Quinquagesima Sunday
West Henrietta - 1962

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IN NOMINE JESU

Luke 18: 37 And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!

JESUS OF NAZARETH PASSETH BY

It is an incontrovertible fact that a single happening may permanently change the tenor of a man's life. God's power is absolute! His ability to transform - to completely refashion and remold a man's ~~life~~ into an entirely new creation is an uncontestable ~~fact~~ truth! Perhaps the most notable instance of this is the conversion of St. Paul. While he was yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the church of Christ - he was suddenly met by Jesus on the Damascus road. From Saul the persecutor of Christ he became Paul the greatest of the apostle Others have had similar experiences. La Cordaire, the French scientist wrote: I was unbelieving in the evening and on the morrow I was a Christian, certain with an invincible certainty. Then there was St. Augustine. Tortured by doubts and fears because of his wayward, dissolute life, he lay on the grass in his garden at Milan, muttering: O Lord, how long? Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. Then, from within his own soul came a voice that said: Take up and read. Opening the Bible that lay beside him, he read a flaming page from St. Paul's letter to the Romans: Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wontonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. This is how he speak of the incident: I opened the book and read in silence the chapter on which my eye first fell. I cared to read no further, nor was there any need of it, since at once with the ending of the verse the light of security was passed into my heart, and all the gloom of hesitation fled away. It was the Damascus experience all over again. Later St. Augustine recalled what had happened to him, and he described it with these unforgettable words: With Thy calling and shouting Thou didst break my deafness; with Thy flashing and shining Thou didst scatter my blindness!

So Jesus continues to scatter blindness to the present day. Today's Gospel tells about a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. Day after day he sat ~~along~~ by the wayside ~~of~~ along the road leading into Jericho, begging for his livelihood. No doubt many of the passers-by stopped to chat with him as they dropped a coin or two into

his hand. I can well imagine that some of them spoke to him of Jesus. You ought to try to get up north to Galilee where there is a remarkable man by the name of Jesus, who is supposed to hail from Nazareth. They say that He heals both rich and poor, and without charging anything. They say He heals anybody, the blind, the deaf the lame, and the leprous, in fact, they even say that He has raised a man from the dead! Many believe that He is the Messiah. Bartimaeus would have liked to have gone up to Galilee to see this remarkable man. But how could he get there, he, a blind man?

Then one day it happened. He heard the noise of a great multitude down the road. Since he could see nothing, he asked what it was. He was promptly told, Jesus of Nazareth passeth by! This was his supreme opportunity, and he was determined not to let it slip through his fingers. He knew that if Jesus passed by, he might never have the opportunity again. So he cried out as loud as he could, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me! Many of the bystanders, annoyed at his shouting, told him to keep quiet. They tried to discourage him from seeking help from the Savior.

How often does it not happen that people are discouraged from going to church, reading their Bible, having their devotions, praying their prayers? Unbelievers are not friends of the Gospel. As soon as a man cries for mercy, there are plenty of voices to tell him to keep quiet. Unbelievers say, Keep quiet! Christianity is a delusion. Others say, Keep quiet! Don't sacrifice the joys of this life for a heaven you know nothing about. Sometimes friends and relatives, even the members of the family, say, Keep quiet! Don't let yourself be carried away by religion. You're becoming a fanatic. Surely, you don't plan on attending every Lenten Service?

Many in that crowd tried to silence Bartimaeus. But the more they tried to silence him, the more he cried out, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me! His blindness was <u>his</u> concern. The Bible says, The just shall live by <u>his</u> faith. You will never be saved by your mother's faith, your father's faith, your brother's

faith, your husband's faith, your wife's faith. You must believe for yourself. And no matter how many try to hinder you from accepting Christ as your Savior, no matter how many make fun of you for reading your Bible, going to church, living the Christian life, keep in mind that this is your concern and not theirs. Every man must stand before God and be judged individually. Then it matters not what others say, but what Jesus has to say!

The Savior stood still and commanded the blind man to be brought to Him. Let us keep in mind that Jesus was on the way to the Cross. Pointedly He had told His disciples, We go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on. And they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again. He knew the agony that He was about to suffer. He knew how His disciples would forsake Him. He knew how He would be scourged by the soldiers, spit upon, buffeted, crowned with thorns, and finally be nailed to the cursed cross. No doubt all of these things weighed heavily upon His mind and heart so that He heard little of the noise and tumult of the great throng that was accompanying Him. But there was one cry that He did hear. It was the cry of the blind beggar. So He stopped and ordered the sightless man to be brought to Him.

So it is today. Our Savior is not a dead Christ but a living Christ. His ear is still open. He is able to tell the difference between the insincere shouts of the crowd and the sincere cry of those who are in need. Although He is in the heavens surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels, He still has time for us. On one accasion a king was having a meeting with his parliament. He was speaking, and the government officials were hanging on his every word. But suddenly he stopped. He seemed to be listening to something. Far off in another room of the palace he heard the cry of his sick son. Excuse me, gentlemen, he said, and then went to the bedside of his boy. Although the affairs of the kingdom were important, he still had time, took time, made time to answer the cry of his child!

Our Savior, who is the King of Kings, has a ready ear to help us. In fact He encourages us to come to Him with our problems, our heartaches, our sorrows. Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, He says, and I will give you rest.

Looking at this blind beggar with eyes full of compassion, Jesus asked him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The man replied, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said, Receive thy sight! And Bartimaeus saw. And the first thing he saw was Jesus. He saw Jesus as His Savior, for Jesus said to him, Thy faith hath saved thee.

If you had been Bartimaeus, what would you have asked for? Would you ask for a large fortune so that you could live a life of ease, would you ask for power and prestige, for success, for strength and health. If you knew yourself as this blind beggar knew himself, you would cry out, Lord, heal me of my spiritual blindness, take away my sin, give me a strong faith, take me to heaven when I close my eyes in death. Without question, this is what everyone needs above everything else. And the beauty of it is that our Lord wants to give us these spiritual blessings. All too many, however, have not because they ask not. They ignore and are indifferent to the Savior's love and compassion.

A devout young woman was once asked what the ringing of the church bells on Sunday meant. Her answer was, Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Certainly this is the Call of Lent. Once more the disciples of Jesus are preparing to go up to Jerusalem to witness His passion - for us and for our salvation. The big question is, however, Will you be drown closer to the Cross and therefore closer to the Savior? Other Lenten seasons have come and gone and have left many indifferent people the same as they were before. Will it be so this year with you. Or will you experience the transforming power of God in having the shakels of darkness fall from your eyes so that you see Jesus as your Beautiful Savior? Remember when Jesus passed through Jericho, it was for the last time. He was never to be at Jericho again. If Bartimaeus did not get his sight then, he would be blind the rest of his life. And there comes a last time to every soul to possess itself of salvation. That gone, salvation is gone, and whose shall be the blame?