

As I'm sure you have noticed, there are people just outside our doors and across the street who are having a grand old time playing something called pickleball, and I've been here for eight years and I have no idea what pickleball is, and I have no desire to know.

And I have seen them literally thousands of times and each time I can hear them talking and laughing and, to be totally honest, it used to drive me crazy. And even more, I would resent them and even be angry at them. Why? Because I would see them as I was going into the parish center to go to my office and I would be stressed out to the max, with a thousand and one things to do- and many of these things I put on myself to do- and I would hear them having such a good time and I would think to myself: *That must be nice to have nothing to do and nothing to take care of so that you can play pickleball all day and all night.* And as I said, I would resent them for even being there and my heart was cold toward them. Which is not a good thing for a minister's heart to be, or anyone else's heart for that matter.

And you thought I was a nice guy. Well, now you know...

It was only when one day- and this was not too long ago- I caught myself beginning to feel that anger and that resentment that I knew that this was silly- this was not the way to feel about these poor souls who just want to have a good time and who probably work just as hard as me, but who have the common sense to take a break once in a while and have some exercise and enjoy the fresh air.

And so I prayed to the Lord- I said "*Lord, I want to see as you see*"- meaning help me to see these people in a new way and in a new light, to see them as He sees them- not through the lens of jealousy and resentment, but through the lens of compassion and empathy and gratitude

that people are happy and know how to enjoy themselves in a healthy way. In other words, asking God to help me to see the world as He sees it, and even more to see with His eyes.

To see something is not necessarily to know what the reality actually is. What we think we see is sometimes simply what we want to see, and sometimes that means not seeing other things in the process. For example, take a look at the disciples of Jesus. They just don't get it- they want security and power and prestige and authority- they don't want to serve, they want to be served, and they want the glory of being in Jesus' kingdom but they don't want the persecution that Jesus promises them will come right along with it. At one level, they see better than most because they are constantly with Jesus, but at another level, they are blind and cannot see at all.

The disciples were present at the healings of Jesus and some of them were present at his Transfiguration in glory, and they were all witnesses to the response of the people to Jesus, but they were failures in their ability to have faith and to thereby see the truth. They will later on come to a greater understanding and insight into just who this Jesus is, but it will take the tragedy of the cross to shake them up and it will take the coming of the Spirit to empower them to finally fully and clearly see and to finally proclaim the truth.

But it is Bartimaeus, this blind beggar who was seen as nothing and was treated as such- Bartimaeus is a better disciple than all of them. Bartimaeus is the one who will not give up asking for what he knows is good for him. He knew what he wanted from Jesus and so was not deterred by the insults of the crowd- the opposition he received just made him more persistent than ever in calling out for Jesus.

And the faith of Bartimaeus- patient, trusting, steadfast, hopeful- brought him healing and helped him to see things as they are. He became a disciple and he participated in Jesus' ministry of healing and reconciliation, of making present the Kingdom of God. In other words, his faith helped him to see the truth.

If we want to see the truth- and why would you not- you begin by acknowledging that we don't always see the world and every person in it as they actually are. We can own up to the biases that we all have and we can admit that we all have agendas that we try to put forward. We can admit that we're not perfect and we can begin to see ourselves and everyone else for who they are and for who we are- frail and imperfect human beings who sometimes fall yet are unconditionally loved by God and will never be given up on by God.

It's not easy because it means being humble and being able to admit that we're sometimes wrong about things. But to see things as God sees them is infinitely more positive than the way that we have trained ourselves to see things, and what has that done for us than to just make us grumpy and unhappy and never satisfied? Just get over yourself and admit that you sometimes see things from a dysfunctional place, and say to God "*Lord, I want to see*" and trust me, you'll see things you'd never thought you'd see.

You'll see with God's eyes and then you'll love the world with the love that God has for the world, and you'll love every person in the world, even those who play pickleball, whatever that is.