

0110 30th Sunday of the Year (B)

What do you want me to do for you?

The Gospels that we hear each Sunday are not just telling what happened 2000 years ago. They are not just historical documents. No, they are God's living word to us in our present circumstances. Through them, God is saying something to us now.

One way to hear this living word is to see ourselves in the Gospel stories. In today's Gospel, for instance, I believe that, in one way or another, we are all Bartimaeus, the blind beggar who wants to see. And the question Jesus asks Bartimaeus in this Gospel is the question he is asking you and me this morning: 'What do you want me to do for you?'

I invite you now to hear Jesus calling you to come to him, and he called Bartimaeus. Then hear Jesus ask you: 'What so you want me to do for you?' What answer do you give him this morning? Try not to censor your answer. You can ask for anything. Tell Jesus now what you want him to do for you.

There is another prayer in the readings of today's, in the responsorial psalm, that speaks to me, that is my prayer: 'Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage.' I pray this morning that the Lord will free me from all that ties me up, that prevents me from loving others fully and following Jesus with all my heart.

Bartimaeus was bound up by his blindness. He couldn't follow Jesus along the way. He couldn't help others. All he could do was sit and beg. All the same, it must have taken some courage for him to want to be set free. His whole identity, his security, his place in society, was based on his blindness. He could sit and beg because he was blind. He couldn't do that if he could see. He would have to work to earn his living. His blindness gave him an excuse not to get involved in the community, not to play a role in society.

Sometimes, the things that bind us up offer us a certain security also, giving us an excuse not to be there for others. Sometimes we need to examine whether we really do want to be delivered from our bondage. Or do we prefer to stay bound up? Are we afraid to be set free?

It is so sad if we are afraid to be set free, because in freedom our sorrow turns to joy, our mourning to dancing.

That was certainly the experience of the psalmist, in today's responsorial psalm, and of Bartimaeus as he followed Jesus along the way.

We don't know the name of many of the people Jesus healed, but do we know the name of Bartimaeus. This indicates that he didn't just follow Jesus along the way for a hundred metres, or for a few weeks. But that he became a significant member of the followers of Jesus. Even at the time when Mark's Gospel was being written there were still people who remembered him by name.

May our names also be remembered in our communities into the future – not for our personal glory – but because we too had the courage to allow Jesus to set us free to follow him wholeheartedly along the way in service of others. Bartimaeus is good news for us. May we in turn be good news for future generations.

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