

**Jeremiah 31:7-9**

**Psalm 126**

**Hebrews 5:1-6**

**Mark 10:46-52**

**Homilist: Deacon Mike Mocek**

**October 28, 2018**

**Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

To help us better understand anything that we read in Holy Scripture, we must put it in proper context. What is the setting? What is happening in the moment? What happened before? And, what will be happening next? Today's Gospel narrative about the blind man, Bartimaeus, takes place near Jericho, a small city not far from the Jordan River that is thought to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities of the world. Jesus and his followers are departing Jericho for the last fifteen or so miles of their long and arduous journey on foot through Galilee, Samaria, and Judea to the city of Jerusalem. Jesus taught throughout this final journey that would lead him to his passion and death, but the Gospels tell us that many of his listeners, including his own disciples, were not getting the message of his teaching. Over the past few weeks, we heard some examples of that in our Gospel readings from Mark. Last week, the Apostles James and John asked Jesus to give them places of glory in the kingdom, one on his right and one on his left. Responding to their preposterous request, Jesus first said, "You do not know what you are asking." Then, he taught them something about humility. "Whoever wishes to be great among you," he said, "will be your servant." Two weeks ago, the rich man asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answered lovingly that the man must give up everything and follow him. But the man, who had many possessions, turned around and went away sad. Last month, Peter rebuked Jesus for teaching that he would suffer, be rejected, be killed, and then rise on the third day. In response, Jesus told Peter he was thinking, "not as God does, but as human beings do." He then said to the crowd,

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

But with Bartimaeus it was different. Sitting by the side of the road and begging, as Jesus and his disciples were passing by, the blind Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus to have pity on him. As we will see in a moment, Bartimaeus was not a simple beggar asking for a handout. Bartimaeus knew about Jesus. He knew Jesus was a descendant of King David – the Messiah who, according to the prophet Isaiah, would bring justice to the poor and the suffering. His cry to Jesus for pity was a cry for mercy. Others tried to silence Bartimaeus, but he kept crying out, "Jesus, son of David, Have pity on me." Jesus called him over, and the disciples encouraged him to go to Jesus, so Bartimaeus threw off his cloak, jumped up, and went to Jesus with great enthusiasm. Jesus asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" Well, here was his opportunity – a blank check, if you will. Bartimaeus could have asked for anything – food, clothing, shelter, money. Instead, he asked confidently, and at the same time humbly, for the one thing that, according to conventional wisdom, was not likely to happen, "Master, I want to see." Jesus realized that Bartimaeus was already seeing in ways that others could not, and he told Bartimaeus, "Your faith has saved you." Note that Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you." He did not say, "Your faith has given you sight." But immediately, Bartimaeus received his sight, and he followed Jesus to Jerusalem, leaving behind his cloak, which may very well have been his most valuable possession.

Today's Gospel tells us that Bartimaeus got the message Jesus was teaching on that final journey to Jerusalem when others, including Peter, James, and John, did not. So, what does this mean for us today? Do we get it? Am I willing to leave everything behind to follow Jesus? Am I at least willing to simplify my life and get rid of the "stuff" that distracts me from Jesus so I can find true joy in following him? And, how do I respond when Jesus asks, "What

do you want me to do for you?" Do I just ask for more "stuff" that distracts? Or do I seek wisdom, understanding, and acceptance, so that I too may see?