

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

The Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year B

Fr. Glenn Joseph Theoret
Executive Director

www.gratitudefoundation.us
frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us

3713 County 416 20th Road
Gladstone, MI 49837

“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading I

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Thus says the LORD:
Shout with joy for Jacob,
exult at the head of the nations;
proclaim your praise and say:
The LORD has delivered his people,
the remnant of Israel.
Behold, I will bring them back
from the land of the north;
I will gather them from the ends of the world,
with the blind and the lame in their midst,
the mothers and those with child;
they shall return as an immense throng.
They departed in tears,
but I will console them and guide them;
I will lead them to brooks of water,
on a level road, so that none shall stumble.
For I am a father to Israel,
Ephraim is my first-born.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

R. (3) **The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

When the LORD brought back the captives of Zion,
we were like men dreaming.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with rejoicing.

R. **The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

Then they said among the nations,
"The LORD has done great things for them."
The LORD has done great things for us;
we are glad indeed.

R. **The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the torrents in the southern desert.
Those that sow in tears
shall reap rejoicing.

R. **The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

Although they go forth weeping,
carrying the seed to be sown,
They shall come back rejoicing,
carrying their sheaves.

R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Reading II

Hebrews 5:1-6

Brothers and sisters:

Every high priest is taken from among men
and made their representative before God,
to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring,
for he himself is beset by weakness
and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself
as well as for the people.

No one takes this honor upon himself
but only when called by God,
just as Aaron was.

In the same way,
it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest,
but rather the one who said to him:

You are my son:

this day I have begotten you;

just as he says in another place:

You are a priest forever

according to the order of Melchizedek.

Alleluia

Cf. 2 Tm 1:10

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Our Savior Jesus Christ destroyed death
and brought life to light through the Gospel.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Mark 10:46-52

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging.

On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say,

"Jesus, son of David, have pity on me."

And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent.

But he kept calling out all the more,

"Son of David, have pity on me."

Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called the blind man, saying to him,

"Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."

He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.

Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?"

The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see."

Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you."

Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Exegesis

Jeremiah 31:7-9

The Prophet Jeremiah was called by God to be His voice for about 40 years beginning in the year 627 B.C. It was arguably the most turbulent political time in the history of the Near East. Jeremiah was called to be a prophet in the land of Judah. He believed that the chosen people were in a marriage covenant with Yahweh and were often adulterous in their relationship with God. Shortly after he began his mission, he witnessed the great reforms initiated by King Josiah. After the death of King Josiah in 609 religious life began to revert to infidelity and idolatry. Jeremiah warned Josiah's successor Jehoiakim that the infidelity of the people would lead to the downfall of the tribes. Jeremiah would witness the fall of Israel and Judah to the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah remained among the ruins of Jerusalem until he was carried off into Egypt where he died. Jeremiah would never see the restoration of Israel and Judah that he prophesied.

In Chapter 30 Jeremiah proclaims the message that God will come to His people and restore Israel and Judah freeing them from their captivity. God promised to bring them back to the Promised Land that He gave to their fathers. "As Israel comes forward to be given his rest, the Lord appears to him from afar." (Jer 31:2-3). Jeremiah has a vision of a New Exodus where Yahweh will deliver His people once again to rest in the Promised Land.

Our pericope is entitled *The Road to Return*. The passage celebrates the Lord who chooses to deliver His people once again from bondage. It is filled with joy and praise to God for His powerful saving hand. They are reminded of the tears that they shed as they were carried off into captivity as Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple demolished. It is the promise of tears being turned into joy. Yahweh will lead them as he led them through the desert once before. He will lead them to books of water as He once brought forth water from the rock during the first Exodus.

The prophesy continued in subsequent verses and the shepherd motif is introduced. "He who scatters Israel, now gathers them together. He guards them as a shepherd his flock. The Lord shall ransom Jacob, He shall redeem him from the hand of his conqueror." (Jer 31:10-11). Jeremiah is reminding them that it was Yahweh who once scattered them because of their infidelity, and now in His compassion gathers them as a shepherd gathers his flock. This is a prophesy that Jeremiah will not see in his lifetime.

Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

Psalm 126 is entitled *The Reversal of Zion's Fortunes*. The psalmist is celebrating the fulfillment of the prophesy of Jeremiah. Tears of sorrow are turned into tears of joy as the Israelites are set free from the bondage of Babylon. The people are set free to rebuild their lives, their city and their temple. The city remains in ashes as it was burned to the ground. The temple is nothing more than a pile of rubble. A daunting task lies before them.

Their thanksgiving and rejoicing turns to prayer as they turn to God to restore their fortunes. Only God can restore the dry stream beds of the Negeb. The people are carrying sacks of seed and bundles of sheaves to begin the work of sowing such that with the hand of God new life will spring forth. They see God's mighty hand in their redemption but also are keenly aware of their role in the restoration of the Promised Land.

