



Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52
Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (October 27, 2024)

We see them pushing carts along the highway or riding their bikes trying to hold on to garbage bags filled with their only belongings. Houseless folks who try to survive. If we are brave enough, we strike a conversation with them and learn their names: Brenda, John, Steve...

Most of the time, we try to avoid eye contact when we see them at traffic lights; when we feel guilty, we give them a handout. If possible, we buy them food, instead.

In today's gospel, we learn about a blind beggar, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, desperate enough to shout Jesus' name.

Mark points out twice that the blind beggar is Timaeus' son...in Aramaic and in Greek. In Aramaic, the prefix "Bar" means "son of," thus we have Bar-Timaeus translated into "son of Timaeus" for additional clarity and stress. Why do we need to know that we are talking about Timaeus' son?

Timaeus must be a known character to the community. A wealthy merchant? A political or religious leader? A known robber? A local cheat? Someone who had a fallout with his son? So, Bartimaeus was known because of his father. A local family history is probably known to Mark and easy to point out.

When people in the crowd have the audacity to "order" him to be quiet demonstrating their superior status with contempt (what did they think, "The Master cannot be disturbed"?), Bartimaeus

shouted all the more insisting that his need not be ignored. He zeroed in on Jesus as his solution to his problem and not on the distracting challenges.

Mark tells us, “Jesus stood still.” Does he want us to remember the time when in a boat swamped by waves, Jesus rebuked the storm to “be still” and instructed the disciples to “have faith”?¹

Jesus shows much calm and control. He doesn’t seem agitated or concerned as the crowd is. And then, Jesus does something remarkable. Mark tells us that Jesus asks the *crowd* to call Bartimaeus closer when he could do that himself. He wants the crowd to be part of the next miracle. He restores the collective dignity of the previously annoyed crowd, transforming them into a community of *encouragers*. They address the blind man now with gracious words, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.”²

Next, he does not assume to know what the blind beggar might want but engages him by asking him to verbalize his need. Jesus demonstrates readiness to listen. He observes and pays attention. He restores the man’s dignity as a worthy interlocutor, one who has agency, and is capable to articulate his needs.

God surely knows our needs. But God doesn’t want to take over and fix our troubles from a distance. God wants to engage with us. Prayer restores our dignity as children of God and gives us power. God is ready to heal but wants to know if *we* know what we need, if we can name it, if we are ready to step up and take responsibility for it, and if we trust God enough to listen to us.

Bartimaeus demonstrates readiness and trust as he throws off his cloak (his only possession and shelter from the elements; this in

¹ Mark 4:35-41

² Mark 10:49; the disciples were encouraged by Jesus in Mark 6:50

opposition to the rich man who holds on to his wealth³), springs up, and comes to Jesus. He quickly declares that he wants to see again. What kind of sight is he requesting, physical, spiritual?

In any case, Jesus sends him away. He is not holding on to him, granting freedom from any obligation. He sends him off without “performing” a miracle. Jesus simply says “Go; your faith has made you well.” He acknowledges and attributes the miracle to the blind beggar’s trust in him. The man regains his sight and doesn’t do as Jesus instructed but follows him on the way. Was that a physical way? A spiritual way? It doesn’t matter, he was closer to Jesus.

The Letter to the Hebrews encourages us to have confidence to come to the Lord who holds his priesthood permanently (v. 24).

Jesus is the eternal priest capable of restoring creation in his blood once and for all. He “who has been made perfect forever” (v. 28) through the suffering he endured out of love, is able to save us from ourselves⁴ by offering his body as a holy and living sacrifice. Through him, with him, and in him we are presented as perfect and holy to the God who loves us.⁵

There are no holy and perfect people but through him. So, in joy and gratitude we worship, we welcome, we receive, and we go, following him on the way. Amen.

³ Mark 10:17-22

⁴ Hebrews 5:7-9

⁵ Hebrews 10:1-18