

OCTOBER 28, 2018

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 [JER 31:7-9](#)

Responsorial Psalm [PS 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6](#)

R. (3) The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Reading 2 [HEB 5:1-6](#)

Gospel [MK 10:46-52](#)

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you." He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

HOMILY:

Booker T. Washington, the former slave and educator of the Tuskegee Institute, was an advisor to American presidents and an advocate for his fellow African Americans in their quest to actually obtain the freedom that was declared by President Lincoln's *Emancipation Proclamation* of 1863. For an *Emancipation Proclamation* alone freedom did not make. In his book, *Up from Slavery*, Washington describes the scenes among the blacks on New Year's Eve of 1862, the eve of the proclamation of their freedom: "There was no sleep that night," he said. "All was excitement and expectancy. Early in the morning we were all sent for. The proclamation was read and we were told that we were free and could go when and where we pleased. ... There was great rejoicing, followed by wild scenes of ecstasy. But," he went on to say, "the wild rejoicing did not last long. By the time the colored people had returned to their cabins, there was a marked change in their feelings. The great responsibility of being free seemed to take possession of them. It was very much like suddenly turning a youth of ten or twelve out into the world to provide for himself. Within a few minutes the wild rejoicing ceased and a feeling of deep gloom seemed to pervade the slave quarters. Now that they were liberated, they found possession of freedom to be much more serious business than they had anticipated." Now that they were free, what would they choose?

Up from Slavery for Booker T. Washington—a journey from slavery to authentic freedom. Now—WHAT would he and his fellow slaves choose? The same journey *Up from Slavery* was also traveled by Bartimaeus, the blind beggar sitting beside the road in today's gospel, who too goes from the slavery of blindness, to authentic freedom. Bartimaeus' journey to authentic freedom is Washington's journey to freedom, and is our journey, each of us, to the authentic freedom for which we were created. With freedom, what will we choose?

As we can see in the figure of Bartimaeus, from Mark 10, Jesus has *created* us for freedom, has *desired to give* us freedom, and longs that we *choose* freedom. However, unless authentic freedom is chosen, it cannot by that fact be freedom. For though Bartimaeus is liberated from his blindness, he could go right back into slavery, unless he then chose the path to authentic freedom. What is this way to authentic freedom?

Bartimaeus cries out to Jesus, “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me!” Through this act of faith, Bartimaeus shows he wants to be free from the **slavery** that is blindness. Jesus asks him, “What do you want me to do for you?”, he replies, “Master, I want to see.” At the critical moment of his entire life, a dance of **authentic freedom** begins. After the healing, Jesus offers at first puzzling words, but words full of freedom: “Go *your* way; your faith has saved you.” Notice: with his new sight, Jesus invites Bartimaeus into full, authentic freedom by saying: “Go your way.” It is not, as we might expect: “Come, follow me” or “Come my way.” Instead, Jesus, who longs that each of his creation be free, says: “Go your way.” However, true, full, authentic freedom is chosen by Bartimaeus, not just because he can see, but because he can see “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). The gospel concludes with Bartimaeus’ first and full choice of authentic freedom: “Immediately he received his sight *and followed him on the way.*” The way: the particular and peculiar way that the early followers spoke of living the gospel of Jesus: The Way. In authentic freedom, Bartimaeus was on his way that was THE WAY. Freedom is authentic and complete not when we follow our own way, but the way that God has created for us to follow into the fullness of life.

The Way—His Way, is the way to authentic freedom for which we have been created and re-created in Christ.

We have gathered here today as God’s beloved children, created and re-created for authentic freedom. The challenging choice we have to face is this: do we want to follow our way or His Way that is The Way to authentic freedom and the fullness of life. Through *The Emancipation Proclamation*, Booker T. Washington and all African American slaves were offered freedom—but then they quickly discovered that with freedom came responsibility, and with responsibility comes a choice: follow one’s own way that often leads back into the slavery of sin, or The Way, His Way, that leads to authentic freedom and the fullness of life. We have been called to this freedom. Let us too rise up from **slavery** that is our ways (you know your story!) and take up the in the **authentic freedom** of the Way of Jesus that leads to the fullness of life. What HE would have us do is not a choice that leads us back into slavery, but a choice for authentic freedom This is the fullness of life for which we have been created. The choice, by God’s great mercy, is ours. Look, Jesus is coming to lead us on this way, The Way, His Way.