

“Shame On Jesus”
Text: Luke 18:31-43
February 14, 2021

“Shame on you.” You ever have someone say that to you? It’s a terrible thing to say to someone, for it shifts shame from something bad to the person who did or said it. Shame can be a helpful tool, when it’s focused on something somebody did or said in an effort to help them not do or say it again. But when shame becomes personal, it’s not so helpful. To coin a phrase from best selling author John Bradshaw, shame can be toxic to one’s mental and emotional health.

One of the blessings of being a Christian is that we don’t have to take shame personally, because our Savior has already done that for us. For the Christian, it’s never “shame *on you*” but “shame *on Jesus*.” We see that from today’s Gospel, to which we now turn our attention ...

As we do, we hear again from St. Luke, who writes that:

“As Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him: ‘Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.’ And he cried out: ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’” (Luke 18:35-38)

Now, let’s take note of a few things ...

First, the blind man asked about what was going on as he *heard* the crowd going by. That was so because all he had to go on was his hearing, given that he couldn’t see. Also, note that he was seated by the roadside. That was so probably because Jericho (the town to which Jesus drew near) was near Jerusalem, and many people would’ve journeyed there along that road on their way to the Passover (which was drawing near at the time this took place). The blind man was seated by the roadside, begging, and that was also because of his blindness. Unlike in our world today, in Jesus’ day there really wasn’t any recourse for the blind to take care of themselves other than by begging. So you have a scene being portrayed in today’s Gospel that makes sense: someone who needs to beg is seated in a place where there would be a lot of people to beg from.

Begging was a rather shameful activity to engage in, and so it’s a bit remarkable that the blind man cries out when he hears that Jesus is approaching. I say it’s remarkable because, in crying out, he would’ve drawn attention to himself. I don’t know about you, but I never want to draw attention to myself when I feel ashamed; I usually turn my face away from others and hide. But Luke says, again, that the blind man:

“... *cried out*: ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’” (v.38)

Not only that, but when some people in the crowd rebuked the man, telling him to basically shut-up, Luke says that:

“... he cried out *all the more*: ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’” (v.39)

This shows incredible faith on the part of the blind man, faith that, in spite of his “shameful situation,” Jesus would take care of Him. A crowd of people said to this blind man, in a sense: “Shame on you!”, and he ignored them, taking his shame and his blindness, to Jesus.

Jesus did take care of the blind man, as Luke goes on to write that:

“Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he came near, (Jesus) asked him: ‘What do you want me to do for you?’” (vs. 40-41)

It might seem like a silly question that our Lord asked the blind man. After all, what did Jesus think the man wanted from Him? But when we consider that alms-giving was a way of showing mercy in Jesus’ day, we realize that the man could’ve been asking Jesus for money, or even food; after all, he was seated along the road for the purpose of begging. In response to Jesus’ question the blind man replied:

“Lord, let me recover my sight.” (v.42)

With that, Jesus restored the man’s sight, affirming his faith by saying:

“Regain your sight; your faith has made you well.” (v.42)

“Immediately,” Luke says, “he regained his sight.” (v.43)

A few items of interest regarding the blind man’s healing ...

- First of all, the man addressed Jesus as “Son of David,” and this shows that he had more than just faith in Jesus’ ability to restore his sight; he ultimately had faith in Jesus’ ability to restore him *to God*. He knew Jesus was the One promised ‘of old’ – in terms of today’s O.T. Lesson, about the anointing of David, he knew that Jesus was the One Who would sit on David’s throne to reign over God’s people forever.

- Not only that, but the translation of the Lectionary words it just as I read it to you: “your faith has *made you well*,” but the original text literally reads: “your faith has *SAVED you*.” That fits with the overall context of Luke’s Gospel, as in the narrative of this event Luke uses language that he uses throughout his Gospel to describe God’s acts of *salvation* for His people.

- And finally, in presenting the blind man as believing that Jesus was the “Son of David” and the bringer of salvation to God’s people, Luke shows that he was able to see *before he was able to see!* – able to see with the “eyes of faith” that Jesus was the One sent from God as the Savior of the world. This fits well with Luke’s emphasis, throughout his Gospel, on the eyes and sight, as he often illustrates faith in terms of being able to see. In telling us that the blind man cried out to Jesus the “Son of David” for mercy, Luke tells us that he trusted Jesus as the One sent from God to reign over the world *for good*. The blind man saw, in Jesus, His Savior.

We see too. In faith, we see Jesus as our Savior. In the first part of today’s Gospel Jesus predicts His death and resurrection, and that was the means by which He accomplished our salvation. With His death Jesus paid the price for our sin, and with His resurrection from the dead He provided us with hope, the hope of our own resurrection on the Last Day.

We mentioned earlier the concept of shame, that the blind man must’ve felt shame when begging, and that we too often feel shame about the things we do and say, and even about what we are. Well the book of Hebrews says that Jesus “endured the cross, *despising its shame*, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). That means that Jesus heard the words “shame on You” as He hung on the cross answering for our every sin. Jesus became shameful so that we wouldn’t have to be; Jesus became the very embodiment of shame to free us from it.

Knowing that enables us to see Jesus the way the blind man in today’s Gospel saw Him, leading us to cry out to Him, as the blind man did, in every time of need. With the blind man we cry out today to God for mercy, knowing that we are safe with Him, even when we’re ashamed. With the blind man we cry out today to God for help because, in Jesus, we are His, and He is ours. He is our Savior.

Which brings us back to where we began and our mention of shame. My dear friends in Christ, we’re all flawed; we’re all broken by the same thing that had broken the blind man, taking away his sight: sin. Of that we are ashamed. BUT by His Spirit God has given us faith to see in Jesus our restoration and salvation. On the Last Day of Jesus’ glorious return we will actually see all that is broken about us repaired and made new in “the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.” Nothing will ever again need to be ashamed of, because all our shame is on Jesus –

– in His ✕ Name,
Amen!