

Worship Service for October 24th: 22nd Sunday after Pentecost - Students & Colleges Sunday (Next Sunday is Food bank Sunday).

- **Old Testament:** Job 42:1-6, 10-17
- **New Testament:** Mark 10:46-52
- **Psalms:** Psalm 126

Announcements:

- **Sunday October 31st:** Food Bank Sunday
- **Wednesday November 3rd:** Bible Studies Acts 1 in St. George's P. C at 7pm.

Sermon Title: What Do You Want Me To Do For You?

What Do You Want Me To Do For You? Each time I read these words when Jesus is talking to someone, I always ask myself that if God were to appear to me and ask me "what do you want me to do for you? What will be my response? I have a long list of needs and wants and even emergencies but I'm wondering to myself, would I get the answer right? Is there even a right answer to this question?...

In the Old Testament, King Solomon had an encounter with God and God asked Him the same question. We are told in 2 Chronicles 1:1-12 that after gathering the entire nation of Israel and offering sacrifices to God, God showed up and asked Solomon what he wanted, and Solomon asked for wisdom to rule the people well. God was impressed with his selflessness and blessed him not only with wisdom but also with wealth and riches.

When we look at this passage, we see God commending Solomon for not asking for something that will benefit him as an individual but for something that will help his people and his nation. And God assures that him that because his request was not a selfish one, He would not only give him the wisdom that he needed to govern the people, He God would also give him wealth and riches and fame such as no other king had ever experienced.

This always made me worry about if I would give God the right response if asked such a question. "What do you want me to do for you?" Coming from man such a question will not bother us too much because all we need do is look at who is asking us the question and assess what they can actually do for us before making our request. But coming from God, that is a blank cheque, and it could drive us crazy only thinking of what answer we would give. I remember one time I even went as far as writing down all those things that I thought I needed and maybe even wanted

in my life in case God asked me the question so that I would not leave out anything. I mean, you don't want to be given such a blank cheque and then remember things later that you should have asked right? But my greatest worry was not missing out something but making the right request to God as Solomon did.

Our passage this morning tells us a different story from that of Solomon. Jesus Christ is still on his way to Jerusalem as we have encountered for the past few weeks. And as always, there is a large crowd following him. This time around, we don't see the disciples misbehaving and Jesus having to correct and teach them. Jesus has an interaction with a blind beggar, one that leaves the blind beggar seeing again.

When this man hears that Jesus is around the area, he starts crying out "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." This is a blind man so we can of course understand why he would be screaming in a large crowd – he can't tell what direction Jesus is. The only solution is to attract Jesus' attention. And he did. Even when people tried to hush him down, to silence him, to shut him down, he shouted even louder. And when he came to Jesus, Jesus asked him the question "what do you want me to do for you?"

Jesus is asking us that question today? He is asking you as an individual and asking us as a church – "what would you have me do for you today? Blind Bartimaeus asked that Jesus give him back his sight and it was done. What would you have Jesus do for you today? Jesus is coming to us this morning with a blank cheque and giving us permission to make our requests known to him. He is not expecting our request to be like that of King Solomon. King Solomon had requested for what will help him as the king of Israel.

What do you want Jesus to do for you today? There are a few things that are noteworthy about Bartimaeus' interaction with Jesus that we need to ponder on for ourselves. Bartimaeus was a blind man and so he had heard and not seen the miracles that Jesus had performed. Yet he believed with all his heart that Jesus could heal him. What can we learn from his encounter with Jesus?

- Bartimaeus addressed Jesus directly and by name showing that he knew who he was seeking help from. He was specific that it was to Jesus, the Son of David. By acknowledging that he was the Son of David, he was declaring Jesus

as the Messiah, the One who had come to save. Do we truly know our Saviour and our Lord?

- Bartimaeus didn't blame anyone for his blindness. He didn't accuse God of making him to be blind and wondering "why him?" He took his situation in stride, did what he could to survive by begging and when the opportunity arose, he called on Jesus with all his heart.
- Even when he was hushed by the people, Bartimaeus shouted even louder because he knew that his salvation would come through Jesus alone. He didn't back down – he didn't shout once and stop. He shouted until Jesus heard him. He was confident and persistent in making his request known to Jesus.
- Bartimaeus cried out for mercy, confessing his need for God's grace. Sometimes that is the healing that we need.
- Bartimaeus had strong faith and he proved it in his reaction when he was called by Jesus. He threw his cloak, jumps up and runs, probably with the help of those around him to meet Jesus.

