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30th Ordinary Sunday - 24 October 2021

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24 October 2021

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

Even when things seem lost, there is great joy to be found through faith in God. This sort of faith is witnessed in Bartimaeus in his terse and honest call out to Jesus 'I want to see!'

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you healed Bartimaeus that we might believe. Lord, have mercy.
You heal the wounds of sin and division. Christ, have mercy.
You are our High Priest, leading us to the Father. Lord, have mercy.

First Reading

Jeremiah 31:7-9

A song of celebration and praise features in the reading from Jeremiah. Joy is encountered as the loving God reaches out and calls his people from "the ends of the earth" back to their home and back to Godself.

Second Reading

Hebrews 5:1-6

This reading from Hebrews continues to contrast the priests of Israel with priesthood found in Jesus. Both are called by God to act on behalf of humanity, but Jesus is like no other before him because his authority is found in being God's son; thus he is the eternal mediator for humankind.

Gospel Reading

Mark 10:46-52

Bartimaeus may be blind, but he is able to see with eyes of faith. He recognises the power and intent of Jesus where others miss it.

Reflection

It is well established by scholars that the Book of Jeremiah is speaking to a people that have been pulled apart by various geo-political forces. The upshot of such trouble was that Jerusalem was captured and the people of God were in bondage and exiled from their homelands. This is the setting into which the first reading speaks; of the Lord saving the people, drawing them from all over back to their homes and back to where God dwells with them. They left in tears and now are called back with joy. What is often missed when reading this text, and this is true for most of what comes from Jeremiah, is that the prophet is speaking to a people who are yet to see such salvation themselves.

We tend to read this excerpt in the past tense, as if it has all happened and the 'shouts of joy' are celebratory in the typical chronological sense – something good has happened, and so we throw a party to celebrate it. This is not quite the case here. Jeremiah throughout the prophetic text draws on the collective memory and tradition of Israel, particularly the experience of the Exodus event through which they recognise what God can do, but Jeremiah's audience are yet to experience it in the present tense. As such, it is a projection, a hope based on a nature of God which they have faith in and are being called to trust in again.

Today's Psalm speaks in similar terms. The Psalm speaks of 'going out' and sowing seeds in tears, then returning in joy with a harvest. There is an overt pastoral image in the Psalm that is both beautiful in its reading but rather cryptic as well. Why does it speak of crying as they sow, especially if, as we see with the whole Psalm and the first reading which parallels it, the broader text speaks of a joy, flowing water and a harvest that will be its end? The reason for the sorrow is that the 'going out' is not voluntary. It is a poetic expression of a people who through a combination of disobedience to God's ways as well as movements of history beyond their control are being forced into hostile lands, away from their homes where they are close to their God and their life giving traditions. It is into bondage, in captivity, in exile where they are carrying their seeds for the sowing. In other words, it has the feel of sowing in futility.

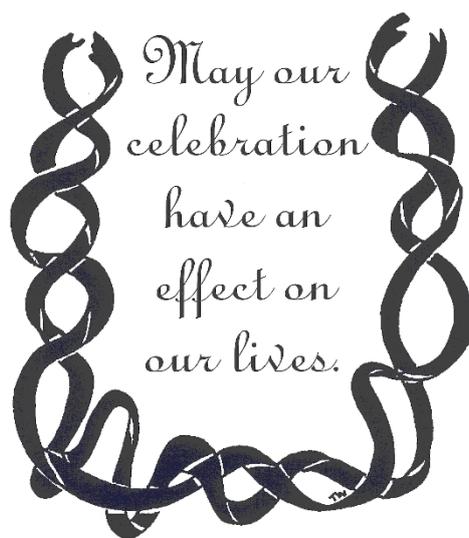
Indeed, the sowing proclaimed in the Psalm follows a cry to God referring to dry deserts. What is commonly translated as 'streams of dry land' in the Lectionary translation is more properly named 'the Negeb' (Ps 125:4). The Hebrew term is the name of a region and is a play on words which stresses the arid nature of the land in question for Negeb does actually mean 'parched'. It includes the most arid lands in and surrounding Israel. It is as if the psalmist feels the futility of being asked to sow in dry beds devoid of moisture, of life. To be asked to sow in such a place and expect reward certainly requires eyes of faith.

However, the Negeb, though parched and hostile for the majority of the time, does occasionally receive heavy rains – and when it does, the valleys referred to in the psalm come alive and are indeed viable for a rich harvest. So the cry of the Psalm in its middle verses is both a cry of desperation and of faith at the same time. The Psalm is speaking on the other side of such troubled times and thus appropriately

expresses joy, but the pathway to that joy is of sorrow mixed with hope, of lament with trust. It is not an easy or cheap celebration being expressed.

