

30th Sunday of Ordinary Time (B)
October 25, 2009

“I want to see.”

There’s a story of two patients – John and Bill – sharing a hospital room with only one window in it.

The patient in the bed farthest from the window – John – unfortunately must lay on his back 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and cannot look anywhere but up at the ceiling.

The other patient, closer to the window – Bill – is freer and has the ability to sit up in bed and look around the room.

Over time, John and Bill begin talking with one another and developing a friendship.

They talk about family members, jobs, and all sorts of life experiences.

One day, John asks his friend Bill, “So, Bill, what’s outside of the window? What’s going on in the world outside of this hospital room? I’m curious if there’s still life outside of the hospital.”

Bill responds, “Oh, its magnificent! There’s a park right across the road with a small pond where ducks gather. People of all ages are always coming and going – walking their pets, playing on the swings and slides, and just walking around and enjoying one another’s company. It’s simply wonderful!”

Days go by and Bill continues to tell John all about the world outside of the hospital. He even tells him about parades, the change in weather, all the cars that go by, and even various billboard signs.

One morning, when John awoke, he found that Bill had died in his sleep.

After the body was taken out of the room John asked to be placed closer to the window.

The nurses had no problem doing this and so, they wheeled him next to the window, where Bill used to lay.

Once he was there, John couldn't wait till the day he got better and was able to look out of the window himself and see all the beautiful things that Bill had described to him over the past few weeks.

Eventually, that day came where John not only did get better, but also found himself with enough strength and energy to be able to sit up in bed.

Upon sitting up, with the help of the nurses, John was amazed at what he saw when he took his first glimpse out of the hospital window.

There, staring at him right in the face, not more than 10 feet away, was an ugly brick wall from the next building.

Obviously, John was a little upset and confused.

He immediately asked the nurses, “Where’s the park with the pond and the ducks? Where’s the people walking around and having fun? Where are the colorful billboard signs?”

The nurses were a bit confused themselves and asked John what he was talking about.

And so, John proceeded to tell them all about the wonderful things that Bill had described to him over the past few weeks.

After John was finished, the nurses sadly apologized to John and said, “We’re sorry sir. Bill couldn’t possibly have seen all those things. You see, Bill was blind.”

“I want to see.”

When Bartimaeus tells this to Jesus, he is speaking about the physical ability of seeing.

What he may not realize already though is that he’s able to see and has been able for quite some time.

But, the catch is that he’s able to see not with his eyes, but rather, with his heart.

Bill had this same ability.

He couldn’t see with his eyes. But, with his heart, he was able to see many, many of God’s wonderful creations and thus, bring joy to another person.

The irony of the Gospel though is that Jesus' apostles who were able to physically see, who were walking with him, listening to him speak, witnessing numerous miracles, and so forth, were not able to see Jesus as Bartimaeus was.

You see, Bartimaeus truly knew Jesus even without seeing him, seeing his miracles, or following him like the apostles.

The apostles, on the other hand, maybe had a hunch, but really didn't know Jesus even though they had been following him and listening to him preach for quite some time.

In fact, they won't truly know Jesus – like Bartimaeus knew Jesus – until after the resurrection when they see for themselves that he has risen from the dead.

And perhaps because of their lack of fully knowing Jesus, they try to dissuade Bartimaeus from approaching Jesus.

But, what does Jesus do – he calls forth Bartimaeus and by doing so, he illustrates once again that he came not for the healthy, but for the sick, the lame, and the downcast.

You would have thought the apostles would have learned this when Jesus welcomed children into his presence...but no.

And so, we have an illustration here of how little the apostles are able to see, especially see the Truth that is right in front of them.

God wants us to see this Truth that is Jesus Christ.

He knows that we long for it...we long for the ability to see, to see the right path that is laid before us, to see the right path that leads to Jesus Christ who alone can heal us and save us.

And because God knows that we long to see this, He calls out to us, inviting us back from the ends of the world and back home.

What will be our response?

When we hear those words, "Take courage and get up! Jesus is calling you!" how will we respond?

Will we throw off that which is holding us back, or will we remain stationary?

I think our answer depends on what do we want Jesus to do for us.