Exegesis (Continued)

Hebrews 5:1-6

Our pericope is taken from a section in *Hebrews* that is entitled *Jesus, Compassionate High Priest*. The understanding of priesthood in the OT is that of one chosen by God as a representative of the people before God. The priest was viewed as a mediator between the people and God. This mediation was a two way “street”. The priest served as a mediator of God’s word to the people. He also brought the prayers of the people to God. The priest offered to God gifts and sacrifices for the atonement of sins.

When the time was right God chose His only Son to be the mediator between Himself and His beloved children. Jesus first assumes our human nature that He might offer Himself as a gift and sacrifice to God. “But Christ came as high priest... He entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.” (Heb 9: 11-12). Being both divine and human, Jesus becomes the perfect mediator between God and humanity. He is both sacrifice and mediator of that sacrifice. He also was tempted in every way that we are that He might become patient and compassionate in His human nature in deep solidarity with us.

Hebrews quotes Psalm 110 verse 4, “The Lord has sworn and will not waver: ‘Like Melchizedek you are a priest forever.’” Melchizedek was an ancient king of Salem (Jerusalem) who blessed Abraham (Gen 14: 18-20). The kings of his time were often called and anointed by God to perform priestly functions, e.g., King David.

Mark 10:46-52

Our Gospel passage brings us to the end of our journey with Jesus to Jerusalem. It is the end of Chapter 10. Chapter 11 begins with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the Gospel passage that opens our Good Friday service. We began this journey with Jesus in Bethsaida where Jesus cured the first blind man. That cure seemed more involved with Jesus putting spittle on his eyes and laying His hands on him twice as his sight came into clarity slowly until he could finally see clearly.

During this journey to Jerusalem the eyes of the apostles and the disciples of Jesus were opened slowly. On this journey as described by Mark in 8:22-10:52 Jesus revealed much about who He is, what lies ahead in Jerusalem and He reveals much about what it means to follow Him on the way. The journey that began at Bethsaida, proceeded to Peter’s great confession at Caesarea Philippi and Jesus’ first prediction of His Passion, then up the mountain of the Transfiguration, then down the mountain and eventually to the depth of Jericho 800 feet below sea level. The road up to Jerusalem raises 3,500 feet in a few short miles. Jesus is now looking up to the hill of Calvary.

The journey of Jesus to the depth of Jericho I believe is deeply symbolic of His descent into solidarity with us. St. Anselm once said, “What is not assumed is not redeemed.” Jesus had to make that descent to bring us with Him up the road to the Hill of Calvary, down into the tomb that we might rise with Him in His Resurrection and Ascension. On the Way with Him comes divine illumination, spiritual sight that we call faith.

Exegesis (Continued)

Mark 10:46-52

In our Gospel story today, we are told that large crowds were following Him. There was an energy that was drawing people to Him on the way. The blind man was there along the road because it was the place to position himself to beg. He was there day after day as a way of existence that he might beg for support to buy food that he might live. What he begs Jesus for is something more. He begs that he might see. Jesus gives him his physical sight and something ever greater; he gives him spiritual sight that he might follow Jesus on the Way. Without any of the previous healing words and actions that cured the blind man in Bethsaida, Jesus simply says to him, “Go your way; your faith has saved you.”

There is an interesting dynamic that is centered on the word that we translate as *way* or *road*. The word is *hodos* in the original Greek. The story begins with Bartimaeus sitting along the (*hodos*) road. Jesus tells him, “Go on your (*hodos*) way.” Then we are told that he followed Jesus on the (*hodos*) way. The man was moved from sitting along the way, then being instructed to go on his way and finally following Jesus on the Way. The movement goes from being an outsider, to entering the way of life, to walking with Jesus on the Way, the Way that leads to eternal life. The word *hodos* can mean a physical roadway, but often in scripture it describes the way of discipleship and way to eternal life.

As is often the case with healings, Jesus tells the man. “Your faith has saved you.” The word for faith is *pistis* in the original Greek. I have talked about this word in some depth in prior exegesis. It means much more than an ascent of the heart and mind. It involves a connectivity with the divine. The blind man connects with Jesus on the way. There is a spiritual connection or indwelling that allows him to see with the eyes of the Spirit.

