

2.27.2022 Quinquagesima (Luke 18:31-43)

Our Gospel reading this morning began with these words: *“Then Jesus took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again”* (Luke 18:31-33).

The same words Jesus spoke to the twelve, His Church speaks to us. Next week, on Ash Wednesday, we will begin a 40-day journey in which *we go up to Jerusalem*, where all the things written by the prophets concerning the Son of man were accomplished. There, we will stand at the foot of the Cross, behold our Lord on Good Friday, and after three days celebrate His glorious Resurrection on Easter morning.

The passage we read from the Gospel this morning is meant to help us prepare ourselves for that journey. This passage from St. Luke is one of many instances in which the Gospel writers record Jesus warning the disciples about His coming passion and death. Time and again He tells them *“that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised”* (Matthew 16:21), but the disciples fail to understand what our Lord is clearly saying to them. St. Luke, in his Gospel account, emphasizes the disciples inability to see what our Lord and God was trying to show them by repeating this fact three times. Luke writes, *“And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken”* (Luke 18:34).

In a sense, you could say the disciples were blind. These men who had lived, traveled, and ministered with our Lord for three years couldn't see what was happening in front of them, and immediately after Luke repeatedly describes the mental blindness of the disciples, he writes about a blind beggar named Bartimeus, and his miraculous physical cure. The fact that our Lord's encounter with Bartimeus follows Luke's description of the disciples inability to see and comprehend these things is not a coincidence, it is instead by

God's design, a way of illustrating how blind we can be.

There is a parallel between the disciples' blindness, and our own failure to see, and understand, and truly take to heart the meaning of the passion and death of our Lord. Bartimeus is meant to be an example to us. Like him, we are to cry out to Jesus in faith, for mercy to see, so that we may grow in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ to the end that our hearts and souls and minds may be transformed, and our lives changed forever.

If we are to follow the faithful example of Bartimeus, we must first acknowledge the truth that, apart from Christ, in a spiritual sense we are all blind. Jesus said, "*I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness*" (John 12:46). Our Savior Christ is *the Light of the world* (John 8:12). Apart from Him, we *abide in darkness*. Without His light illuminating our way, we are like blind men and women stumbling around searching for a guide.

Bartimeus, who "*sat by the way-side begging*" (Luke 18:35), is a powerful illustration of who we once were. We were blind beggars sitting by the side of the road, and so thanks be to God, for our Savior has come into the world as a light that not only guides our feet on His path, but *the Light of the world* which we possess in ourselves. Jesus declared, "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*" (John 8:12).

God's promise is not merely that we will be led by the light or brought out into the light, His promise to you is that you *will have* the light of life. The light and life and love of Christ lives in us. Unlike the Israelites who were miraculously guided in an outward way by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21), our Light and our Guide and our God dwells in us. His light does not merely illuminate the path before us, His light fills and floods our entire being. Once we were like Bartimeus, blind beggars living in darkness and the shadow of death, but now, in, with, and through Christ there is only *light and life and love* (John 1:4; 1 John 4:16).

In the example of Bartimeus we also recognize the importance of crying out

to Jesus for mercy and healing regardless of what others think or say. St. Luke tells us that when Bartimeus heard “*the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood (still)*” (Luke 18:36-40). When the crowd told Bartimeus to be quiet, he cried out all the more. When the world tells us to remain silent, we should follow his example. In the face of opposition or discouragement, we must keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking (Matthew 7:7-8), not only that we may be healed, but that the world would receive sight and “*come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:4) by witnessing the mighty work our Lord has done in us.

This is exactly what happened when Bartimeus was healed. Our Gospel passage ends with him receiving his sight, following Jesus, glorifying God, and then we read that “*all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God*” (Luke 18:43). Bartimeus, though he was physically blind, saw the grace and mercy of God in our Savior Christ. This was something the crowd did not see, until he was healed. Those who arrogantly rebuked him, who told this poor, blind man to be quiet, when they saw how Jesus ministered to him, and healed him, suddenly realized their own blindness. We often read this story and focus only on the miracle Bartimeus received. We must not miss the miracle the crowd received, for they were truly blind, but in the end, they see.

To cry out to Jesus in this world, in a bold and courageous way, is not only about receiving the healing we so desperately need, it’s really just as much about loving our neighbor as we love ourselves, because when we cry out to our Lord in faith and the world sees the miraculous work God does in us, when they see the light and life and love of Christ living in us, when we let our light so shine before men... they will glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:16). The crowd will give praise unto God, and where there was once darkness and death, there will be light and life and love.

Jesus has healed you. Our Lord has called you “*out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (1 Peter 2:9). He has given you eyes to see both this life and

the life to come. Now the question is: Will you respond to the miraculous healing you have received as joyfully and deliberately as Bartimeus? Will you spend your days following Jesus and glorifying God to the end that *all the people*, when they see the miracle He has done in you, will give praise unto God, for in doing so, their hearts and souls and minds will be transformed, and this world will be changed forever.