

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Thus says the Lord:

“Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
‘Save, O Lord, your people,
the remnant of Israel.’

“See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them those who are blind and those who are lame,
those with child and those in labour, together;
a great company, they shall return here.

With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.”

Ephraim = EE-fra-in

PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Every high priest chosen from among men
is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf,
to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward,
since he himself is subject to weakness;
and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins
as well as for those of the people.

And one does not presume to take this honour,
but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.
So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest,
but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;
as he says also in another place,
“You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Aaron = EHR-uhn

Melchizedek = mel-KIZ-uh-dek

Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – 30 B

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

As Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho,
Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar,
was sitting by the roadside.

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth,
he began to shout out and say,

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Many sternly ordered him to be quiet,
but he cried out even more loudly,

“Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stood still and said,

“Call him here.”

And they called the blind man, saying to him,

“Take heart;

get up, he is calling you.”

So throwing off his cloak,

he sprang up and came to Jesus.

Then Jesus said to him,

“What do you want me to do for you?”

The blind man said to him,

“My teacher, let me see again.”

Jesus said to him,

“Go; your faith has made you well.”

Immediately he regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Jeremiah 31:7-9

This passage is part of the second of a series of four poems celebrating the return from the Babylonian Exile. These poems are obviously akin to Deutero-Isaiah, though their exact literary relationship to that work is uncertain.

Perhaps the four hymns are products of the Deutero-Isaianic school and somehow got attached to the prophecies of Jeremiah in an attempt to relieve that prophet's preoccupation with the decline and fall of the southern kingdom and the adjustment to life in exile.

However, Jeremiah was certainly hopeful of the eventual restoration of his people, as is indicated in his prophecy of the new covenant that comes later in chapter 31.

Like a similar hymn of the return in Isaiah 35, this hymn stresses the presence of the weak, the blind and the lame, nursing and pregnant mothers among those returning from exile. In pictorial language this underlines the *sola gratia* aspect of the return.

It is the mention of the blind here that doubtless influenced the choice of this passage to match the healing of the blind Bartimaeus in the gospel.

Responsorial Psalm: 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

It would be hard to find a more appropriate psalm to go with Jeremiah 31:7-9, for like that hymn it celebrates the return from Babylon, and indeed the contrast between sorrow and joy is the theme of both passages. It is a pity that the psalm does not say anything about the blind, though, for that would tie in with the gospel too.

Reading II: Hebrews 5:1-6

Slowly the author of Hebrews is preparing for the exposition of his great theological theme—the high priesthood of Christ. Except for the reading on the twenty-eighth Sunday, all our passages through today's are concerned to establish Jesus' qualifications for high priesthood. Here the following qualifications are spelled out:

- 1) Due appointment by God.
- 2) The selection of Christ from among human beings to act as their representative before God in offering sacrifices for sins.
- 3) Sympathy for the ignorant and the wayward (a repetition from our earlier readings).

The later part of our reading takes up the first point—appointment by God. Jesus was appointed as Son and high priest at his resurrection (Pss 2:7; 110:4).

Some may be surprised to see Ps 2:7 applied to the resurrection. It suggests an Adoptionist Christology (the heresy defined by a former colleague of mine as the view that Christ was a man who graduated in divinity with honors). But we are still moving within the orbit of Hebraic Christology, which is functional rather than metaphysical.

Psalm 2 originally celebrated the king's coronation. From that point Christ embarked upon the functions of kingship, that is, the functions of the Son of God. So it is at his exaltation that Christ embarks upon his messianic functions, which include that of high priest. Incidentally, this shows that Christ's high priestly work is performed in heaven and that Calvary is only the preliminary to it.

Gospel: Mark 10:35-45 (long form); 10:42-45 (short form)

Normally the tendency of the synoptic tradition is for unnamed figures to acquire names, a process that continues in Church tradition (for example, the naming of the three wise men). Here, however, the process is reversed. The earlier evangelist, Mark, names the blind man, while Matthew and Luke drop the name.

Bartimaeus must have been known later in the Christian community (at Jericho?) that first remembered and shaped the story. Probably he would have addressed Jesus simply as "Rabbi" (or "Rabbouni," v. 51; the RSV has "Master").

The post-Easter community would have used this story as a vehicle for its Davidic Christology by inserting the address "Son of David" (and is "have mercy on" liturgical?). Mark in turn received the story from the tradition, placed it here because of its geographical location (Jericho), and used it as a coda to his central section (8:22-10:45). That section thus ends as it had begun,—with the healing of a blind man.

This blind man follows Jesus in the "Way," a technical term for Christian discipleship. All this is part of Mark's answer to the "heresy that necessitated his Gospel" (the title of an important article by T. Weeden).

The true disciple is cured of Christological blindness—that is, of seeing in Jesus only the miracle-worker and not the suffering servant—and follows him in the Way of the cross.

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