

“Do you want to see?” 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.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

An interesting Gospel reading we have got today, and, the Lord being gracious upon us, it may lead us to interesting meditations and insights. The blind Bartimaeus, the blind beggar meets Jesus and what did he ask for?

Yes, he wanted to regain his eyesight. He wanted to see. Jesus granted him his wish. “Your faith has made you well, go your way.” And immediately he recovered his sight and ... where did he go? Yes, he followed Jesus.

Today I invite you to reflect on **the topic of seeing**. Not so much on physical seeing, but mostly on our spiritual sight. Then we would reflect on **the beauty** that our dear Lord reveals to us as we live in His world, and finally we would just briefly reflect on **the power** that He bestows upon us.

So, **spiritual seeing**, then **the beauty** that the Lord reveals to us, and finally **the power** that He gives to us. Let’s begin with the topic of seeing. John has recorded for us these scary words of Jesus:

“For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” (John 9:39) He is not talking about our physical sight. He is talking about our ability to see and to recognize the truth.

Jesus is talking about it as about judgement. Those who will accept Him and His words, the incredible message that He brings us – they will see and they will enter into life, eternal life, to receive what God has prepared for His beloved.

But those who think that they already see, those who are wise and righteous in their own eyes, they will become blind. Blind to the truth of the Gospel, for they have rejected Jesus and His message. Scary stuff...

There is this famous passage in the book of Isaiah, it is also quoted numerous times in the New Testament. This quote comes from Matthew, where Jesus says: “This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “You will indeed, hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” For this people’s heart

has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.” (Matt 13:13-16)

Do you see what a scary picture is painted for us? People who hear words of Jesus, who are blessed to be so close to the very source of life and light and truth, yet, because of the hardness of their hearts, they don’t hear and they don’t see, and they do not understand and do not turn to Jesus. They choose death.

We hear it too often these days that the words of Jesus, the words of Scripture are not clear. Sounds familiar? If they are not clear, if we can’t hear and see and understand their message, then they actually become irrelevant. Why bother?

The thing is, then something else takes that place. Then, instead of listening to our Triune God we listen to something else. To the world, to one another, to our own hearts, and so on. Judgment happens when we hear the message of Jesus.

If pastors, as servants of the Word, indeed preach in such a way that we can say after the sermon – amen, that is indeed true! – then such preaching is the moment of judgment. It exposes our hearts; it exposes our allegiances.

Examine yourselves, dear brothers and sisters! How do you behave, when you hear the servants of Jesus speak to you His message? Do you want to listen? Which parts do you want to listen? How do you react when you hear something that you don’t like, something that contradicts to what you want to hear?

Do you dismiss those parts? “O, that’s just what this pastor says! I have my own thoughts.” Or do you humbly ask: “Where is this written? Is this truly what the Word of God teaches? Then I may need to change.”

What does your inner voice say to you? This shows the spiritual state of our hearts. If we only want to hear affirmation of what we believe and hold dear, if we don’t want to be challenged by the Word of God, if we get upset if the Word of God makes us feel guilty ... so we shut our ear and our eyes:

“We don’t need that! We don’t want that!” What does it reveal about our spiritual state? Think about this – how can you have relationships with a person, if they have to agree with you all the time, otherwise you don’t even listen to them? Wouldn’t that be almost impossible?

Now think about the Triune God, the Holy One! How can we have any relationships with Him, if we don’t want Him to show us our sin, to expose our idols and false ideas, to tear down our self-righteousness? But, of course, what He says and demands will contradict the desires of our sinful hearts!

This is where the judgment happens. We either listen to Him and allow Him to change us, or we close our eyes and ears and stubbornly claim that we are good and right. Our confidence that we are spiritually fine, our self-righteousness doesn’t mean much if our eyes and ears are closed.

Jesus’ opponents were really confident that they were faithful and God-fearing people. They thought they knew where they were going... that’s quite popular a

saying these days. But in reality, they were going... to reject and to crucify the One who was their only way to life and freedom and truth. As the Pharisee in the parable said: "Thank you God, that I am not like those people. I always do the right thing. I know where I am going after this life is over."

We had a relative. A lovely, friendly person. But with very, very anti-Christian sentiment. He said that he had never sinned. I know people in Tanunda, who run from Jesus like from a plague, but they are confident to claim that "they know where they are going when this life is over".

