

October 28, 2018 Born That Way: Looking Forward

First Reading ~ Mark: 10:46-52

They came to Jericho. As he 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 him on the way.

Second Reading

~ from Anne Lamott in *"Hallelujah Anyway: Rediscovering Mercy"*

There are many routes to living a merciful life in this mean and dangerous world; assorted ways to find and extend inclusion after lives of cheeky isolation; a number of walkways to awakening and gratitude. And there are two goat paths to the peace of self-forgiveness.

The first is to get cancer. All the people I've known who have received a terminal diagnosis have gotten serious about joy, forgiveness, simple pleasures— new green grass, massage, cherries, the summer's first peaches— and have been able to find good-enough peace toward people who did unforgivable damage to them and their families. They know they are going to die one of these days, but maybe not today, so they live, savor, rest, wake up kind of amazed.

The second is to fall in step with a teacher, briefly or forever, a real teacher who makes it clear that even as he or she points to the moon, we have got to stop staring at the person's fingers. If we want freedom from grudge, we will at times need wise counsel— teachers, with flashlights. Forgiving those who have betrayed a beloved, let alone forgiving one's own disappointing self, is grad school. Without these studies, we live so small. Every one of us sometimes needs a tour guide to remind us of how big and deep life is meant to be.

Mercy means that we no longer constantly judge everybody's large and tiny failures, foolish hearts, dubious convictions, and inevitable bad behavior. We will never do this perfectly, but how do we do it better? How do we try to hold people

we've encountered with the understanding of a wise, caring mother who has seen it all, knows that we all struggle, knows that on the inside we're as vulnerable as a colony of rabbits?

Sometimes when we cannot take it one more day, a mentor appears, one who knows things, and more important, knows that he or she does not know things. We want what that person has- a gentler way of seeing, a less rigid way of thinking, less certainty, more play.