The word that we translate as *saved* is *sozo* in the original Greek. It means *to heal, to make well, to cure, to deliver or to save*. Jesus came to heal us from the affliction of sin and death. He came to heal us of the separation from God caused by sin. That healing, that salvation comes from uniting ourselves with the Savior and following Him on the Way,

Reflection

Our first reading this weekend is taken from the Prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah is writing during the time of the Babylonian Exile. God is promising through the prophet to rescue the people from their bondage. God is promising to set them free and to lead and guide them back to the Promised Land. Along with the Exodus story it is one of the primary paradigms of salvation in Sacred Scripture. Our Psalm for this week is the fulfillment of that promise of God. It was written as the people were being set free and many were returning to Jerusalem to begin to rebuild their lives. They are returning to the Promised Land with great rejoicing.

Only a remnant of the people is returning, however. Biblical experts will tell us that many of the people although set free chose not to return. By ancient standards Babylon was a very affluent society. Many of the Israelite people had become very comfortable as indentured servants living in wealthy households. It was in many respects an easy and carefree life. I am sure that they felt a certain sense of security knowing that they had a roof over their head and plenty of food to eat. Perhaps it can be likened to people who have been incarcerated for some time in our prison system. The walls give them a sense of security over time such that many of them no longer longed for freedom.

In a similar story, experts tell us that even though they were very poorly treated in Egypt, many of the Israelites did not follow Moses as they were set free. Many feared a trap, or that they would die in flight. Both models of salvation remind us that salvation is not only freedom from something, i.e. bondage, but freedom for something. We are set free to begin a journey. The good news is that God is promising through the Prophet Jeremiah to be with them on the journey: "I will console them and guide them; I will lead them to brooks of water, on a level road... for I am a father to Israel..."

With freedom comes responsibility. Each one of us is ultimately responsible for our own lives. In today's Gospel as Jesus restores the sight of the blind man, Bartimaeus, Jesus told him, "Go on your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way. Bartimaeus was set free from the bondage of his blindness. He was also set free to begin a journey, to go on his way. Given new spiritual sight to guide his life, Bartimaeus chose to follow Jesus. Even though Jesus was on the way to Calvary, Bartimaeus chose to follow Him.

As difficult and fearful as the way can be, it is the way to salvation. Remember the question of the rich man: "Lord what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Sell all that you have and give to the poor and then come and follow me." Following Jesus is the answer to the question. Our own eternity depends on how we answer the call with our lives, and so we too pray, "Master, I want to see." Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle within us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in Christ,



Personal Witness

As I was praying, asking God for the right words for this personal witness, grandma's favorite song Amazing Grace was echoing in my head. "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I am found. I was blind but now I see."

I am sometimes angered and sometimes amused by the intentional effort to take God out of our culture and out of society. It is tantamount to a small minnow deciding that he is going to take the ocean in which he swims out of his life. The results would be the same, flopping as a fish out of water until death.

I grew up in an ocean of faith and spirituality. I have shared deep personal experiences of God I knew at a young age. Those experiences came out of the spiritual emersion in which I lived and moved and had my being. I was raised in a small predominantly Catholic rural farming community. The ethnicity was largely French Canadian. My maternal grandparents owned a dairy farm, and my paternal grandparents owned the local corner general merchandise store. Our community centered around grandpa's store and the local Catholic Church. The church was nestled in a pasture such that one side acted as a fence and that now and then a cow would poke her head into one of the open windows during Sunday morning Mass. (Perhaps that is where the expression "Holy Cow" originated). The social life of the community danced to the rhythm of the Church calendar and the events flowed from it.

I was not aware of any separation of church and state, or any dichotomy between the corporeal and the spiritual. My grandpa attended and served daily Mass. People would come to him often looking for spiritual advice and asking for his prayers. The local priest was totally integrated into the life of the community. The local public school was across from the church. Our entire class would walk over to Mass on holy days, as all were Catholic including the teachers and staff. Every morning, we pledged allegiance to the flag, and we would pray in school.

As I went off to college and then entered the world of business and finance, I found myself drifting into a different world. Over time I began to separate my faith and spiritual life from my lived in world. I began to drift from God and relegate my faith to one hour on Sunday morning before I went to the office to catch up on things. In this new world cataracts began to dim my spiritual view and eventually even spiritual blindness set in. I found myself living in a darkness that I had never experienced and never knew existed. The movement was so gradual that it escaped my conscious awareness.

One day, from this darkness, I found myself begging Jesus that I may see again. In a moment of sheer grace the cataracts were removed, my heart was rent open, and I found myself immersed in the warmth of God's love. I found myself immersed in a sea of light and everything was vivid and bright. I found myself back in a world where there was no division between the spiritual and the corporeal. It was all one. I forgot how beautiful God's world was. I did not remember how clear my faith once was until I experienced it anew in that moment. I never want to return to that awful darkness, and I want to dedicate my life to helping others to see what I see and to know what I know. And so, I beg you now to pray with me, Lord, help me to see! Thank you, Lord, for the gift of spiritual sight!

In Christ,

