



October 24, 2021

Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time

"Rabboni, I want to see." Mark 10:51

Dear Friends;

Last week after mass someone stopped me and said that he was doing a program of reading the whole bible in a year. In commenting on my homily he said that he thought that people have gotten a dominating image of God (which I had named pagan) from the Old Testament. I said *"Yes that's possible, but it depends on what you focus. But it is a mischaracterization to suggest that the God of the Jewish Testament is the wrathful and punishing God and the God of the Christian Testament is the loving and compassionate God. Jesus after all was Jewish and his understanding of God is rooted on a faith in the God of the Jewish people."*

Another thing, which I did not have time to mention, is we see a developing understanding of God as the history of the Jewish people unfolds. What changes is not so much God as our understanding of God. But at the heart of the Jewish and Christian understanding of God is the idea that God cares. In paganism reality is the result of struggle, defeat, and luck. In the Jewish/Christian understanding God creates out of love and it is all good.

God is not indifferent to his creation. God acts in time, in the history of the Jewish people calling them from slavery to freedom. Time and time again God will rescue them. In our first reading from Jeremiah, the prophet comforts the people who had been conquered and dispersed. God says, *"Behold I will bring them back...I will gather them from the ends of the world, with the blind and lame in their midst...For I am a Father to Israel..."* At the heart of the Jewish Testament is the central theme that *"God saves!"*

In the Jewish Rabbi Yeshuah (Jesus), we see the central Christian theme that *"God saves us through Jesus."* Last week we heard Jesus offer criticism of how power is exercised in the empires of this world. They use domination. The empires of this world always leave various versions of Bartimaeus by the side of the road. We see it in the crowd following Jesus. They tell the blind beggar to shut up. People like Bartimaeus are seen as just *"acceptable losses"* and *"collateral damage."* The crowd will not let someone like this nobody stop them on their march to glory.

But Jesus stops and hears the cry of a lonely, blind man looking for help. Cleverly and repeatedly Bartimaeus calls after Jesus with the royal title *"Son of David."* If Jesus is a king what is the nature of his kingdom and his rule. In the kingdom that Jesus preaches even a blind panhandler has infinite value. Ultimately this is what Bartimaeus, the crowd, and we come to see. We are each of infinite value in the estimation of God. That is the faith that will save us. This faith enables us to *"follow Jesus on the way."*

Jesus, the healer and prophet of the Kingdom of God, models the manners of the kingdom. Rather than *"lording over"* his beneficiary, Jesus adopts the role of servant and accedes to the blind man's request. Jesus acting as the servant of the God of Israel obtains restoration of the man's sight. Jesus takes the role of the successful broker of the God of Israel, who never turns a deaf ear to the requests of the humble. Mark's gospel invites us to see the contrast between the crowd, the empires of this world and Jesus. Do we consider everyone—especially the least and lowest—of infinite value in the sight of God? Can we behave as a faithful broker of God's mercy?

Peace,

Fr Ron