

The Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost
Mark 10:46-52

Why would our Lord Jesus even bother to ask the blind man what he wanted our Lord Jesus to do for him? The blind man was, well, he was blind, was he not? You would think that it was pretty obvious what he would want.

I wish I could sing was the title of an article I read many years ago, when I was a young man; yes, I do remember some things even from that far back. The article was about a blind Christian girl; and the title was her answer to the interviewer's question as to what she would choose, if she could have one wish granted, one wish: *I wish I could sing*.

So often we assume that what others want is what we ourselves would want, were we in their situation. And we make this assumption because we also assume that everybody must think and feel about things exactly the way I do, because the way I think and feel about things is the only way to think and feel about things, and as such, it is also the way everybody else must think and feel about his or her own situation, and it cannot be any different, for I know everything about everything, including those situations of which I know nothing. I do not have to listen to anybody. What others want cannot but be what *I* think they *ought* to want. I know everything worth knowing, and nothing I do not know is worth knowing.

Even well meaning people who think that way do much damage when they insert themselves in situations, when they arrange the affairs of others behind their backs, or over their heads, without taking their thoughts into account, when they make commitments on behalf of others, or when they nag and haunt others into doing the things they are responsible for the way the inconsiderate busybodies want them done, and think they can be done, although, perhaps, they really cannot.

All good intentions aside, to treat others as if their thoughts and feelings do not matter is not a loving thing to do; and to treat others as if they do not matter is *not* what Holy Scripture teaches, either. *Let each of you look not only to his own,* writes the holy Apostle Paul, *but also to that of others,* and: *in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

In fact, to begin with, the attitude of assuming that the way I think and feel about things is the only way to think and feel, and that what I know is all there is to know, or at least all that matters, that attitude is in itself an expression of ungodly arrogance.

Last year, when authorities chose to single worship out for being under restriction, as opposed to business, the assumption was clearly that there is no God, or, as some phrased it, that worship is not *essential*; in other words: that your life with God is not essential, because there is no God, and everybody knows that there really is not, and Christians and the Church will just have to be reasonable and admit it, for the epidemic *is* for real, unlike your faith.

To force upon others the way I think and feel about things, assuming that the way I think and feel about things is the *only* way to think and feel, that is called *tyranny*. And tyranny is what we have seen on the rise in recent years, as fanatics on the internet, and in the streets, and in congress, and on the courts, have set out to ruin the lives of anybody and everybody who think and feel differently about things than they do themselves. And this is *wrong*; it is evil and ungodly, not only when done by unbelievers, but also when done by those who believe in God, and seek to serve Him by tyrannising others. Yes. Only God Himself has the right to demand that we think the way He does; He, and He alone, knows all things, and all truth. He alone is the rightful Judge of good and evil. And to Him we owe all things, and ourselves, with all that we are, and all that we have.

Is this, perhaps, part of what our Lord Jesus was teaching the blind man, and those who stood by, when He asked: *What do you want me to do for you?* It may very well have been. After all, *He* is Himself God, and actually knows all things. As such, He knew already what the blind man wanted from Him. And nevertheless, He bothered to ask him. Most certainly, there is a lesson to learn from this, namely that what seems so obvious to you might not be what is really at work; after all, you are not God, and it is for real that you are not. Let us be reminded of this today.

And let us be reminded, also, that although God already knows very well what we want, and although He also knows very well, unlike ourselves, what is really good and right for us, He nevertheless wants us to present our wishes to Him, and our thoughts and feelings. He not only asks and teaches us, but *commands* us to pray, that is: not only to expect all things good from Him, but actually to speak to Him of what is in our hearts and minds; just as our Lord Jesus asked the blind man to state his desire to Him, although He knew already what it was, and not only because it seemed so obvious.

It does seem, though, from what we hear today, that recovering his eyesight was actually not all that the blind man sought from our Lord Jesus.

We learn that after he had recovered his sight, he followed our Lord Jesus on the road; on the road to Jerusalem, that would be, where our Lord Jesus would be given over into the hands of His enemies to suffer and die.

