

A Bible Bullet (aimed at the heart)

Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle B
Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52

If we as modern day believers can walk for a moment in the sandals of the Israelites of Jeremiah's time, I believe we can better understand the request of the blind man in Mark's Gospel as he asks Jesus to "...let him see again." There is the obvious understanding that Bartimaeus had at one time been able to see. When his sight is restored he naturally follows Jesus. Anyone who has become lost and suddenly finds the way, hurries to it and stays on it.

Jeremiah speaks to idolatrous, unfaithful Israel as they march off to Babylon as captives, their just desserts for infidelity to the one true God whom they replaced with pagan idols and pagan practices. Their kingdom had been destroyed and their Temple demolished. They were forced into a foreign land as slaves/servants of a foreign king. Their future is bleak. They cannot save themselves from the consequences of their actions.

It is at this moment that Yahweh speaks to his people through Jeremiah saying:

The Lord has delivered his people, the remnant of Israel. I will bring them back from the land of the north. I will gather them from the ends of the world, with the blind and the lame in their midst.

The mothers and those with child shall return an immense throng.

They departed in tears, but I will console them and guide them; I will lead them to brooks of water, on a level road, so that none shall stumble.

For I am a father to Israel, Ephraim is my first-born.

This last statement is an expression of God's faithful love. Ephraim was not only a large and powerful tribe of the twelve tribes of Israel. It was also a term for the geographical area inhabited by those belonging to that tribe. Due to its northern location, it had been one of the first to desire association and assimilation with the pagan powers that surrounded it.

The cost of discipleship is repeated repentance. The reward is repeated forgiveness and restoration. God's words of love have been echoed through all of history. The ancient words of Jeremiah speak to Israel, to the blind man of Jesus' day, and to us sinners who seek forgiveness, restoration and **healing celebration** over and over again.