When reading the story of Bartimaeus, we might take it with a pinch of salt, as I have sometimes done. Probably because I was thinking of all the requests that I have brought before God that are still unanswered. Is this passage telling us that all our requests would be answered? No. It is there to give us hope that we serve a God who is compassionate and who would pay attention to a blind beggar that is hushed by others because they see him as unimportant, as just a blind beggar. The passage is there to let us know that even when the world rejects us, despises us, silences us, or undermines us, we have a Saviour who loved every one of us equally and unconditionally and who even though heading to die for our salvation, will stop and pay us attention.

We will sometimes go through challenges and God's response is going to be the same one he gave to the apostle Paul when he was suffering from a thorn in his flesh. God's response just might be that His grace is sufficient for us, for His power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). Jesus Christ suffered, was crucified and was buried and even though he resurrected, he had scars. And those scars where his prove that fulfilled God's purpose on the earth. Let us never forget that the devil has come to kill, to still and to destroy and because of that we are sometimes going to go through unexplained pain and suffering.

However, God remains faithful in all His ways and we can have hope and faith in Christ because he came to give us life and life in abundance. That abundance of life will be experienced in eternity. May we learn from Bartimaeus to never stop crying out to God. Yes, it ended well for Job and Bartimaeus, but that is only the part of their life that was narrated in these stories. We don't know any other thing that happened in their lives. And if we want to go by the stories of Abraham, Noah, David and many others, they still faced challenges but their faith in God kept them going.

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as the confidence in what we hope for and the assurance about what we do not see. And in verse 13 of the same chapter, it says of the people that were commended for their faith that "all these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. We will not receive everything that God has promised in His Word, but we continue to live in hope because some of those things will be seen by our children.

No matter what happens let us remember to cry out to God as Bartimaeus did. It is only when he cried out to God that he experienced his grace. God is asking you and I today – what do you want me to do for you? Do not keep silent, do not be afraid of being silenced by others. Cry out and ask for his mercy which endures for ever. Amen.

Prayer

God of life, You open our eyes on the world you love and show us your presence and purpose all around us. We see the beauty and wonder of your creation in autumn changes, and in gifts of love and compassion offered through friend and stranger. For these many gifts, we give you thanks. We pray for those who cannot recognize these gifts in their lives and find themselves lost and alone. Open their eyes to your presence through our companionship and our eyes for opportunities to reach out with understanding.

God our Saviour, Lord Jesus Christ, teacher and healer, you heard the cry of the blind beggar when others would have silenced him. Teach us to be persistent in prayer and give us courage to ask plainly what we need from you, that we might respond in your name by the power of the Spirit through the ministry entrusted to

us. Teach us to be attentive to the voices others ignore, that we might respond through the power of the Holy Spirit to heal the afflicted and to welcome the abandoned for your sake and the sake of the gospel.

God of justice, You open our eyes on the world and show us struggle and conflict. We see the stressful times in which we live and the burdens many are carrying; Today, we pray for those whose businesses are still struggling as the pandemic stretches on; For producers unsure their harvests will be sufficient this season; For workers uncertain about their jobs or looking for new work; And for families carrying the stress of economic uncertainty. Open their eyes to new possibilities and open our eyes to ways we can support them.

God of compassion, You open our eyes on the world and show us suffering and despair. We see the challenges for health care across our country and around the world. We pray for nurses, doctors, hospital staff and home-care workers, so weary and worried, for those facing acute or chronic illness, and delays in needed treatments, and for communities struggling with COVID-19, overdose deaths and mental health challenges. Give strength and compassion to all who offer treatment and courage and hope to all who wait for healing. Open their eyes to your mercy and open our eyes to needs we can meet.

God of wisdom, You open our eyes on the world and show us its complexities. We see countries locked in old animosities and communities overwhelmed by anger and upheaval. We pray for the millions displaced by current conflicts and natural disasters and for leaders everywhere, trying to find solutions to complex problems. Open the eyes of those who lead to recognize the suffering among their peoples and open our eyes to ways we can participate in solutions.

Good and gracious God, we bring our offering in gratitude for all that makes our lives good, even in uncertain times. Bless these gifts with your Spirit and use them through the ministry and mission of our church to touch lives in need of your goodness, in Jesus' name.

God of hope, we offer you our prayers, longing for your peace and promise to break into the lives we care about, in the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. Go in the peace of Christ. Amen.