



Thirtieth Sunday Ordinary Time 2006.

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

The third mention of the passion and the subsequent misunderstandings are followed by a vivid story. The little band had journeyed on to Jericho and they were now on their way again followed by a crowd.

By the side of the road, *the way*, sat a blind beggar. The route where the traffic left a town was a good place for beggars to sit to get the maximum opportunities. Modern hitch-hikers use the same strategy.

We are given the man's name which suggests that this story was associated with a later disciple from Jericho. When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by he called out to him.

Using an honorary title, Son of David, he tried to attract Jesus' attention. The fact that some tried to get him to be quiet suggests that Jesus was in conversation, perhaps answering questions or even telling stories.

But Jesus had heard the man's cries and he asked someone to call the man over. Those closest to the beggar conveyed the message adding an interesting rider, "You have nothing to fear from him. Get up! He is calling you!"

The blind beggar threw off his cloak, jumped up, and came to Jesus. The choice of three distinct movements is significant for the story.

Jesus then asks the man a question.

"What do you want me to do for you?"

Mark has the man use an affectionate title, dear teacher. "I want to see."

Jesus says "Be on your way! Your faith has restored you." The seeing man now followed Jesus along *the way*.

This little story is another model of discipleship. It is possible for good people to spend their days searching but never finding. Spiritual blindness prevents them from perceiving the way a follower of Jesus should live. The problem, the story tells us is "sitting". Our spiritual life is like a journey and so the opposite is, to be staid, out of the flow, comfortable with the place we have always known.

What can rouse us is Jesus, passing by. For us this means through the scriptures, our life experience, people and events that stir us or prod us. Our following of Jesus is not compulsory.

We cannot be compelled to love or to accept the mission of God to transform the world after the pattern of Jesus. We must make the first step. We must want it. We must not accept the voices that would have us silenced.

The gift we seek is sight, the ability to capture the vision of a new creation brought about by a community of people. Of course we will be afraid. Our reflection on the lives of those who have gone before us tell us that the way of discipleship can lead us into paths we may find difficult.

Jesus confirmation of Bartimaeus' vocation is a sending forth. "Be on your way!"

Faith in Jesus and his revelation of God will make us whole and equip us for the task.

The threefold response of the blind man is a summary of our response to the call to discipleship.

Throw aside your cloak.

Leave behind anything that encumbers you.

Jump up.

Don't dither. Seize the moment and plunge in.

Come to Jesus.

I like this as a pun. To "*come to*" suggests coming out of unconsciousness. This is a good image of moving from an unreflected life to the embracing of the call to transform the piece of the world that is our place.

The fragment from the poem of Jeremiah is about Good News. It describes our vocation.

I will gather them all. Through you joy will enter the world.

Patricia Stevenson rsj.