

HAPPY ENDINGS? believing is seeing...

Today's readings have happy endings. Job's fortunes are doubled from where he began. Bartimaeus never visits the optometrist again and the Hebrews have their great high priest. Job says to the Lord, 'Now my eye sees you...'. (Job 42: 5-6) Bart says to Jesus, 'My teacher, please let me see again.' Jesus says, 'Go, your faith has made you well.' (Mark 10: 51-52)

Bart is face to face with Jesus pleading for his sight. Job is eye to eye with God and must take a long look at his life and repent. Hebrews calls us to approach God – through Jesus Christ – that we may find salvation.

But the phrase, '... and they all lived happily ever after' is not real or Christian. It is the stuff of fairy tales. Our lives are complex and maybe they call for simple faith in essence. Bart simply wanted to see. He regained his sight and the record says that he followed Jesus 'in the way' - the way to the cross. We do not live in this life happily ever after; the trials remain and even intensify.

Amid all this Jesus asks us as he did Bart, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The answer may be obvious for some and harder to discern for others.

When Jesus asked his squabbling followers on route to Jerusalem, 'What do you want me to do?' They said, 'Let's sit alongside you – one on your right, the other on your left.' He cannot answer the request of the disciples because they are seeking self-aggrandizement and the power that goes with it. Jesus can help Bart because he understands the true nature of his condition – he is blind. That's simple faith in my book.

One of the last has become first, and those who might reasonably have thought themselves first – 'we have left everything and followed' – have become last.

Job essentially ended up where he started - that suffering is a mystery and that God is faithful. 'The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'. I love this sentence. It is not a fatalist saying for me but an acceptance that Jesus 'doeth all things well'. Job is liberated from self centredness and self justification, he is made stronger by his humanness, and he is freed to accept life on its own terms.'

The destitute, blind Bartimaeus had already travelled this path and knew that he accepted discipleship before it was even offered. When summoned by Jesus, the beggar leaves everything, springs up and comes to meet Jesus. He recognizes him as the Son of David and follows him immediately. Bart saw more clearly than the disciples, who were still blinded by their own aspirations for power and were therefore unable to understand what Jesus was really on about. With nothing to lose and everything to gain, Bart is free to be free while the disciples are left with their own misconceptions. It takes the resurrection of Jesus to give them real sight.

Our world is topsy-turvy as we cease to esteem integrity, honesty, loyalty etc. To choose to live life in the way of Jesus, despite what the worst systems throw at us, is to confess, with Job, that we have often agreed with those who misrepresent the truth (Job 42.3). We need to keep on resolving to intentionally align ourselves with the psalmist, 'though hardships without number beset the upright, the Lord rescues... from them all.' (Psalm 34.9) Two of the Bible's principal themes are restoration and renewal. We can count on our good God.

Happy endings sometimes occur by the grace of God. Unhappy endings are resolved in the next part of eternal life. 'Although we see through a glass darkly, or mirror darkly, we still can see with the eyes of faith and grace. But one day it will be face to face. Now we know only in part but then we will fully know even as fully as God knows us.' (1 Cor. 13: 12)

That is your and my ultimate happy ending; where having believed we see. In the meantime KNOW that we, you and I, are deeply loved by our Heavenly Father, Jesus God's Son and the blessed Holy Spirit who continue to create, renew and comfort.

Let us pause in silent prayer to take in God's love.

AMEN

Readings

Job 42: 1-6, 10-17
Psalm 34: 1-8
Hebrew 7: 23-28
Mark 10: 46-52



