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“ RABBI, LET ME RECOVER MY SIGHT.” – Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

link video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5qWOI5nXdk>

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.

After Jesus' third and last announcement of his passion, of his destiny at Jerusalem there had been an troubled reaction of James and John that had not understood anything. Jesus had said clearly “in Jerusalem I will be killed” and they had asked for the places of honour. They have ears but do not hear, as Jesus had rebuked them, they have eyes but do not see. The evangelist Mark develops this blindness of the two disciples, in chapter 10, 46-52, with the episode of the blind man at Jericho. In Matthew's gospel there are two blind men, clearly representing the two disciples, here the blind man is alone, but the evangelist, Mark, makes us understand that it is James and John. Let's read what Mark writes for us.

“*And they came to Jericho.*” Jericho was the first city conquered by Jerusalem before entering the promised land. Now this promised land has transformed itself into a land of slavery and death from which we must exit and it is the city, Jerusalem where Jesus will find his death. “*And as he was leaving...*” the evangelist uses the same verb used in the Book of Exodus, therefore it is the liberation that Jesus does. “*...Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd*”, the crowd followed him. And here there is a person that is presented “*..Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus..*” it is the first time that the evangelist presents him in Greek and the second in Aramaic, why this ? Because he wants to make it clear that it is the two disciples James and John sons of Timaeus, "Timaeus" in Greek means "honour". In the sixth chapter in the episode of the synagogue of Nazareth where Jesus was not believed and was not accepted, he had said "No prophet is dishonoured" literally "if not in his homeland".

So, while Jesus is the dishonoured, the disciples look for honour. Well now, “son of Timaeus” then repeated in Aramaic, “Bar “ means “son”, Timaeus honour , it is the disciples that search for honour, and the evangelist doubles up to make it understood that it is James and John, “*.. a blind beggar,*” they have eyes but do not see. “*..was sitting by the roadside.*” The roadside is a technical

term that has already appeared in the fourth chapter to indicate the fruitless sowing of Jesus, when Jesus threw the seeds on hard ground and the birds came, the picture of the power, that takes away the message. “..beggar,” why a beggar? The ambitious and vain man is always forced to beg for those who hold power. The ambitious one is always forced to stay begging, always asking.

“*And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth,..*” the crowd believed that Jesus was a revolutionary come from these mountains where the fighters lived, the resistant to Roman oppression, “.. *he began to cry out..*” crying out exactly like the man possessed in the synagogue in Capernaum, “..*and say,*” and here is the reason for his blindness “ *Jesus, Son of David,..*” He does not see Jesus the son of God, with who for love communicates his life, but the son of David, like a great valiant warrior that, with a blood bath, inaugurated the kingdom of Israel by bringing together the tribes. “*Jesus, have mercy on me!*” *And many rebuked him,..*” they are the true followers of Jesus who scold him, shouting “..*telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David,..*” and this time Jesus’ name has disappeared, “*Son of David..*” he is the one who had to restore the monarchy, this is what James and John want to follow “..*have mercy on me!*”

Jesus does not go near the blind man, he stops. Therefore he gives him a possibility, but it is not Jesus that must go to the blind man it is the blind man that must go to Jesus “.. *and said, “Call him.*” Once again as for the twelve Jesus must call them, they are with him, but they do not follow him they are distant even if they are near physically. “*And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.” And throwing off his cloak...*” and here the process of conversion begins. The cloak means the person, throwing off the cloak means a break from the ideology that has made him blind. It is the moment of the conversion “ *And throwing off his cloak he sprang up and came to Jesus.*” Jesus did not go to the blind man, but the blind man who went to Jesus, “ *And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?”* Exactly what Jesus had asked James and John, when they had asked “ *What do you want me to do for you?*” The evangelist makes understood: attention, in this episode it is about James and John, the blind and deaf disciples. “*And the blind man said to him,*” here this time he does not call Jesus “son of David”, but “*Rabbi.*” Finally the disciples have understood who Jesus is.” So, he was not born blind, there was a period in which he saw the nationalist religious ideology that had blinded him, “..*let me recover my sight*”.

Jesus does not take any action on this blind man “*And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.*” The blind man’s reply to Jesus, to his message of love had changed his life and had saved him, Jesus had taken no action “*And immediately he recovered his sight...*” the evangelist underlines that he had seen before. The nationalist religious ideology of supremacy, of superiority, blinds people, racism, the exclusion of others, and finally “..*followed him...*” it is not along the road because along the road it is negative, it indicates the place of fruitless seeding. Here the evangelist writes “..*on the way.*” It is the way to Jerusalem, the passion and death of Jesus that also the disciples will accept.