

## Godly Man

8 March 2010 - Lent Week 3

Psalm 42:1-7; 2 Kings 5:1-15b; Luke 4:23-30

On a cold, rainy morning last week I gathered with a local family who buried one of their own. He was a brother, brother-in-law and uncle. He was also an icon of homelessness in our community. Bobby, or Bob as he was known to many, was homeless his entire adult life, living on the streets and on grassy patches in Tenleytown for over 50 years.

What became apparent to us, as the few of us who attended his funeral gathered over lunch was that each of us had a unique impression of Bob. The funny thing is that the more time we spent time together - we discovered and rejoiced in who Bob was. Under the torn clothes, lay an extremely, bright person - a gifted artist and one who *also* had a stunningly beautiful singing voice - who could bring tears flowing readily from anyone who heard his rendition of "Somewhere over the Rainbow." His family was also surprised he was remembered by others as someone who carried himself with an air of dignity, gentleness, and graciousness that defied his outward appearance. When in the last few years of his life he would be teased by his good-natured legal guardian and friend to stop doing this or that - he'd reply - "oh no, that's alright, I'm a Godly man."

I believe that statement with all of my heart.

First impressions of people and situations, our daily snap judgments, are indeed, many times, deceiving. It sometimes takes someone to shake us up to help us see things in a new way.

### Let's take today's lessons...

Many times, we desire (our saviors and) leaders to match our expectations and to *fix it* and *deliver it*, NOW! A few lines earlier in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is speaking with authority and proclaiming he's the anointed one to bring sight to the blind and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, among other things. After hearing this, people are dumbfounded, amazed then uneasy and getting angry.

Perhaps Jesus is referring to this schizophrenic reaction when he cites the proverb "Doctor, cure yourself!" It's indeed difficult to accept the light of Christ in ourselves and in others. He's certainly a different kind of savior than they were looking for, one with a new message too. This guy just doesn't fit the bill - they want a terminator-like messiah. One who will lead them from oppression with the might of the sword. Instead, they see an unlikely homeboy, clearly crazy who says he's anointed by God - who's willing to heal even Gentiles like Naaman the Syrian were he alive today!

Are we much different, now? We want our leaders to cure what's ailing us right now, to show us the proof and meet our expectations. What we might be missing, in pushing for the quick *cure* - is what we might be longing for in our own lives - *healing*. We always want something more, and when we don't get it we get angry quickly. Doesn't it seem like yesterday, during Christmastide and Epiphany, we were celebrating the light of Christ breaking through in our hearts? Now it's as if we're schizophrenics - from one minute the Hosannas ringing in our heads on Palm Sunday - replacing them with the crescendo of "crucify him!" the next.

So many of us wanted Bob to be cured of his homelessness - why he was even offered an apartment! He quietly and graciously turned this offer down to return to a life passing us in our midst - living on his own terms - with the help of our community.

As we shared a meal and stories to remember and mourn Bob *together*, we began to understand things in a *different way* and to see to him in a *different light*. Around the table, our newly formed, makeshift, motley community with a homeless man at our center, we received a taste of what we were longing for all along.

*Let us pray. Gracious and Merciful Father, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you — welcome your son, Robert, home and give strength and comfort to those who mourn him.*

*We also ask that you grant us the awareness to recognize the beauty and grace that surrounds us and peeks at us from the most unlikely places. All honor and praise be yours Almighty Father forever, Amen.*

Ben Bradburn