The very fact that Holy Scripture gives us the name of the blind man would seem to indicate, also, that he was well known in the early Church, not only as one who once was blind but now could see, but also as one who once was lost but now was found. And already in what we hear today, we hear a hint that he sought more from our Lord Jesus than the recovery of his eyesight. *Jesus, Son of David*, he cried out, *have mercy upon me!* In other words, even while still blind, he saw our Lord Jesus not only as an out of this world ophthalmologist, but also as the Saviour in whom the mercy of God had come to His people, according to His promises of old, the Son of David.

Most certainly our Lord Jesus Himself had greater concerns in dealing with the blind man than restoring his eyesight; as He has greater concerns for us all than worldly wealth and health and happiness: He has *eternity* in mind, rescue from eternal death and damnation unto eternal life with Him in glory; as it is also the things of God we always should have in mind in our dealings with Him, rather than our own. It is that which He Himself has sought for us, and for which He has set all things else aside. As He said it in His prayer to the heavenly Father on that bitter night in which He would have Himself given over to His sufferings and death for the salvation of sinners: *Father, my desire is that where I am, they also may be with me, whom You have given to me, that they may see my glory which You have given to me because You loved me before the foundation of the world. O yes, there is so much more for us to see than the beauty and glory of this world; there is that fullness of goodness and glory the Father gave to the Son from before the foundation of the world, in that love which was for ever between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

And for us to see that glory, the Son of God gave all, and gave Himself over to the most severe sufferings, to *eternal* death, that is: the fullness of death, the judgement of God against sin, His righteous wrath against wrong and wrongdoing, the hatred of His whole and holy goodness against all evil.

This the Son of God would suffer for our salvation, for us to be rescued from eternal death and damnation to be with Him forever instead, in His Kingdom and His heavenly life, in the fullness of His goodness and His glory, and have all things good and glorious given to us.

Such is His love for us sinners, so strong His desire to give us all things good, that He would suffer all for our salvation. It was for this He was going on the road to Jerusalem, to be given over into the hands of His enemies and suffer and die. And as we hear it today, when the blind man had received his sight, he also followed our Lord Jesus on the road; on that very road which would lead to suffering and death for our Lord Jesus Himself, and to the greatest grief and agony for those who loved Him and followed Him.

Yes, for to have sight given to us, so as to see our Lord Jesus for who He is, and see Him as the Saviour in whom the mercy of God has come to us, it calls us and draws us out on a path of much struggle and suffering and sorrow.

At some points in history it has been a path of persecution, as it might very well be again soon, as we have seen signs of it in recent years. At other times it has mostly been but a path of being ridiculed and reviled. At all times it has been a path of struggling with oneself, with our own hearts and minds, the constant temptation to take for ourselves what God will not give us because it is not for us to have, and constantly having to face our faults and failures and flaws to learn that His mercy is what we need more than anything else, forgiveness for our sin.

Our Lord Jesus has greater things to give than worldly wealth and health and happiness; His will is for us to be with Him for ever and see Him in the fullness of His goodness and His glory and share all things good and glorious with Him.

Therefore is it that He does not give us all that we want; not because He does not want us to be happy, for He does, but rather so as to keep us from losing sight of Him and His love; and *He* knows, and He alone, exactly what that takes. And whatever it takes, that He will do, for love of us, for our salvation; as He has set all things aside, and given all, for love of us, for our salvation.

And on our painful path He Himself will be with us, with His love. He will speak His Word of His love and what His love has done for us. As He spoke to the blind man: *Go your way; your faith has made you well!*, and the blind man received his sight and followed Him on the road, so will He assure us of His salvation, with His Word, so that we will see that all is well, and we will go on on our way, that is: on the way He has laid out for us, that which leads us to His eternal Kingdom and His heavenly life.

Now, to Him, whose power works in us and can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine, be glory, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, for ever and ever. *Amen.*