

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 24 OCTOBER 2021



Healing of the Blind Man by Carl Bloch | public domain

What do you want me to do for you?

Antoine de Saint – Exupery was the author of a story *The Little Prince* which is still popular. The Little Prince leaves his own asteroid and comes to earth where he is befriended by a fox. The two become friends.

The central theme of this short story is significant for today's gospel which concerns the encounter between Jesus and Bartimaeus, the blind beggar.

The fox who is wise in the ways of the world and in its constant battle to survive in a world of men tells the Little Prince *'it is only with the heart that one can see rightly'*.

This is a theme which permeates Mark's gospel. Bartimaeus who is blind is able to see with the heart. The apostles are blind and continue to be blind though they can see. They continue to miss the essential teachings of Jesus because they are 'seeing' power and authority, not to mention wealth for themselves.

They were told they had to become slaves of each other instead of having power and authority. When James and John asked for positions of honour with Jesus, the ten apostles were angry because they had been pre-empted – they were thinking in the same way.

Previous gospel passages informed them and ourselves that trust in God's goodness like a child trusting a parent is crucial. They are astounded. They are told that they must follow the example of Jesus who came to serve, not to be served. They are astounded again.

Beware of riches which lead us away from a deep relationship with God! When does this stop? Yet the attraction to Jesus never wanes! They are slow learners but who can blame them? Are we better?

Now another blind man appears in the gospel.
Perhaps Mark is telling us that the apostles are 'blind' like Bartimaues

In every age disabled people are expected to know their place and wait for assistance and be grateful. Bartimaeus will have none of that attitude and shouts so loudly that Jesus hears him and calls him. He leaves his cloak behind, in fact all that he has to go to Jesus.

Jesus asks him: *'what do you want me to do for you?'* It might seem obvious what Bartimaeus wanted but Jesus makes him articulate his need. *'Master let me see again'*.

The question is our question too. What do we want Jesus to do for us? In one sense, the answer is that we might 'see' again. We don't know what we want, we want to see our lives differently, we want to be different, we want to let go of what prevents us from being our true selves.

The apostles came to understand what it meant to follow Jesus. We need to have Bartimaeus' confidence and commit ourselves too. Letting go is difficult and the future may be uncertain. In that way we are like the apostles who had much to learn.

The Holy Spirit was with them, the same for us.

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Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/102421.cfm>

