

28<sup>th</sup> October 2018 (30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

Jeremiah 31:7-9; Psalm 125(126); Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10: 46-52.

### **Go; your faith has saved you!**

Leaving Jericho on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus meets with the son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, and heals him. This is a story of faith and a story that confirms to us that the time of the messiah has come.

As part of the readings for this Sunday, the Church gives us the reading from the prophet Jeremiah who declares that when the Lord comes, he will welcome the blind and the lame, those who are marginalised in society. In other readings we are told that the messiah will heal the sick and give sight to the blind. This is a good introduction to today's gospel reading.

Bartimaeus is the image of those who are marginalised in society; we find it very easy to push people who challenge us to the margins of our society. This situation cannot be better portrayed than in today's story. Bartimaeus was blind, so he cannot earn a living and had to beg. Yet beggars are not welcome in society; there was a large crowd of people around Jesus, but blind Bartimaeus sat on the side of the road and did not form part of the action. Moreover, when he tried to draw Jesus' attention, the crowd tried to silence him, scolding him and telling him to shut up; he was a nuisance! The crowd thought they had the king they had been waiting for – soon we will read about the entry into Jerusalem – and there was no space for poor blind beggars in their midst!

Bartimaeus was a man of faith! He had heard about Jesus of Nazareth and the miracles he had performed; he knew that giving sight to the blind, as Jesus had done in other instances, was a sign that he was the messiah, and so he calls for help. Bartimaeus addresses Jesus with a messianic title: Son of David. The Jews knew that David had been promised that one of his offspring will be the messiah, hence the blind man begs: have pity on me!

What a simple and beautiful prayer: Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me! Lord I do need your help and I know that you can give it! How often do I pray in these, or similar words? Bartimaeus knew who Jesus was and believed he could do what he was requesting, that is why Jesus answers: your faith has saved you! Do I have faith in God? Do I believe God can really give me what I need? Do I pray with deep faith?

Faith is a relationship with God. At times we might feel that God is not listening, there are too many things happening around us, we feel marginalised and disadvantaged in society and at times even in the Church, but we need to keep praying. Bartimaeus shouted even louder.

God listens and responds to prayer made in faith. Jesus heard Bartimaeus' prayer, stopped and called him forward. God listens to our prayer too when we sit and pray in faith.

And when God calls there is no time to waste; Bartimaeus throws away his cloak, jumps up and goes to Jesus. The gospel gives us a sense of haste and urgency; there is no time to waste. It is very probably that his cloak was the poor blind beggar's only piece of clothing, still he wasted no time to throw it away, leave it behind and got to Jesus. In front of our God we need not be embarrassed to appear as we really are. We do not need to hide behind our clothes or lack of sincerity. God knows our true self and welcomes us as we really are.

Perhaps Bartimaeus actually did not need his eyesight in order to be able to see, as Jesus points out he had faith and could already see through his eyes of faith. Probably Bartimaeus could see Jesus more clearly than the disciples could. He had faith in Jesus, and this faith saved him.

The story does not end yet. Bartimaeus leaves everything behind and starts following Jesus. Faith leads us to follow and listen to Jesus and his teachings.

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