

2024 B 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Oct. 27

Occasionally we experience an ecstatic moment, such as a gloriously radiant sunset, a spectacularly played sporting event or an inspiring speech. When we do, it gives us a pause to think about turning our life around.

This is happening in today's readings. The freed Jewish exiles leave their long, painful captivity. The Hebrews hear Jesus as High priest reconcile them with God. And Bartimaeus receives his sight and follows Jesus. All have life-altering experiences that change the direction of their lives. This is the same result Jesus wants, for all to hear his message.

It was not a normal day in Jericho – a lot of people were heading to Jerusalem. Bartimaeus, a blind beggar hears that it was Jesus passing by and began to shout, **“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”** Somehow, he knew enough to know Jesus was of the house of David and Messiah and he could give him sight. It was now or never.

When Jesus asked him what he wanted, Bartimaeus didn't ask for anything else like-cushy lifestyle, or a woman of his dreams. He just wanted to see and have life. Jesus knew the kind of man Bartimaeus was and granted his request. Mark tells us that immediately Bartimaeus followed Jesus along the way.

What can we learn from this story? The first is obviously, that he was **disadvantaged**. And not only that. He was also made to **feel rejected**. Even his name, **Bartimaeus simply means, “Son of Timaeus.”** We don't even know Bartimaeus by his real name. **He had no identity of his own.** He was known by his dad's name. Many people, that time, considered physical disability was a punishment from God for the sins committed in the family line. How many hearts have been broken because of someone's outrageous interpretation of adversity? Probably Bartimaeus had to put up with some of this. He was blind, a beggar, and probably an outcast.

Secondly, **Bartimaeus was disadvantaged, but not a defeated man.** He was not going to let people tell him to be quiet. When he saw the opportunity for healing, he jumped for it. He wasn't like the rich young man who turned away sadly when he was called to make a decision between his wealth and eternal life. Neither was he like the man beside the pool Bethesda, who, when Jesus asked him if he really wanted to be healed, made excuses for his situation.

Bartimaeus wanted to see, and he was **willing to pay any price.** He would not be defeated. What a difference such an attitude makes in life. Thanks to God for the people like Bartimaeus of this world who would not allow to be defeated by their circumstances.

How many of you know how the famed **Brooklyn Bridge in New York City** was built? Recently I read about it. It's an engineering marvel. Completed in 1883 and known for its granite towers

and steel cables. The bridge took 14 years to construct. At least two dozen people died in the process of building the bridge, including its original designer.

Engineer John Roebling was the designer. When Roebling came up with the idea of building this massive suspension bridge over New York City's East River to connect the boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn, everyone thought he was crazy. But John and his son Washington set out to prove it could be done. After only a year of construction, though, John Roebling was killed in an unfortunate ferry accident. This left his son, young Washington, an inexperienced engineer, in charge of the bridge. But this is just one of the tragedies that befell the Roeblings.

Since part of the bridge was being built underwater, many workers began to suffer from decompression sickness due to the difference in pressure below the water and above it. Young Washington, himself, suffered from this condition to such an extent that he became paralyzed, deaf, and mute. Can you imagine what that would have been like? But this wasn't going to stop him from building his father's bridge.

Able to move just one finger, Washington devised a system by which he could tap on his wife's arm and communicate with her. He continued to direct the construction of the bridge from his bed, giving instructions to his wife, who then passed them along to the crew building the bridge. For the next 11 years, Washington continued to work in this way, until 1883, when the Brooklyn Bridge was completed and opened for the use. And what a success it was! Today, 141 years later, the Brooklyn Bridge still carries more than 180, 000 people each day safely to their destinations.

You have to admire any person who goes **through trials and tribulations with faith and determination, refuses to be defeated**. Bartimaeus is one of those people. He was disadvantaged. But he refused to be defeated. And he was rewarded for his determination. He became a follower of Jesus Christ. Biblical blindness is recognized as lack of faith, while having sight is living faith.

**Fanny Crosby**, the great gospel hymn writer, lost her sight as a child. But, in many ways she could see so much more than others. Many feel that it was the story of blind Bartimaeus that inspired her to write the beloved hymn: "Pass me not, O Gentle Savior, hear my humble cry. / While on others thou art calling, do not pass me by ..."

It's wonderful hymn, but we need to know **Christ will not pass us by if we are truly seeking him**. He sees our need whatever it may be. And it must be in accordance of his will. Let us follow Christ all the days of our lives like Bartimaeus.