

## Scripture Reading

### **A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew** (*Matthew 13:13-16*)

This is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

### Reflection – Two primary graces we need to beg God for every day

**What do you want Me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied (Luke 18:41).** As Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind beggar sitting on the roadside called out to Him to restore his eyesight. Bartimaeus knew he had a great impediment. He was willing to go to great lengths to restore his precious eyesight. Such was his great desire to get the help he needed that he ignored the admonishment of the crowd to keep quiet. Physical blindness, though a great physical handicap is not as damning as spiritual blindness is. There are different levels of spiritual blindness. At the first level, it is an inability to perceive the reality of the existence of God. God is very near to us, and can be found by those who seek Him in truth. *I have not said to Jacob's descendants, 'Seek Me in vain.'* (*Isaiah 45:19*). The second level refers to those who profess their faith in Christ but who have an inability or reluctance to see things of this world in relation to God and to eternity, an inability or reluctance to understand the truths of God in relation to everyday living. In other words, these people are Christians in name only. In this Gospel passage Christ is addressing primarily people on the second level.

**Due to spiritual blindness, Jesus the true Messiah was rejected by God's chosen people.** Jesus knows that the real enemy of the ancient Jews was not the cruel Romans that reigned over them but it was something deeper than that. It was their calloused heart, a condition of the heart that can only be cured by God. The scribes, the Jewish elders, the chief priests who rejected and plotted to kill Jesus were all well versed in religious knowledge. They knew about the prophesied coming of the Messiah, yet when He appeared in the flesh, they could not recognize Him. God-Man spoke to them but they could not recognize it was God. God-Man walked among them but they could not sense God's presence among them. God-Man suffered, shed real blood and died for them, yet they remained blind to this reality. How a curse spiritual blindness is!

**Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it (Proverbs 4:23).** The beatitudes (cf. Matthew 5:3-12) teach us concrete ways on how we can keep our heart pure and tender so that it will always be open to God and God's presence in others. We are to keep our primary focus not on ourselves or earthly things but things of heaven (first beatitude). In other words, God must always come first in our lives. We are to mourn for our sins and that of others (second beatitude). We are to remain humble (third beatitude). We are to thirst and hunger not for the things of this world but for righteousness (fourth beatitude). We are always to show mercy to those around us (fifth beatitude). We are to keep ourselves pure and chaste even in this impure world (sixth beatitude). We are to love peace and work for peace that comes from the truth (seventh beatitude). We are to persevere courageously in our faith and love of God even in the face of persecution and adversity (eighth beatitude). For every sincere endeavor to do what God asks of us, His immense blessings will accompany His graces which will give us all the supernatural help we need to walk in His ways.

**Conversation with Jesus:** Precious Lord, You agonized over the ancient Jews who failed to recognize You as their true Messiah when You came in the flesh in their midst. How Your heart must be broken by a people You came to save but who rejected You! Like Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, I call out earnestly to You to heal my spiritual blindness. Forgive all my sins of pride, selfishness, preoccupation with things or activities which bear no relation to my eternal salvation but which sap me of the time and energy which is needed to exercise my devotion to You. Purify my mind of all deception, untruths, all wrong way of thinking and anything which opposes holy truth. Flood my mind with God's light, God's truths, holy wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Give me the gift of discernment and all the graces I need to do Your holy will every day. Purify my heart so that it will always be open to receive the graces and inspirations of the Holy Spirit. May my eyes see what You want me to see, my ears hear what You want me to hear and my heart understand what You want me to understand. Mary, Mother of Salvation, intercede for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.