If you think that you see everything clearly, that you have heard everything that there is to be heard, that you really don't need the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to enlighten you then know this!

Jesus came for you. He knows the hardness of our hearts. He knows our self-righteousness, He knows our rebellious nature, this is why He keeps coming to us, gently calling us: "Dear child, listen to me, don't shut your ears, don't close your eyes, don't harden your heart, return to me, I want you to live.

I forgive you your arrogance, come and I will give you eternal life. Don't hesitate, don't feel guilty or ashamed for resisting me and despising me, I have come to restore you, to renew you, to bring you in the divine fellowship with me and with my family. Please, come and let me bless you!"

This is Jesus speaking to us. He wants us to see. And what a picture of the world He reveals to us! Once we are willing to listen to Him, He opens a new reality before our eyes. Remember, **this is our second topic for our reflection.**

It is like a dark veil is taken off and then we can see the brightness and beauty and colourfulness of what He gives us already now. He reveals that He is God who loves life and beauty and joy and bounty. He has created this world that is teeming with millions of species of living creatures.

He is not a distant God. He is close to us. Closer than we can imagine. If we are willing to respond to His invitation, He embraces us in the divine fellowship with Himself, He indwells in us, He unites us with Himself. This fellowship begins here and it will last and be fully manifested in the age to come.

So, yes, He loves us, He cares for us and He has created us as His emissaries, as His regents over His creation. Majestic, wise, designed for greatness, for magnificent responsibilities. That's all about you according to His design.

Unfortunately, after the Fall, we are also totally corrupt, wretched, soiled with sin, born in enmity with our gracious and loving Creator, stubborn, foolish, miserable. That is also true. But then, we are not forgotten or abandoned.

Instead, we are redeemed and rescued. We are purchased by paying the highest price, the life of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. His innocent sufferings and death have brought us a new and living hope, freedom from sin and death and blessed life in His very presence in the world to come.

But even now, He entrusts us magnificent responsibilities. He allows us to participate in the creation of new life, of new human beings, many of whom will populate New Heavens and New Earth. He allows us to take part in this incredible endeavour. As spouses, as parents. In those life-creating callings.

He also invites us to have loving dominion over His creation. Learning about it, exploring, discovering, working it and keeping it, serving our neighbours, delighting in beauty of creation, in art and music and poetry, filling us with satisfaction for mission faithfully fulfilled, blessing us with enriching and joyous relationships and so on and on. This is good, very good.

Even death, the greatest enemy of humanity – we see it differently. Jesus has freed us from the fear of death. For we know that our lives are in the hand of our Father in heaven. “In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.” (Ps 139:16)

So, we could say together with the apostle Paul: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.” (Phil 1:21) What for others is a terrifying jump into unknow, for us is like a changing room, where we leave our old and sin ridden bodies, just to put on new and perfect resurrected bodies. We know that when we leave this life behind, it will be our Lord and Brother Jesus Christ Himself who welcomes us.

So, yes, if we want to see our reality as Jesus reveals it to us through His Word, it is indeed beautiful. Which brings us to our last point. **The power that Jesus bestows on us.** Some may rightly remark that this all sounds nice and hopeful, but what can we do if our hearts want to steer us into a different direction.

Then we need to be reminded that Jesus is not a weakling; He is not just one more teacher. He doesn't just make a noise. He comes to us and speaks with the divine power. As He speaks, He sends His Spirit Creator to change reality.

When we open our ears, eyes and hearts, when we listen to Jesus, He fills us with His Spirit. The Spirit Creator indwells in you and He then works to create a new inner self, a new being, a new life. To listen to Jesus is not just about embracing some new ideas, learning some new perspective or principles for life.

We may like different good and wise ideas, but what can we do if our old, sinful nature hates those good things and craves something else. We can't change who we are. But Jesus can. He not only reveals us what is good and holy and beautiful, He makes you good and holy and beautiful.

He fills us with the power of the Holy Spirit, and then we too desire to love and delight in what He loves and what He delights in. Our new life begins, and where it will lead us, that surpasses anything we can imagine.

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.” (1 Cor 2:9)

Now, do you want to see it? Then listen and follow Jesus. Amen.