

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The certain man on the road to Jericho was blind. He was a beggar, and from the sound of what Luke related, not a highly regarded one. He could not see the commotion, but he could hear it. So, he asked what was going on. I imagine that he was told reluctantly that Jesus was passing by.

The certain blind man called out to Jesus for mercy. The crowd tried to quiet him. Instead of being silent, like the crowd shouted to him, he cried out all the more for mercy.

Jesus asked, "What do you want Me to do for you?" "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Jesus does for the man exactly what he asked for. It might do well to note what the blind man didn't ask for; doing so reinforces what's going on in this text, so note well that he didn't ask for riches and fame—he didn't even want a better reputation among the people of Jericho. He didn't ask for food and drink. He didn't beg for the things that the other passers-by could give him. In mercy, he asked for his sight, and Jesus obliged.

His sight could not have improved his standing among the people of Jericho. He would likely still have remained a beggar for a while, begging for food and drink and spare change for a while at first, then maybe work after that—after the people realized that this formerly blind beggar could actually see. One or two might reluctantly have sent the man into their vineyards to work, but the man would probably prove his inexperience by working rather incompetently so that he would not be hired again the next day.

So, why ask for sight? And why did Jesus grant it? This minor part of the text is there primarily to point out the irony of the rest of the text, and secondarily to give you a glimpse of the perfect restoration of the flesh at the resurrection on the last day.

The irony, though, is the point of the text, and it is this. The blind man could already see perfectly well, though not with his eyes of flesh.

The first hint you get of this is Jesus' interaction with His disciples before meeting the man. He tells them that they are on their way to Jerusalem and why they are going there. This isn't the first time they heard Jesus predict His death and resurrection. Still, they are confused by His words. In fact, as Luke tells you, "[T]his saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken." In other words, they were blind to what He had just told them—they could not see it.

The second hint you get of the irony is in how Jesus is addressed along the road. When the blind man asked what was going on, he was told that Jesus of Nazareth was walking by. Hearing this, and knowing who Jesus was, he calls out to Him, "Jesus, Son of David." To refer to Him simply as Jesus of Nazareth is to acknowledge only His humanity. It's the same thing as calling him the son of Joseph. "He's a carpenter, the son of the carpenter from Nazareth. He does some pretty amazing things, so it's obvious that God is with Him. Or maybe not so obvious because maybe 'he casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons.'" (Luke 11:15)

So, that crowds were following Jesus is no indication that they knew who He was. They might simply have seen in Him someone they could make into their bread king. (cf. John 6:15) But the blind man was different. He called Him "Jesus, Son of David." This is a messianic title. It acknowledges the prophecies concerning the descendant of David who would assume the throne and free His people. It acknowledges that the throne which Jesus will assume is no ordinary seat, but, as it turned out, a cross outside of Jerusalem—the very place which He told His disciples He was going; the very task which He told His disciples He was going to Jerusalem to accomplish. It's to call Jesus the Christ!

How did the blind man know Jesus as the Son of David? That he was catechized, if only a little, is evident; how he was catechized is never revealed. But, to the blind man, Jesus was revealed to be the Son of David, the Messiah, the Christ. The blind man saw this. Jesus' disciples did not. And when the blind man's eyes were opened, the first thing he saw was not Jesus of Nazareth, but Jesus, the Son of David. He didn't stick around to beg and find work in Jericho, but followed Jesus and glorified God.

Jesus, the Son of David, still comes among you. Do you cry out to Him, or do you listen to the cries to be quiet? Those cries come from within and without, and those from without from so-called Christians and pagans alike. They bid you to stop speaking about abortion, poverty, and true social justice in Christ for all people, including fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, and the like, because "such were some of you." (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) And it is easier to speak of these things in terms of Jesus of Nazareth—or not speak of them at all—than in terms of who Jesus, the Son of David, is and what He has done about these things and for you!

Imagine what it meant for the blind man to receive His sight and follow Jesus, praising and glorifying God. Has Jesus not done as much for you? Has He not restored your sight? Do you not now see Jesus, the Son of David and not only Jesus of Nazareth? Where is your following Him and praising and glorifying God? Is it just too hard? Would you rather be quiet than speak of abortion and poverty or speak of the grace and mercy of God to fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, and the like? If these hear not the Word of God, then they are lost; and the scary thing is, if you had the chance to speak to them the Word of God and didn't, then you are complicit in their eternal deaths.

Here is the church, now on the cusp of Lent, and this is a fantastic message to hear. Repent! Seek the mercy of Jesus. Lord knows, you need it! Mercy for your blind soul, your hardened heart, your ignorance and neglect—all those things which afflicted the disciples and the crowd that day outside of Jericho. Those things which afflicted you when you were enemies of God (cf. Romans 5:10), and which still torment you to this day. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

And your God is gracious and merciful. He knows well how to cure blindness and hardness of heart. See those same disciples, from whom the saying of Jesus was hidden, also had their eyes, ears, and hearts opened to the Word of God, and went into all of the known world proclaiming the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ—His life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

So, He can and does do the same to you. Here you are, hearing the message to repent, hearing of your silence, blindness, hardness, ignorance, and neglect, and you are killed to the core. The sharper-than-a-two-edged-sword-Word-of-God (cf. Hebrews 4:12) has slayed you in your sin, but the grace of God abounds, even in your weakness and death. For it is for His sake that you are killed all the day long (cf. Psalm 44:21-22), and by His grace and mercy, you are brought back again and again to newness of life in Christ, the righteousness of God in Christ. (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21)

What does that sound like? "Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; My eye wastes away with grief, Yes, my soul and my body! Make your face shine upon Your servant; Save me for Your mercies' sake." (Psalm 31:9, 16) "O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise." (Psalm 51:15) "Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word. Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law." (Psalm 119:17-18) "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

The blind man asked for mercy, that he would receive His sight. Jesus granted the man's request. You—your being here and singing the liturgy—are asking for the same mercy, and Jesus is here, time and again, to grant your request. Come, again and again. Sing the liturgy again not only on Sundays, but on Wednesdays for these upcoming 40 days of Lent. Receive your Lord as He gives you of Himself in the Sacrament. He is gracious and merciful to hear and grant your pleas for mercy. And you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.