**Blind man**

Come and See. The idea is that if we can just get a potential convert or a fallen away parishioner to come to church and see what’s going on, that their faith in God will begin or be renewed. After all, isn’t that one of the main reasons that God became incarnate? So that we could see Him in the person of Jesus Christ and believe? Is that not how most people came to faith in God during Jesus ministry? They saw Him and saw the miracles and healings He performed and marveled at the wonder of it all. Yes, this is how many came to faith in God.

   However, today’s gospel presents us with a different, more important passage towards faith. And that is hearing. A blind man was sitting by the road and he hears a multitude passing by and they tell him the reason is that Jesus of Nazareth is present. Once the blind man hears this, he cries out, *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!* We often miss perhaps the most important point of this passage: that the blind man already had faith in Jesus before he encountered Him. The phrase “Son of David” is a messianic one. Therefore, the blind man was addressing Jesus as the Messiah, the one sent from God to save His people Israel. To emphasize the point, let us remember that the blind man is blind. He cannot see. The only way he would know about Jesus is through hearing and one could infer from the text that up to this point the blind man would have known about Jesus only through second or third hand witness accounts. In other words, the blind man’s faith was built on a trust in what others were telling him about Jesus of Nazareth, not through direct experience.

   Contrast this with the Apostle Thomas, whom we hear about on the Sunday after Pascha . When his fellow apostles tell him that they have seen the risen Christ, Thomas responds that he will not believe unless he sees Christ in the flesh including *the print of the nails* and actually touches the gaping wound in His side. When Christ does appear again to the apostles and Thomas is present, Jesus tells Thomas “*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed*”

 Consider the instruction of St. Paul that “*faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God*”.

Is this not how faith in God has been perpetuated through the centuries?

One person tells another about their own faith in and experience of the risen Lord. The other person hears and begins to believe and then begins to see Christ working in the world.

  Why do some of us hear and even see, and still do not believe placing our trust in God? Jesus addresses this in today’s passage when He asks the blind man, ?*What do you want Me to do for you?*? One could say that’s a silly question for an omnipotent, all-knowing God to ask. Yet, Jesus is not asking for Himself. Jesus is asking so that the blind man can search out his own heart and begin to understand what it is that he truly needs to change in his life.

   Jesus poses the same question to each one of us. ?*What do you want Me to do for you?*? If we say, Give me a nice, fancy car, we have missed the point of course. Because the point of the passage is this: the blind man’s inability to see is symbolic of our own spiritual blindness brought on by sinful pride and lazy ignorance. Thus, another way of saying, “*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*” is *Jesus Christ, Son of God, forgive me and heal me*. Receiving the forgiveness of God through repentance and confession leads to the healing that cleanses our hearts and opens our spiritual eyes to the presence and power of God in our lives and in the world around us. Jesus emphasizes the matter during the Sermon on the Mount when He says, ?Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God? (Mt.5:8).

   Today’s passage closes with Jesus saying to the blind man, “*Receive you sight; your faith has made you well*”. This doesn’t mean much to the 100% of us who can see physically. However, it has great meaning for the 100% of us who are spiritually blind to one degree or another. The antidote is more faith/trust in God, which requires hearing His word/teachings/commandments, which requires listening and understanding. It’s difficult to hear if we are always busy and talking. It’s difficult to listen and understand if we always insist on our own ideas. It’s difficult to have more faith in God if it’s always being directed towards something or someone else. Amen!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |