

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time – B
Fr. Chad S. Green
Holy Family Catholic Church
Kirkland, Washington
28 October 2018

Jeremiah 31:7-9
Psalm 126
Hebrews 5:1-6
(see 2 Timothy 1:10) Mark 10:46-52

Ways God Answers Prayer

There are five ways that God answers our prayers¹:

- 1) By granting our request.
- 2) By giving us something better.
- 3) By removing the desire.
- 4) By giving us grace and strength to endure.
- 5) Fully and finally in Heaven.

A prayerful and holy priest at Mount Angel Seminary gave this list to our class a couple years ago. There are other versions of this list out there. Having a list like this is a helpful reminder that sometimes God answers our prayers in ways that are not immediately apparent to us. The challenge for us, however, is to have *eyes of faith* to *see* all the different ways that God hears and answers *all* our prayers.

For many of us – myself included – our preference is that God would answer our prayers, not in many different ways, but in the most straightforward way: simply granting our request (or giving us something better!). Because those other three ways that God answers our prayers are harder, aren't they?

- 3) Letting go and allowing God to purify us by removing our desire for something that's not good for us, or that we don't really need.
- 4) Accepting God's grace to endure through a difficult situation, which will ultimately be for our benefit.
- 5) Waiting until Heaven for the fulfillment of every good prayer – that can seem like too long to wait.

+++

Jesus' encounter with Bartimaeus looks a lot like a case of the "easy" answer to a prayer. He made his prayer to Jesus: "Master, I want to see."² And, immediately, Jesus answered his prayer and "he received his sight."³ Done! Easy, right?

Bartimaeus' example encourages us to be confident and bold in our own prayers. To have *faith* that when we ask Jesus for what we need, He hears and answers our prayer. Jesus' words to Bartimaeus are also His words to each one of us: "What do you want me to do for you?"⁴ *What is it that you want Jesus to do for you?*

+++

So, what do we do when we sincerely respond to Jesus' question? When we pray to Jesus, but our prayer isn't answered as easily as it was for Bartimaeus?⁵ Does that mean there's something *wrong* with what I'm asking for? Does that mean that Jesus listens to others but not to *me*? Does that mean there is something wrong with my *faith*? Does that mean there is something wrong with *me*? But before we start comparing the results of our prayers with Bartimaeus', let's take a closer look and *see* all the ways Jesus answered Bartimaeus' prayer.

When Jesus walked by, Bartimaeus had been sitting by the roadside begging.⁶ How many long years had he been there begging? How many times before had he made prayers for God's pity?⁷ Had he ever been discouraged? Had others ever told him to give up on his prayers?⁸ Did God simply not hear his earlier prayers? Or, was God answering his prayers all along, giving Bartimaeus the *grace and strength to endure* his suffering? All along, answering Bartimaeus' prayer in the best way, by strengthening his *faith*? Answering Bartimaeus' prayer by preparing him for the right moment of healing?

And what about what Bartimaeus prayed *for*? When Jesus asked him what he wanted, Bartimaeus could have asked for *anything*. He was face to face with Jesus Christ, the Word

through Whom all things were made, the Son of God Who was present when the world was created.⁹ What other prayers had Bartimaeus prayed throughout the difficulties of his life? Perhaps he had one time been tempted by the lure of money or power? Recall in the Gospel two weeks ago, just a few days before Jesus met Bartimaeus, Jesus encountered the Rich Man who was unwilling to sell his possessions.¹⁰ And recall in the Gospel last week, Jesus had just finished dealing with the Apostles who were asking for and bickering about places of power and glory.¹¹ In contrast, in today's Gospel, Jesus encountered a poor blind man whose years of prayers were now being answered because – perhaps – the *desire* for these two tempting and attractive things had been *removed* from him. He had purified and was ready to pray for the most important thing, not only to see with his eyes, but to see with *eyes of faith*.¹²

Finally, after giving him his sight, Jesus continued to answer Bartimaeus' prayer when He said to him: "Go your way."¹³ Which way did Bartimaeus choose to go? Not back into his home in Jericho. Not to the Mediterranean Coast for a vacation. Out of all the places he could've gone with his new sight, Bartimaeus chose to follow Jesus on the way to Jerusalem.¹⁴ On the way to His Crucifixion, Death, and Resurrection. Out of all the things Bartimaeus might've wanted to see, He most wanted to see Jesus win the redemption of all humankind. He wanted to see Jesus answer all our prayers by saving us from sin and opening up Heaven for him and for all people in every time and every place – including all of us.¹⁵ Ultimately, Bartimaeus was *given something better* than what he prayed for. He was given *eyes of faith* to *see* the way to Heaven – the place where all our good prayers will be *fully and finally* answered.

+++

My friends, Jesus always encourages us to keeping asking Him for what we need.¹⁶ He is always asking us that question: "What do you want me to do for you?"¹⁷ And when He asks us

that question, He hears and answers *all* of our prayers. We may not always understand it. It may not always be apparent to us. It may not be the way that we think is best. But it is happening. In more ways than we know. In better ways than we know. In the best possible ways.

And when we take courage, when we keep getting back up on our feet, when we keep crying out and praying to Jesus, He increases our *faith* and helps us *see* how to follow Him on the way to Heaven.¹⁸

¹ From Fr. Thomas Koller, OCD, professor at Mount Angel Seminary, Fall Semester 2016

² Mark 10:51

³ Mark 10:52

⁴ Mark 10:51

⁵ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 2734-2737, especially:

CCC 2734: "Some even stop praying because they think their petition is not heard. Here two questions should be asked: Why do we think our petition has not been heard? How is our prayer heard, how is it 'efficacious'?"

CCC 2735: "...when we praise God or give him thanks for his benefits in general, we are not particularly concerned whether or not our prayer is acceptable to him. On the other hand, we demand to see the results of our petitions."

CCC 2736: "Are we asking God for 'what is good for us'?"

CCC 2737: "Do not be troubled if you do not immediately receive from God what you ask him; for he desires to do something even greater for you, while you cling to him in prayer (Evagrius Ponticus, *De oratione* 34)."

⁶ Mark 10:46

⁷ Mark 10:47-48

⁸ Mark 10:48

⁹ See John 1:1-18

¹⁰ Mark 10:21-22 (from the Gospel for the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B)

¹¹ Mark 10:35-37, 41 (from the Gospel for the Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B)

¹² Mark 10:52: "Jesus told him, 'Go your way; your faith has saved you.'"

¹³ Mark 10:52

¹⁴ Mark 11:1ff (also see Mark 10:32)

¹⁵ See CCC 549: "By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils...Jesus performed messianic signs.

Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage."

¹⁶ Mark 11:24: "[Jesus said to them,] 'Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours.'"

¹⁷ Mark 10:51

¹⁸ Mark 10:49, 52

St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380): "All the way to Heaven is Heaven because Jesus said, 'I am the Way.'"