**30th Sunday (B) October 24th, 2021**

Jeremiah 31: 7-9, Psalm 126, Hebrews 5: 1-6, Mark 10: 46-52

**Bartimaeus, the Blind Beggar of Jericho**

There was a sizable crowd walking with Jesus that day leaving Jericho, possibly hundreds of people. Many people have needs and surely some in the crowd had urgent needs too. Apparently only one of them had the audacity to speak up and ask the ‘prophet’ for help. That man happened to be a blind beggar sitting by the roadside.

Bartimaeus probably did not know, as Hebrews tells us, that Jesus was the great high priest according to the order of Melchizedek appointed by God to take away the sins of the world. In the few words he spoke, we can know that he did believe several important things about Jesus. Bartimaeus addressed this VIP, a very important prophet, as “Jesus, son of David” indicating through his faith that Jesus was the messiah. He also believed that Jesus had the power to cure his blindness, a power that neither the kings nor the rabbis of Israel possessed.

Before Bartimaeus received the miracle he so ardently desired, Jesus told him “your faith has saved you.” It was in fact his faith that saved him as this was a requirement for Jesus to perform a miracle.

**Seeing requires light**

Reflecting on Mark’s narrative of Bartimaeus the blind beggar caused me to recall a personal story from 30 years ago.

It was during the fall that I found myself semi-lost in an Arkansas cave with 5 companion cavers. We spent most of the day in the cave wading through cold water up to our zippers, crawling and squeezing through tight passageways, one was called the birth canal, and rappelling down a steep slope covered in bat guano.

Eventually we found our way to an unmapped and somewhat unexplored large room searching for another exit that was rumored could lead us back to the surface outside. We were exhausted and decided to interrupt our adventure for a much needed rest.

Turning off our headlamps, the room turned to absolute total darkness. It was the same whether our eyelids were opened or closed, we were blind without any light source to illuminate the dark cave room. That moment I experienced the darkest darkness in the world where one mis-step could be fatal.

This story is not an attempt to convince anyone to go cave exploring. The point is; I was blind in total darkness without any light, but fortunately it was only a temporary blindness. It did not take a miraculous healing or much faith for me to recover my sight, just a decision to switch on my headlamp and I could see.

**Spiritual Blindness**

There is another type of blindness not associated with the ocular organs. We could experience it any time of our life if we stray from following Jesus. Spiritual blindness may actually be worse than blindness which does not allow us to see with our eyes. It could be permanent or temporary depending on how much we desire to change it.

But left untreated in our souls, it could result in spiritual death.

**Healing of Spiritual Blindness**

Spiritual blindness for us baptized Christians can happen gradually as we turn away from the truth of the Gospel and succumb to the ways of the world.

Some symptoms of spiritual blindness are selfishness, arrogance, and indifference to injustice, self-sufficiency, jealousy, anger, impatience, entitlement, greed, and sadness…. The evidence of spiritual blindness of course are the sins we can commit as we follow our own selfish will and oppose the will of God.

But the light of Jesus Christ is always shining brightly in the world ready for our decision to receive its illumination in our souls. If we are bold and courageous like Bartimaeus and take initiative, the light of Jesus Christ will shine for us and help us make the changes we desire in our own lives.

Silent conviction would not have worked for Bartimaeus. If he only believed quietly in the prophet everyone was making the fuss about, Jesus would have just walked on by. Fortunately this blind beggar had a faith that speaks up with perseverance.

Jesus says elsewhere in the Gospel that he who asks, receives. He told parables about rude widows and obnoxious neighbors who make a nuisance of themselves, who persistently ask for things, and finally get what they want.

Bartimaeus believed that Jesus could do anything and would not allow this Rabbi to pass him by and leave Jericho without fulfilling his urgent need. When the people in the crowd told him to be quiet he only persisted all the more.

Jesus wanted to help him to see and he wants to help each one of us see things in a different light too. All we need is faith to see things in a different light.

It’s not through yoga, transcendental meditation and aromatherapy; it’s through faith. It’s through trusting in the God who created us and who died on a cross for us to show us how much he loves us.

We all have faith; otherwise we wouldn’t be here today. And we all know that we need stronger faith; otherwise we wouldn’t be here today.

We need to pray as Bartimaeus did and beg the Lord from the bottom of our hearts to have mercy on us.

Pray the Jesus prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” which sounds a lot like Bartimaeus’s request, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.”

And when Jesus asks “What do you want me to do for you?” be ready to tell him. Just as sure as the blind beggar was healed, we too can surely recover from our spiritual blindness if we speak out with the faith that he had.

In this Mass today, Jesus is passing by our lives, just as he passed by Bartimaeus on the road leaving Jericho.

We want to see him more clearly; we want to love him more deeply; follow him more closely.

When we decide we are ready for it, Jesus will heal our spiritual blindness and rehabilitate our souls through the sacrament of confession.

This is what will truly make us happy and allow us to proclaim “The Lord has done great things for us; and we are filled with joy.”