The Gospel reading has the same interlocking feature of desperation and trust coexisting in the same place or, more properly speaking, the same person. The desperate Bartimaeus calls out from the roadside as he hears that a crowd passing by features Jesus of Nazareth. Living with such an affliction as not being able to see has its own natural struggles, but is all the more the affliction in the culture of the day which attached moral and spiritual culpability to what was already a natural misfortune. Perhaps it is for this reason that the crowd, which includes disciples of Jesus, at first rebuke Bartimaeus. Whatever the reason, Bartimaeus is forced to work through more than his own affliction, but the tide of the crowd as well. Bartimaeus' depth of faith is thus illustrated further with this act of defiance of the crowd.

Whether it is the feeling of being in bondage like the Israelites longing for a time of connectedness and closeness to God, whether it is the feeling of futility like sowing seeds in what seems like parched soil, or of one crying out to Jesus against all the forces, both human and natural which makes it all the harder to see and perceive – our readings today call us to recognise that this is what faith actually is. It is a confident trust that goes against the grain, that knows that waters can flow in the arid valleys and that God is always drawing us to God's dwelling place even when we feel abandoned. The joy of faith proclaimed today is not a shallow happiness, fleeting and based on naïve optimism. It is recognition that we *do* find ourselves in tears, blind and despairing. We acknowledge and we feel it, and from there we, following Bartimaeus, put our needs frankly to our Lord, recognising that our loving God will always comfort and lead us back to streams of living water where we too can sing "what marvels the Lord has worked for us" (Ps 125:3).



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

When Bartimaeus cried out, Jesus stopped to listen to him. Let us cry out with the same faith as the blind beggar, trusting that the Lord will hear our prayers and answer them.

Petitions

Insert text Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Sunday

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for vocations in the Church, that the Spirit may inspire young people to answer God's call to marriage, the priesthood, the religious life and the single life, so that the Gospel may be brought to all people.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of our country, that they may guide the nation with watchful prudence and consider the voices of those whom they serve.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the refugees and asylum seekers whose voices are ignored and unheeded in this time of pandemic, that they may be granted a safe place to live and be at peace with their families and loved ones.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are blinded by the pursuit of wealth and commercial gain at the expense of the vulnerable, that they may be touched by the selfless love of Christ and become more generous and kind.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for this parish community, that our eyes may be opened to the needs of others and we may offer ourselves to the service of God every day.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Lord, you have done great things for us and we are filled with joy at your Son's healing presence. Through the power of the Spirit, listen to our prayer that we make in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Amazing grace. J. Newton. 437
Christ, be our light. B. Farrell. 404
Come to the feast. M. Haugen. 400
Now in this banquet. M. Haugen. 197
Seek, O seek the Lord. R. Connolly/ J. McAuley. 211
The light of Christ. D. Fishel. 405
The voice of God. P. Icarus. 476
We remember. M. Haugen. 446

AOV1

Amazing grace. J. Newton. 29
Come to the feast. M. Haugen. 151
Open my eyes. J. Manibusan. 166
Praise my soul, the king of Heaven. H. Lyte/ J. Goss. 78
The light of Christ. D. Fishel. 186
We remember. M. Haugen. 81

AOV2

Christ, be our light. B. Farrell. 3
Heal me, O God. G. Norbet OSB. 52
Holy darkness. D. Schutte. 24
Table of plenty. D. Schutte. 20
We gather here, O God. O. Alsott/ C. Smith. 99

CWB

Seek, O seek the Lord. James Phillip McAuley. 802

CWBII

Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions

Your hands, O Lord in days of old. Edward Hayes Plumptre. 129
Amazing grace! how sweet the sound. John Newton and John Rees. 450
Gather us in. Marty Haugen. 501
Open my eyes, Lord. Jesse Manibusan. 582
Praise the one who breaks the darkness. Rusty Edwards. 584
Word of God, come down on earth. James Quinn SJ. 644
Additional selections by Chris deSilva
Seek, O seek the Lord. James Phillip McAuley. 595

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 125: *The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.*
Psalm 125: Noel Ancell. CWB 177
Psalm 126: The Lord has done great things for us: Noel Ancell. GA 74
Psalm 126 (125): Jenny O'Brien. JOBB pg. 102
The Lord has done great things for us: Tony Alonso LPB pg. 169