



## 14TH SUNDAY OF LUKE

January 23

### THE GOSPEL READING

**Luke 18:35-43**

[The Blind Man of Jericho Healed]

*At that time, as Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front 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 commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.*

### THE SERMON

As the Lord Jesus is on His last journey to Jerusalem, He passes by a city called Jericho, located near the Dead Sea. At that time, the city was in a region known for immorality and violence. Nonetheless, Jesus was about to take that road up to Jerusalem, where He would arrive on Palm Sunday. The miracle we read about in this Gospel was one of the last miracles Christ performed before His crucifixion. His encounter with a blind man teaches us about faith, restoration, and the mercy of God.

As Jesus approached Jericho, the blind man was sitting by the roadside begging,



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and hearing a large group passing by, he asked what the commotion was, and he was told, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” The blind man suffered from poverty and ostracization since there was no social care for blind people in that time and place. He could not work or provide for himself, so his physical disability left him with few options except to beg for a living. However, his physical blindness did not stop his spiritual insight from awakening nor the eyes of the soul from perceiving. When he heard that it was Jesus who was passing by, he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

The blind man had heard about the Lord and, with faith and hope, addressed Him as “Son of David,” which is a Messianic title. In other words, he addresses the Lord as the Messiah, the Anointed One who had come to save God’s people. When the blind man cries out, he is already making a statement of faith – first, by recognizing that Jesus is the Messiah, and secondly, by the very act of calling out to Him, since he believed Jesus could heal him. In this way – that is, with faith – he is already beginning to see spiritually, even while being physically blind.

The blind man also uses the words “have mercy on me” (ελέησον με in Greek), which are the same words we use in the Jesus Prayer, as well as throughout the many services and devotional prayers of the Church. With the Jesus Prayer, our hearts call out to the Lord constantly with the words, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!” (Κύριε Ιησού Χριστέ ελέησον με in Greek). As Saint Porphyrios says, “The soul is sanctified and purified through the study of the words of the Fathers, through the memorization of the psalms and of portions of Scripture, through the singing of hymns and the repetition of the Jesus Prayer.”

As the blind man cried out to the Lord, those who were walking in front of the crowd rebuked him, telling him to be silent, but he cried out even more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” The blind man not only had faith, but he also had *perseverance* and *conviction* – he did not give up even when others were telling him to be silent. There was a crowd, and no doubt, many voices, but Jesus stopped at the blind man’s cry from the heart. The Lord hears those who cry out to Him in genuine faith and love.

The exercise of our faith requires that we sincerely desire the Lord’s help and open ourselves to His love without hesitation. Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, “Faith is able to resist all and to triumph over all . . . The voice of one invoking in faith stops Christ, for He looks back upon them who call upon Him in faith.” In other words, the Lord does not ignore those who approach Him in faith.

With love and compassion, the Lord Jesus had the blind man brought to Him and asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus did not ask because He did not know, but rather, He was giving an opportunity for the blind man to put into words the greatest need of his life. The Lord always knows what we need before we even ask (Matthew 6:8), and yet because of His love for us, He wants us to come to Him in faith and ask freely. The Lord Jesus says, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and

it will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9), for “men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). The blind man made a *specific request* of his need with faith, and the Lord answered accordingly. The Lord wants us to ask freely that He might answer us in mercy. He interacts with us in a relational way – that is, in a *personal* way. This requires that we exercise our free will and come to Him in trust, as in all healthy relationships.

The blind man replied, “Lord, let me receive my sight.” He had already addressed Jesus as the Messiah, and now he addresses Him as “Lord,” that is, a title used for God. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, and He is God the Son. In faith, the blind man was already seeing things that eyes could not see. The Lord said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” Immediately the blind man received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God, and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. Notice how quickly the blind man is healed after Jesus says only *nine* words. How wonderful that a sincere, short prayer from the heart (a cry for help such as “have mercy on me”) is readily received and answered by the Lord. The disposition of our hearts is vital. Recall that the thief on the cross was the first to go to paradise and all he said was “remember me when You come into Your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). The Lord answered him because he asked in repentance and humility.

Even though the blind man was only one voice on the fringes of a crowd, the Lord saw his strong faith, hope, sincerity and responded in love and compassion. The blind man asked for mercy, and he received mercy. He asked to be healed, and the Lord opened the eyes of his body as He had already opened the eyes of his soul. He received his sight and followed Jesus, glorifying God, and when they saw it, all the people gave praise to God!

There is a progression in the story that teaches us how the love of God connects to our faith: first, in His grace, He opens the eyes of our hearts to see. Then, in faith, we present ourselves and our needs to Him, and He answers us in love. As a result, we *follow* Him and *glorify* Him. In this way, the Gospel is spread, as others come to see and rejoice in God’s mercy and give Him praise. May our hearts ever be filled with faith and longing for the mercy of the Lord, so that we may always rejoice and praise God.