, “Take courage; get up, he is calling you.” The irony here is that Bartimaeus is not the one needing encouragement! He “sprang up, and came to Jesus.” To cast off “his cloak” symbolizes his leaving behind his former life, as Christians are called to put off the old nature at baptism and throughout their life.**

**Jesus asks the same question of Bartimaeus that he had asked of James and John, “What do you want me to do for you?” This is the real moment of decision for Bartimaeus and his truly big chance in life. Bartimaeus could have asked for the gift of money that would simply help him get by, but instead he asked for the transforming gift of God’s grace that would restore his sight and change his life. It takes a lot of courage to ask for that kind of gift because it means learning to live in a new way and leaving behind familiar settings, expectations of others, and fulfilling new responsibilities. Sometimes when we pray for God’s grace we seek only that gift which well get us by from one momentary need to another rather than the grace that will change our lives so we can follow the Lord as faithful disciples.**

**Perhaps the greatest miracle in this story is that Bartimaeus knew what to ask for when he was given the chance and knew that he had the courage to actually seek it.**

**Unlike the sons of Zebedee, Bartimaeus does not ask for any special honor for himself, but only the restoration to wholeness that is part of God’s messianic promise. Jesus replies, “Go your way; your faith has saved you.” The man’s faith is his absolute confidence in God’s power to do the impossible through Jesus. Bartimaeus is healed physically, but even more, the eyes of his heart are enlightened, an image of what happens to every Christian at baptism. He demonstrates the perfect response to being healed; he follows Jesus “on the way” of discipleship, the way through Jesus’ passion and death to the resurrection and eternal life. Bartimaeus could have used his gift of sight to return to his former life and follow his own pursuits instead. By using his gift to follow Jesus he is showing us what true and authentic discipleship looks like when one commits his life to Christ and lives out his Baptism by accompanying the Lord on His way. Bartimaeus has become a missionary disciple entrusted with the commission to “go” and witness the Resurrected Jesus to all whom he meets, especially those people whom he will find sitting along the way waiting for someone to bring them to the Lord.**

**We can be fairly certain that was fruitful in his ministry. Bartimaeus is the only recipient of healing whose name is recorded by Mark, suggesting that he became a disciple and was known in Mark’s early church community.**