

THE STORY OF BARTIMAEUS

Isn't it so often true that our physical sightedness can so often obscure our vision of the truth leading us to spiritual blindness? Whereas, when we loose sight of the attractive allurements of this world, we often gain true sight, the light of faith and better spiritual vision? In our journey of faith, Jesus persistently calls us to move away from all our material comforts that tend to dominate and possess us, and prevent us from freely choosing Him. For true discipleship demands of us an attitude of blindness to the things of this world, to enable us to see and understand all our physical deficiencies and limitations, our spiritual poverty, our sinfulness, and our inclinations toward self-prefence and self sufficiency. For didn't Jesus proclaim, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, and blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!"

But why is our poverty so often such a blessing? The answer: It is by means of our poverty that we come to humbly realize our total dependence on God. And it is in this condition of dependence that we persistently cry out to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on us." For our poverty has need of God's abundance, and God's abundance also has need of our poverty! Therefore, Jesus directs his call to discipleship, not to the strong and worldly successful, but to the weak and lowly in our midst.

I believe this beautiful story of the blind beggar Bartimaeus dramatizes this point. It focuses on the healing gift of faith, that springs from our poverty. It leads us to an enhanced interior vision, a vision that is clear and discerning. So picture with me, if you will, this totally blind man, in the heat of the day, sitting on his cloak by the side of the road leading to Jerico. With outstretched arms he pleads for a few coins from the hurring passers by, hoping that some might land on his cloak. His cloak therefore, is his prized possession and only means for his survival, because at the end of the day, the only way he can locate the coins

is by folding it up by its corners with the coins dropping to the bottom.

However, when told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, his pleading was not for coins! Instead with deep and abiding faith, acquired as a result of his affliction, he relentlessly cried out for something better, God's healing mercy! Although blind, he discerns his Savior, knowing Jesus has the power to cure him. And Mark in his gospel emphasizes this fact, for when told Jesus was calling to him, what does he do? He immediately throws his cloak away, his only possession, and his only means of survival, trusting he wouldn't need it any more!

Finally, let us think about our own instances of blindness and short sightedness. If Jesus were to suddenly ask you today, "What would you have me do for you?" How would you respond? Would you say, "that I might live comfortably and without anxiety about the future, or would you say, "Lord, grant me sufficient faith that I may see?"

God bless you all