

PROPER 25 – B

Rewards of Faith

For Sunday, Oct. 24, 2021

SCRIPTURES

~~Job 42:1-6, 10-17 (Track 1)~~

Jeremiah 31:7-9 (Track 2)

~~Psalms 34:1-8 (19-22) (Track 1)~~

Psalms 126 (Track 2)

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52



Today's Readings

The promise of restoration and healing flows through today's readings. Job (Track 1) has all his lost property restored because of his fidelity to God. Jeremiah (Track 2) looks forward to the rescue and renewal of God's people. Hebrews affirms the promise of full salvation through Jesus Christ and continued growth for believers. Jesus grants physical and spiritual wholeness to blind Bartimaeus.

~~Job 42:1-6, 10-17 (Track 1)~~

After Yahweh speaks, Job's lament in dust and ashes ends and a new response of praise begins. Job ceases his dispute, acknowledges God's power and wisdom, recognizes his incompetence and praises the wisdom and justice of God's mysterious ways.

Although God vindicates Job's innocence and denounces the dogmatism of his friends (42:7-17), God's ways are still not to be comprehended. The result is a kind of stand off. God does not give Job the explanation he wants, and Job does not surrender his own integrity. Rather, Job yields to the Lord and is transformed by his experience of confrontation (42:5).

The resolution of the problem of the just person who suffers is hidden in the mystery of the person of God. God is truly free of all human restraints, even beyond the highest human standards of justice and mercy (Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:15). At the furthest extreme, God remains a "hidden God" (Isaiah 45:15) shrouded in unfathomable mystery.

◆ What is most instructive for you about Job's answer to God?

◆ How has your knowledge of God grown from just hearing "about" God to experiencing God's mysterious presence?

Jeremiah 31:7-9 (Track 2)

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry to Judah began in 627 BCE and ended about 580 BCE. His ministry spans the period leading up to Judah's final defeat by the Babylonians in 587 BCE, the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the temple, and the exile of a good part of the population.

Today's reading comes from a section (chaps. 30-33) consisting of promises of restoration (30:1-4). In it are gathered Jeremiah's oracles of hope for an eventual renewal for Israel. Jeremiah envisions the restoration of Judah by imagining God's fashioning a new exodus.

◆ Why does Jeremiah recall the past exodus out of Egypt to encourage those exiled in Babylon?

- ◆ How can recalling past triumphs over struggles and difficulties give you hope for present struggles?

- ◆ Why is it important to know that God's deepest desire is to gather all the faithful back after their separation in exile?

Hebrews 7:23-28

In the first part of chapter 7, the author describes the superiority of Melchizedek to Abraham, and so demonstrates the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood. Jesus' priestly claim is based not upon physical descent nor upon ineffective law. It is based upon his indestructible life and is attested by the divine oath.

Today's reading points out that Jesus' priesthood is also superior because of its permanence—he will forever function as our high priest—and because of his character—he is holy, blameless, unstained and separated from sinners. Thus Jesus' unique sacrifice of himself, "once and for all" (v. 27) as he fulfills both the role of high priest and that of the sacrificial victim, was all that was needed to redeem fallen humanity now and forever.

- ◆ According to the author of Hebrews, what makes Jesus' priesthood unique?

- ◆ What are the benefits for the believer of Jesus' role as intercessor?

- ◆ What intercession do you want from Jesus as you try to keep God's law?

Mark 10:46-52

The story of the healing of the blind man Bartimaeus is filled with vivid detail. Bartimaeus calls Jesus "Son of David" (vv. 47-48), a messianic title, recognizing Jesus' true identity. Although blind, Bartimaeus can "see" Jesus more clearly than others because of his faith.

- ◆ No healing word or action of Jesus is recorded, just a response to Bartimaeus's faith. On one level, his faith, in the sense of confidence and persistence, is answered with healing. On another level, his recognition of Jesus is answered with salvation. The phrase "made you well" means both heal and save.

Bartimaeus responds by becoming a disciple.

This story is similar to the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (8:22-26).

These two stories of new sight frame the whole section dealing with Jesus' predictions of the passion and the disciples' misunderstanding. Eyes must be opened to see the true meaning of Jesus' messianic suffering and so correctly follow him on this new way to life with God.

- ◆ Bartimaeus believes, sees and follows. Describe your reaction to this formula as the pattern for discipleship.

- ◆ How do the actions of Bartimaeus show his faith?

- ◆ What most holds you back now from fully following Jesus?

Reflection

At a conference on Ignatian spirituality, a blind priest, Larry Gillick, SJ, offered insights on the Bartimaeus story that sighted people may miss. He explains how he recognizes footsteps: his young students shuffle; his colleagues stride with intensity. Then he asks: do we recognize God's footsteps? How do we know in our souls when it's God's love? Or when do our egos simply sound like God?

- ◆ Just as the sculptor reverences the density of the marble, so God reverences human resistance. Like the sculptor, God uses a chisel, not dynamite. So Jesus respects Bartimaeus enough that he doesn't make any assumptions about his condition. He asks courteously, "What do you want me to do for you?" For his part, Bartimaeus must come to know his truth before he can articulate it to Jesus. He must spend a long time in the darkness contemplating, so that when his moment comes, he doesn't say, "I want to hear."

Where does Bartimaeus go after his cure? He enters more deeply into the mystery where he had already been immersed. Phrases like "on the way" or "up the road" can mean only one thing in this context: he walks in trust, entering further into God's love.

Quietly consider:

- ◆ Where today can I accept God's gift of new insight, unafraid of the changes it will bring to my life?

Prayer Starter

God, lead us from darkness into the light of faith.

Open my eyes so I might see...

Food for Thought

"Receive Christ, receive the power to see, receive your light,

- ◆ *that you may plainly recognize both divine and human."*

—Clement of Alexandria