

St Pius-St Anthony 30th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B2nd

What a wonderful gospel today! It is rather short but so interesting. Maybe because it is a great story or that Bartimaeus is such a great guy! I want to start by just asking you, "What details most struck you from the reading?" It's in the details for me today. Maybe they are small things, but they sure make the story!

First, Mark's mention of Bartimaeus' cloak, jumps out at me. Maybe because if I was there that day, seeing Bartimaeus jump up ('sprang up' it said) and his cloak fly aside like a cut-loose cape, that surely would have caught my eye! So, let's look at this cape-cloak detail for a minute! It is mentioned (in Mark's otherwise very short gospel) so it must be important. So, what can we make of it? Well, they say that beggars have distinctive clothing-you know them when you see them. (For one, it would be oversized and shabby-not fitting well because it was given to him. Probably, it is not the cleanest-who can afford cleaning when simply looking for food-also, probably there are loose threads and it is unraveling at the edges. Again, the beggar's cloak would be distinctive-easy to spot much like when we pull up to a stop light and can tell right away, the difference between a corner beggar, and somebody just waiting for the bus. The clothes give them away. It's the same with Bartimaeus, this loose outer cloak was like a beggar's uniform and signaled his condition in life. So, I would suggest that it was also his security-a tool of the begging trade. He used it to identify himself (maybe like the long red-tipped cane tells us immediately of a person's blindness). So this cloak was Bartimaeus'; security: as it conveniently could double as a shelter-tent, could be spread out like a canopy to cover him from sun/rain, but it was doubly practical because it could be 'spread out on the ground' in front of him to catch alms-food-coins like a collection basket. We see the same in subways today when musicians use their guitar or violin cases to catch thrown down coins/bills into these makeshift poor-boxes. When the beggar gets ready to move on, he can pull in the four corners of the cloak (like a net), and tie it up as a bag-satchel just like hobo's used to do with their bandana cloths tied up on end of their sticks like a bag to hit the road again. So this cloak was Bartimaeus' security, like a security blanket! Maybe that is what draws to me love Bartimaeus! I had one of those, maybe for longer I should have. I know I'm confessing now, but I had a blanket just like Linus in Peanuts. But the day came finally, when the blanket was let go. It worked out for me interestingly. I bet all parents ask about their kid's security tokens-whatever they are, whether they be pacifiers, toys, blankets, jackets, whatever it be I imagine all parents wonder, 'What is it going to be that lets junior release that 'security'?' The best I remember my security blanket got buried (really buried) when our neighbors Dick & Catherine or their son Charlie, had their dog Barney die. Somehow, there as they were putting Charlie into the grave and maybe someone said something about the blanket helping to line his grave and so in it went! I wish I could recall and my mind from that day-maybe I just thought

thankfully it is not me in there. Well, the gospel has Bartimaeus 'throw off' his security blanket as Jesus calls him, because his days of needing a security with a cloak are over. He springs up, throws it off and goes to Jesus unassisted- now that is faith too, yes, the throwing away cloak, but also the running because remember that he is blind-there's a crowd and a road with bumps, rocks potholes. And Bartimaeus makes a Beeline to Jesus. Because his life is all about to change. All new! And what an offer Jesus lays out to him? (Like winning a lottery with a pick your own prize winning? Mark 10:51 , Jesus asks him "*What do you want me to do for you?*") Bartimaeus simply says "***I want to see***". Bartimaeus doesn't ask for money, privileged status, not a house, not even food-no stuff at all. He only wants to have his eyes opened. I wonder if he is really asking, "Jesus I just want to see you- That's all, if I can just set me eyes on you even for just a minute-Heaven, I am okay, I am just glad to be here with you." SO, Jesus gives him sight, opening his eyes. And I love how Jesus never forces or pressures us by his grace, he tells Bartimaeus, 'Okay, there you go-be healed-now you see-Go on along your merry way..' But here is Bartimaeus' admirable faith again in his response? The last line says Bartimaeus (Mark 10:52) '***followed him on the way.***' He stays with Jesus, on Jesus' way. Bartimaeus knows who gave him sight-his eyes now belong to Jesus and he wants to stay with the source of his healing. With Jesus now Bartimaeus is not going to take his eyes off Jesus. He goes from the 'taking taking taking' as the roadside beggar to now 'giving giving giving' as Jesus' disciple (that may be part of the giving away of his cloak-he is passing it off to next in line if there is a beggar's hierarchy). Jesus gave him free reign to go off his own way and please himself, but Bartimaeus chooses to stay with Jesus. He knows how life changing are Jesus' gifts and he wants to make sure as many other people as possible can also receive such gifts in ministry so he jumps in to help Jesus spread this grace as far and wide as possible. And 'Oh the places he'll see now with Jesus!"

But there is another detail we don't want to overlook with Bartimaeus' story. How about the detail of this all happening in ***Jericho***? Jericho is the place where dividing walls are torn down. We all remember the Old Testament story of the trumpets blown, and shouts of faith right before the walls came tumbling down. Well, once more in Jericho we hear shouts from Bartimaeus this time with "Jesus Son of David have mercy on me". Jesus then breaks down more walls of separation. What walls am I talking about? How about the separating walls of blindness- that was another world Bartimaeus was living in before Jesus breaks through to bring him into a world of light-world of sight. His wall of blindness had prevented him from entering the working world and being active mingling in and out of the community. He had been stuck on the roadside begging. And his sidelined position amounted to another wall that Jesus broke down for him. As a disabled person, he was marginalized, overlooked and left out. Also a condemnatory prejudice against the poor had ostracized Bartimaeus from society,

that is why we see him sheltered on the side of the road (like in the ditch out of the way). His excluded position was highlighted when the crowd looked down on him as unimportant and to be ignored, when they tried to shush and silence him when he cried out to Jesus (who are you to trouble the Messiah?). So, Bartimaeus was walled off and isolated from the city's activity and society, until Jesus comes along, and 'tears down those walls of separation'. Jesus does that! He brings Bartimaeus into his company, reuniting him to a loving community and gives him a place in ministry work with him! What a gift Jesus gives him, and he responds by **jumping** right in himself. Maybe that is what strikes me so deeply about this Bartimaeus story: his enthusiasm and faith. He knows who can heal him, he cries out persistently, trying himself to break through barriers to come to Jesus. All he wants is to see, to have his eyes opened and help tear down other separating/dividing walls: walls between God and us people, and between all of us people with each other. So, a closing thought for all of us is simply: Might we be as enthusiastic as Bartimaeus to see and be with Jesus and see each other with such newly opened eyes!