

**The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa**

October 25, 2009

Proper 25

Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52

Ask a person on any given morning, “how did you sleep last night”, the response will usually fall somewhere between, “OK” and “not very good”. At least, that’s the impression I get. Most of us, most nights are not getting a great nights sleep. There might be lots of reasons for this: the overall sense of anxiety and tension that is in the air. The fact that TV stations broadcast all night long; Internet is available all night long. The world never sleeps, so neither do we. Illness in the home affects the sleep of everyone that is there. There are many factors, physical and emotional that cut into our sleep.

In response, to this epidemic of insomnia, there are many suggestions on how to improve your sleep. Some suggest sleeping medication. Some suggest watching what you eat or drink in the hours before you sleep. Cut down on the spicy food, and caffeine. Some suggest following the same schedule each night, having a regular bed time, and taking time before going to bed to wind down. Turn the TV off well before you go to bed. Go to bed calm and sleep improves.

Another option would be to buy some eye coverings to shut out any and all light. Of all the options, this seems to me to be the most frightening. I am not sure that I could sleep in the midst of such total darkness. Plus, I think I would be afraid that waking up in the morning I just might forget to take the blindfold off. Imagine the danger of forgetting to take off the blindfold. With my blindfold on, I just might walk into the closet instead of the bathroom. How would I make my morning coffee? How would I drive to work? How would I find my clothes? Yes indeed. Living life in blindfolds would be disastrous.

Our readings this morning are about learning to see clearly. The book of Job is not a biography. Rather, it is a short story that is meant to teach. The readers of Job are taught how to see “suffering”. Job was written in a time when people were taught that the good were always blessed, and the evil always suffered. Yet, many could “see” that this simply was not true. To believe that the good are always blessed and that the evil are always punished, one has to be blind to the way the world really is. It takes a certain amount of blindness to believe that only evil people suffer or to believe that all riches and comforts are proof of a person's goodness. Job stands for many persons in the world, good, holy God fearing people who suffered tremendously. The story of Job teaches us that in this world there is a randomness to suffering. Too often the innocent do suffer, and the guilty seem to live very comfortably. It is through his suffering that Job comes to see that God is found not surrounded by riches and comforts, but God is found in the midst of suffering.

As I have read the Gospel throughout the week, the phrase that stood out to me most powerfully, was the response Bartimaeus gave when Jesus asked him: “What is it you want me to do for you?” “Teacher”, Bartimaeus said, “I want to see again.” I wonder: Why did he call Jesus “teacher”? Might you not expect him to refer to him as “Healer” or “Miracle worker”? Why teacher? Could it be that the Gospel is trying to teach us that the ability to see is something that is learned. “I want to see again.” At one time, Bartimaeus could see. Now, he wants to see again. “Teacher, Teach me to see again”. Perhaps Bartimaeus is a symbol of the person who puts on blindfolds and forgets to take them off.

Do you ever wear blindfolds so that you do not have to see the truth of your life? Do you ever wear blindfolds so you don't have to see how your actions, your words are hurting those around you? Do you ever wear blindfolds so you do not have to look at yourself? So you do not have to see how anger, and jealousy and resentment are turning your heart cold. Do you ever wear blindfolds so you do not have to look at the suffering in the world? So you do not have to see the ravages of violence, poverty and disease. Do you ever wear blindfolds so you do not have to see that the comforts we take for granted cause suffering to others? Do you ever wear blindfolds so you do not have to see the injustices which surround us in our city, our nation and in the world.

After he is healed, the Gospel tells us that Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the way. "On the way" where? "The way" for Mark is the way of the cross. On the way to resurrection through suffering. On the way to life through death. The Gospel is teaching us that the way to find God is not to flee from suffering but to pass through it. In the Eucharistic Prayer that we will offer in a few minutes, we will pray: Open our eyes to see your hand at work in the world about us. Open our eyes, take off our blindfolds. Teach us to see again. Teach us to see you in the suffering of the world. Teach us to see you in those who are today crucified on the crosses of poverty, disease, injustice and war.

Sometimes it is as if we have put blindfolds over our eyes and left them there. We are blind. Jesus have mercy on us. Teacher restore our sight. Teacher, help us to see again.

After he is healed, after the teacher restores his sight, Bartimaeus springs into action. The Gospel invites us to do the same. When we take our blindfolds off, we act. Might I suggest to you all that each one of us, reads one article this week about suffering and poverty. One article about homelessness, one article about the suffering caused by global climate change. One article that will help us take off our blindfold and see again. And after reading one article, may we act. May each of do something, one thing to care for the poor. May we write one letter to congress, may we bring one can of food for a pantry, may we give one hour in service of the community, may we say one prayer for those who suffer.

May we take off our blindfolds and see. May we spring to our feet and act. May we follow Jesus on the way. Maybe when we see, maybe when we act, maybe when we truly follow Jesus on the way, we will finally come to the end of a day, lay down, and get a good nights sleep.

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