

The BLIND Hero

THIRTIETH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

CYCLE B

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Hebrews 5:1-6

Mark 10:46-52

GATHERING

We reflected last week on God's choice of the rejected and the flawed to be signs of grace for us. This week we encounter another *weak* one. But this blind beggar will loom up before us with a great inner strength. He will stand revealed as a follower of Jesus.

The session begins with the opportunity for sharing of some significant encounter of the past week.

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Let us acknowledge ourselves in the presence of God.

(Pause for several moments of silence.)

(After a minute silence, a selection of quiet instrumental music is played. When the music is complete, members dwelling quiet for another minute.)

Focus Question

Can you recall an experience of feeling "left out?"

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

Gospel: Mark 10:46-52

COMMENTARY¹

Imagine Bartimaeus...blind, poor.

He sits *by the side of the road*. A fringe person, he dwells on the margins of society. The world passes him by.

He sits. He waits. He waits for mercy.

What must be the experience of such a one – surrounded by darkness, hemmed in on all sides, limited in his possibilities, trapped, cut off, alone, at risk?

He learns of this Jesus of Nazareth. He is aware of his passing. He resonates with this presence. Bartimaeus senses in Jesus a new possibility for himself, a path to the future.

But to realize this possibility he must assert himself. He must rise above the crowd. He must *single* himself out from the mass. He must go against the collective. He must differentiate himself. He must make himself heard.

Feel the weight of the crowd. Feel the pull of the conventional. It's a drag! It is almost overwhelming.

From his utter neediness, out of the depths of his human longing, he cuts into the collective din. Bartimaeus calls out, "Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me."²

The indifferent mass resists him. It is put off by this voice from the

¹ Separated by only a few verses from last week's gospel, this story of the blind beggar is set into Mark's gospel in such a way that it stands as the final story in the narrative of Jesus' travelling ministry. Following this story we are told of Jesus' immediate approach to Jerusalem. Our story is also the final fully developed Markan account of a healing by Jesus.

² "Son of David" is a messianic title (cf. Mk 12:35). In the Greek text of this story the title precedes the name of Jesus. This emphasizes the expectation with which Bartimaeus looks to Jesus.

sidelines. It resents his effort to assert himself. It attempts to deflect this human cry, this plea for the realization of a heart's deepest hope.

But Bartimaeus refuses to be passed by. He will not hold his piece. He will not keep to the place to which the crowd relegates him. Insistently, he slices at the conventional limits which would hold him bound.

With his persistence he commands the attention of Jesus saying, in effect: "You who carry the hopes of our people, hear me that I may realize my own deepest yearning." His call stops Jesus in his tracks.

But what a crew, this crowd! It goes from one extreme to the other. First it dismissed him, now it encourages him, as if Bartimaeus needed the affirmation of the collective. By its encouragement now, the mass would still hold him within its grasp.

But Bartimaeus has already left the crowd behind. Hear the dynamism of the narrator's description: "He threw aside his cloak, jumped up and came to Jesus." He moves as if by propulsion. What a freedom in the midst of his limits. He moves through the crowd with a clear sense of direction, as if he can already see. He becomes an individual standing before Jesus.

There on the road Jesus-Hero, about to embark on the last steps of his great journey to accomplish the will of God, finds himself confronted by another seeking to make his own way on life's road.

Jesus' direct address ("What do you want of me?") is met with an equally direct, concrete and uninhibited appeal, "I want to see." Or in other words: "I want to be able to make my own individual responsible way on life's road."

Jesus-Hero making his individual way in response to the call of his baptism by John activates the hero within this Bartimaeus trapped by the side of the road. As befits the hero, Bartimaeus acts with courage. Healed by this encounter with Jesus, Bartimaeus takes his place on life's road. He follows Jesus on the road to do the will of God.

It is a common journey on which we are each embarked. To follow Jesus on the road – to accomplish the will of God in our lives – we must

likewise encounter the hero within. With courage, boldness, persistence, we must step out of the collective and embrace the journey in an *individual* way.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

1. Like Bartimaeus you find yourself standing on the road before Jesus. He addresses you, "What do you want of me?" How do you respond?
2. Recall a time when you had to cry out (for help or in protest) even when others wished you would be quiet.
3. In what way are you needy before God?
4. Imagine yourself on the road of your life journey, how must you go against the demands of the crowd, the pull of the conventional to follow Jesus on the road?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

1. Help a blind person be "included". Learn about the National Association of the Blind at (410) 659-9314 They will be happy to put you in touch with a blind person in your area of the state who is in need of some assistance (reading, driving etc.).
2. Listen to your friends, co-workers, family members this week. When someone is struggling to be heard against the conventional wisdom of the world, trying to reach beyond his/her limits offer a helping hand, a word of support or encouragement.
3. Take twenty minutes of personal quiet time to discover some place in your life where you are hemmed in by the expectations of the "crowd". Resolve to take some concrete action to free yourself in this area of your life. Act on that resolution.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

All: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Leader: When the Lord brought back the captives of Zion, we were like a people dreaming. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with rejoicing.

All: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Leader: Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad indeed.

All: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Leader: Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the torrents in the southern desert. Those that sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.

All: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Leader: Although they go forth weeping, carrying their seed to be sown, they shall come back rejoicing, carrying their sheaves.

All: The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

The leader invites the community to offer petitions for personal needs and for those of the church and the world. Someone from the group is invited to offer a concluding summary prayer.