

**RABBI, LET ME RECOVER MY SIGHT- Biblical commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM**

***Mark 10, 46-52***

***And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.***

Jesus had scolded his disciples using an expression from the prophet Jeremiah, where the Lord says:  
*"Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?"*

We are looking at Mark's gospel and the evangelist presents the question of having ears and not hearing, with the third announcement of the Passion. Although Jesus had clearly indicated that, he would be killed in Jerusalem, two disciples, James and John, asked him for the most important places. Therefore, they have ears but they did not listen to Jesus.

In the episode that follows, Mark's gospel chapter 10, 46-52, the blindness of the disciples is shown. Let us see what the evangelist writes.

*"And they came to Jericho."* Jericho is the first city that Joshua conquered on entering the Promised Land and now it has become a land of oppression, from which it is best to escape.

*"And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus,..."* Here is a strange character. Strange because he is introduced twice, "son of Timaeus" and "Bartimaeus" - *bar-timaeus* in Aramaic means "son of Timaeus"

It is strange this double presentation of this individual *the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus*. Timaeus in Greek means “honour”, we could translate it as the “honourable”, his disciples looking for honour. Why this? Through this character, the evangelist wants to represent the two disciples, James and John who are not only deaf, but also blind.

Jesus after the failure of his preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth had said: *“A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown,...” (Mark 6,4)* While, Jesus was dishonored, his disciples search for honour. So the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, was repeated twice because the evangelist wants to confirm that he is talking about James and John, who were called “the sons of Zebedee.”

*“...a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus,”*... Here is the denouncement taken from the prophet Jeremiah, *“Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?”*, *“... was sitting by the roadside.”* This phrase has already appeared in chapter 4, 15, in the parable of the sowing of the seeds; the birds arrive, the image of Satan’s power, and eat them. Therefore, there is the misunderstanding of Jesus’ message.

*“And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth...”* Coming from Nazareth meant that one was a revolutionary, *“.. he began to cry out..”* He cries out, as the man possessed in the synagogue *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* Here is the reason of his blindness: he does not see Jesus the son of God, he that for love gave life to the world, but sees Jesus the son of David, he who through violence, death, destruction, conquest and power will begin the kingdom of Israel.

Here is the reason of the blindness. The disciples accompany Jesus, they do not follow him, because in their heads is the image of a triumphant messiah, the son of David. *“And many rebuked him,..”* they are the real followers of Jesus, that want to free these disciples of this mentality, *“.. telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”* And here the name Jesus disappears. The son of David is the one that should restore the monarchy.

*“And Jesus stopped...”* Jesus does not go to the blind man, it is the blind man who must go to Jesus *“And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”* The verb to call appears three times, which in Hebrew means “completely”. To call is to call someone that is distant, they are the disciples that accompany Jesus but they are distant, they do not follow him.

*“And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you. And throwing off his cloak...”* the cloak, in symbolic language means a final break away from the ideology of the son of David, and his conversion.”.. *he sprang up and came to Jesus.”* Jesus does not go to the blind man, he must go himself to Jesus and going to Jesus, he regains his sight.

*“And Jesus said to him, What do you want me to do for you?”* “To understand in this episode that the evangelist is talking about James and John, he writes Jesus says the same words and question that the two disciples had put to him before *“What do you want me to do for you?”*

This time *“...the blind man said to him,..”* finally he does not call him the son of David, but Rabbi, a term used when confronted with the divinity. *“Rabbi, let me recover my sight.”* He was not always blind,

clearly there has been a period in his life when he could see, then he lost his sight because the ideology contrary to God's project for humanity was taken away.

*"And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." Jesus did nothing to the blind man. It was the blind man who had abandoned his old position; he was converted, and went to Jesus. "And immediately he recovered his sight.." so once he could see, and finally, here are the technical words to follow Jesus, "...and followed him on the way." The way that will take him to the Passion in Jerusalem.*