

St Pius & St Anthony 30th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B2

I pick up a reverberation running through the gospel today. Call, call, call. No, it is not a crow squawking, But the resonant sound brings that to mind. Yet, notice where this healing event of Jesus occurs. “They were leaving Jericho (Mark 10:46) Jer-**Echo!** The ancient biblical place where sound is so revelatory! **Jer-Echo!** (Joshua 5:13-6:27). Aren’t echoes awesome? I remember as a kid (*back in the day when you created your own toys and made up your own games*) being so excited by echoes when we might have been at my grandad’s farm and could yell across the stony cliff valley and hear somebody yell back (‘Hey over there’-‘Hey over there’) or even at our house when we were painting an empty room, and the barrenness made every sound multiply. How about that echo in today’s reading? Bartimaeus **calls** out to Jesus, the crowd **calls** him down, he **calls** out again, and then Jesus **calls** him over. That word reverberatesCall, Call, Call, Call..... Like how Joshua circled city Jericho, then the army shouts/blows horns and the walls fall down, well, **here (?)** we have Bartimaeus calling out and calling out, and God answers as Jesus tears down his enclosing wall of blindness. Voiced shouts and trumpets blowing brings down the walls of Jericho. **Sound is powerful.** I think of the old Memorex Cassette TV commercial where a tape recording of Ella Fitzgerald hitting a high, high C note and shatters a wine glass sitting in front of a massive speaker (*I understand there is a episode of MythBusters that did replicate such an event, splintering a wine glass---only one in 12 tries- but it still proved it was possible*). Or how about the healing effect of sound, seen in the way doctors today treat some kidney stones by hitting them with sound waves, breaking them up to ease their passing. I find that this story of Bartimaeus is such an example of the healing power of sound. Since Bartimaeus is healed just outside of Jericho, we can see Jesus as breaking down the wall of separation that Bartimaeus’ blindness caused him. Being blind did not just have Bartimaeus locked up in a world of darkness, but it also separated him from the business of social life in community – he was on road outside of Jericho- and not just outside city life, but he was also marginalized sitting on the side of road (Mark 10:46). The Jewish faith considered him unclean and would have shunned him just for being blind (the blind couldn’t see to avoid touching unclean foods or bumping into-unclean animals). All of village life would have passed him by-left him out. But Jesus heals him and tears down those separating, stigmatizing walls by taking away his blindness-giving him sight.

And marvelously in this story, Jesus heals him by just the use of his voice. Again, the power of sound, Jesus simply says ‘Go on your way’ (Mark 10:52) and

he is healed. His eyes are opened. No special action, tools used, or procedures, Jesus just says it and it happens. The power of sound, or God's voice. This is so similar to how God created all life (everything) back in the Book of Genesis. (Gen 1:3) God says, "Let there be light", and that opened all creation. New Life! In this individual case of Bartimaeus, Jesus creates him new life by simply saying it-the power of His voice. By opening Bartimaeus eyes, Jesus' speaking, it tears down the separating wall of stigma and brings Bartimaeus back into society. Sound and its hearing builds a bridge for Bartimaeus back into society-fellowship again with village life. He who had been cast away and left out, is brought back into the life of community. Jesus is using sound to draw things back together – like that echoing. We can see it even in the name Bar-Timaeus. 'Bar' is Aramaic-Hebrew and 'Timaeus' is Greek (there we can see Jesus' blessing in the growth of His people being inclusive-joining both Hebrew and Gentiles missions in His church). Healing and bringing together again the human family. 'Bar' 'Timaeus'. Some see a connection or bridge here between ancient Hebrew and ancient Greek cultures. Socrates' disciple Plato, wrote many Dialogues (transcriptions of Socrates' talks) and one of them is called 'Timaeus', wherein guess what is being discussed in it but the creation of the world and having our senses opened to 'SEE' the Eternal Forms of thing. So, there is a connection between Plato and Mark (or Greek and Hebrew worlds) because Jesus is creating a 'new world' for Bartimaeus by opening his eyes to 'SEE' the Eternal Jesus standing in front of him. And Jesus does it all just by speaking, just His voice- the power of sound -God's voice in Genesis.

A demonstration that Bartimaeus' healing amounts to his birth into a new world of experience, I love the detail that as Bartimaeus gets up to go to Jesus, he throws aside his cloak -leaves it behind. (A blind man's cloak was like a blind man's cane – Jesus opening his eyes, he won't be needing that cloak anymore). The cloak of blind beggars was like their calling card, like a cardboard sign or beggars bucket, their cloak would be spread out on the ground to catch any gifts/donations thrown at them (like maybe you see struggling musicians in a NY subway sidewalk, with their guitar case opened on ground beside them for gifts to be thrown in). it allowed the gift but without touching the 'unclean' person- which then made you unclean! Having gifts thrown at you, makes me think of us kids, when we got creative about earning money for something special we wanted to buy and we would ride our bikes along the county roads collecting aluminum cans and sometimes a passing truck would honk/wave at us and

throwing out cans, trailing behind them (sometimes with suds still spilling out)- but that is another story!)

So Bartimaeus cloak was his credential signaling his beggar's need of alms. But when Jesus heals him, he doesn't need it any longer and leaves it behind.

This healing of Jesus is more than a physical healing. Remember the connections of this story to Hebrew Joshua and Genesis, and even Greek Plato, that Jesus is creating a new world for Bartimaeus. Jesus heals him by his voice, opening a new world to him. Jesus is reuniting him, bringing him back into the fellowship of society. Not only taking away the separation of darkness for him, Jesus brings him back to life into social kinship and relationship by his tearing down walls of social stigma. I love how Jesus reunites him to a seen world of blessing, and Bartimaeus joins up with Jesus Himself becoming a disciple (Mark 10:52 "he followed Jesus on the way").

Having been given eyes (new world created for him), I bet Bartimaeus begins using them now for God's glory. I bet he saw every blessing and was quick to call out and announce these blessings to others, reminding them (Often it takes a person who has recently regained a sense, to be the strongest witness to point it out for us, what all the rest of us miss.) And don't we all have blind spots? We may not be physically blind, but aren't there things in our horizon that often we are oblivious to, right in front of our face that we are missing? How can we not miss it? Bartimaeus teaches us that another sense (hearing-sound) can open a new world of blessing to us. Our ears may be the first to help us see more of God's goodness and help us discover anew our relationship to each other. Listening, listening to God's voice, we will hear this creation. Through better listening, we can see new what all that God wants to show us.