



The Reverend Emily Williams Guffey, Rector  
Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost  
October 24, 2021

Readings: Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 7:23-28  
Psalm 126  
Gospel: Mark 10:46-52

Good morning and welcome...and welcome...and welcome *back* to those of you who have returned from sojourns near and far. It is wonderful to see you and to be here together.

My heart said to me this morning as I was waking up, the words "*Ask for what you need. Ask for what you need.*"

These were very welcome words with which to wake up, for though a preacher likes to be settled with the Word in advance of Sunday morning, the Word of God, living and active like a double-edged sword, does not always let a preacher have that type of rest and peace.

And I'll tell you that last night was one of those nights where I found myself continuing and continuing to wrestle with those words that we just heard.

*"What do you want me to do for you?"*...Jesus' question to Bartimaeus and to me and to us.

And I think that question continued to keep me up last night, and in the days earlier this week, because, while the question may have some straightforward answers, Jesus is always looking into our hearts, bending us to go and speak more deeply and honestly than we would immediately or even to ourselves.

So time and time again this past week, Jesus kept asking me, "*What do you want me to do for you?*"

At first I thought, well, Jesus that's a long list. What *don't* I want you to do for me?

But he persisted.

*What do you want me to do for you?*

*What do you want me to do for you?*

*What do you want me to do for you such that...your joy may be complete?*

Joy. Joy!

These days I admit that my heart was wrestling. Where is joy now? Can we even ask for joy...amid all of the burdens and restrictions and losses of our life?

Can we ask for joy?

The story Mark made today is often considered one of healing. And it is. It is more than that. It is a call to joy.

Jesus asks Bartimaeus who has been blind, "*What do you want me to do for you?*"

The response is in some ways predictable. The man without physical sight asks to regain sight. But don't you think it is more than just physical sight? When Bartimaeus says, "*My teacher, let me see again,*" I hear in that yearning not only to see physically but to see himself, his whole life, his identity.

Let me see again.  
Let me live *fully* again.  
Let me be *joyful* again.  
Let me *dream* again...

That is what I hear in his words.

Let me *dream* again.

For when his eyes are opened, he does not stay where he is, does he? But he *follows* Jesus along the way.

This Gospel passage is the last one in Mark's gospel before Jesus heads to Jerusalem...where ultimately Jesus will shed his cloak, shed his physical body...for what? For life, for *full* life, for the *completion* of joy.

And Bartimaeus, having *sensed* Jesus, having *heard* Jesus, and now *seeing* Jesus face to face, goes on his way...following.

Not only his identity, not only his life and being but also his trajectory, his life path, utterly changed...by the vividness and the fullness with which he has now beheld and with which he can now behold another.

I was quite moved to hear from Richard as he crafted the floral icon for today based on this Gospel passage...the vividness of the oranges and purples, the exuberance of it...is like what it means like to regain sight, to gain sight, of which one only heard or smelled or sensed, but to now to see it face to face.

How full!  
How joy-full!

I found my heart asking, “*Lord, I need that joy! I need that joy, too. I need that promise of life and our life together and my life becoming full and exuberant and connected again.*”

Lord, I ask you for joy.

I ask you for the joy of friendship, of friends I *long* to see and have not seen for so long.

I long for the joy of feeling connected to purpose and goals and dreams.

Then, say the people of the Psalm, then were we like those who dream. Then were our mouths filled with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy.

And we must remember that this Psalm comes to us from the people of Israel when they were in exile, displaced from laughter and joy and place and dreams and food and comfort and purpose. Apart from all of those things, they remembered that it was their Lord who would lead them back to their dreams and their joy and their purpose and their connection.

What we ask the Lord for we must also be willing...to *make* happen.

Jesus assures us that what we ask for we will receive: “*Ask and it shall be given to you. Ask for what you need.*” Yet our Jesus is no candy dispenser, is he?

Our Jesus, our God is one of love and relationship...our lives together, long for our *mutual* joy.

Bartimaeus had no material possessions beyond the cloak that provided him shelter, warmth, comfort, a place to sleep...his cloak that he would open along the road as a musician might open their guitar or violin case to ask and collect the resources of other, that was *all* that he had. And yet, even that, in conversations with Jesus in pursuit of joy and dreams and fullness, Bartimaeus lets even *that* go...should it get in his way...of the completion of his joy.

My Friends, we have shed and lost so much.

Perhaps we are now poised to *embrace* the joy that Jesus opens for us.

Perhaps though we feel isolated and burdened, perhaps we already are quite at the road for a *great* journey with Jesus.

Perhaps Jesus is ready to give us that joy and let us *dream* again.

What can Jesus *do* for *you*?

And what can *you* do to *meet* Jesus along the road toward that transformation?

Ask for what you need...and it shall be given to you.