

What do you want me to do for you?

[Hebrews 7:23-28](#)

[Mark 10:46-52](#)

Sometimes we get confused between Jesus and Aladdin's genie. We hear Jesus' words "What do you want me to do for you?" and we think of the genie - we think it's an offer to make us rich and famous. We think that all we have to do is ask for a better job or more money or world peace and it'll magically appear.

Today's gospel reading about blind Bartimaeus is a bookend with the story of the blind man whom he healed in Bethsaida. In between those two stories of physical blindness we have the three accounts of Jesus telling the disciples about his death and resurrection with them not being able to see what he's talking about. Mark emphasizes their spiritual blindness by telling us about people who have physical blindness. By calling him Son of David, Bartimaeus makes it very clear that he knows Jesus is the Messiah. Yes he wants physical sight, but he already has inner sight.

And once he has physical sight, he is able to follow Jesus "on the way." The early church called Christianity the way, so Bartimaeus is not just among the crowd following Jesus on the road he's taking to Jerusalem, but becomes one of his disciples. His healing has touched and transformed him at a deep level.

I've told you before about my friend who said, "I'll believe in God when he answers my prayers." It doesn't work that way. Often our prayers are answered with something that we need more deeply than the thing we think we want. This is one of the very big differences between God and the Genie of Aladdin's lamp. The genie can only give three wishes in the way that they are asked which of course can lead to great comic confusion. God responds to our prayers in quite a different way - in a way that will lead us to our greatest fullness of life - in a way that will help to set us "on the way."

Jesus says to each one of us today, "What do you want me to do for you?" "What do you want me to do for you?"

What is the longing of your heart? What do you want Jesus to do for you today? This is a very intimate question. It is one that can lead us into deeper and deeper relationship with God. We too can have our eyes opened. We too can follow Jesus on the way to abundant fullness of life. What is the healing that you seek?

The writer of our second reading from the Epistle to the Hebrews is making an extended commentary on Jesus' work, using the imagery of the temple and the priesthood which was integral to the Judaic religion. He or she tells us that Jesus always lives to make intercession for us. Jesus takes our prayers, our desires, our hopes and our fears to the Godhead.

What do you want Jesus to do for you today?

Whatever healing we receive will always lead us into better relationship with God, with our neighbor and with our environment. It may not always seem that way at the time because healing brings change. And change can be painful. Bartimaeus had probably been begging in the same place for quite a while. He probably had friends, people who called out to him as they passed or shared their food with him. He left them behind. Those relationships were radically changed, even severed, by his following Jesus. It may have seemed to some of them that his getting his sight was a bad and disruptive thing.

We can't always see what is happening until it's happened. Then we can look back and see that the hand of God was truly with us. Healing can require the trust and faith that everything is ultimately working together for blessing to those who are enrolled in the reign of God. Even when the bad stuff happens.

Because prayer and healing happen in relationship, it isn't just a one way street. To paraphrase JFK, "Ask not what your God can do for you, but what you can do for your God."

The Collect for Peace describes God as one "whose service is perfect freedom." It's difficult for us to get our heads around the idea that to serve someone is the same as being free. But that's part of the paradox of the spiritual life. Our healing comes in serving God and one another because that is what we were created to do and at the same time it comes in allowing ourselves to be served by God and each other.

So at the same time as we answer Jesus' question, "What do you want me to do for you?" with the deepest longing of our heart, we ask the very same question back, "What do you want me to do for you?"

This is an astonishing aspect of the relationship that God calls us to. It is a relationship of mutual reciprocity. It is not just us serving God. It is not just God answering our prayers. It is much deeper and richer. It is like the Trinity's mutual dance of love and joy and praise. We are offered a relationship of mutuality with the living God. It doesn't get much better than that.

We are called to be co-creators and co-healers with God. We are called to work for not just our own healing, but the healing of our neighbor and the healing of the planet, indeed of the cosmos. For true healing is reconciliation with God, true healing is finding our right relationship with all beings, taking the place that God has prepared for us from the beginning of time.

If that is indeed our calling, then what we do and how we live really matters. Even the little things matter. Finding ways to live in right relationship is sometimes complex, but often simple. It starts with looking after our bodies and our homes, but it doesn't end there. It continues through the relationships we have with those whose lives touch ours in small ways – the checker at the market, the mail carrier, the person who walks their dog past our house, and so on. Each of these seemingly little things matter because they are part of the blessing that we have to offer.

As we come to the table together today asking for God's blessing, we do not come alone. We bring with us every person and being who is in the web of relationship with us. We bring with us the people and birds and critters who live around us and all whom they are in relationship with, and we bring with us those who are geographically far away, those who are fighting in Syria and

Iraq, those who have been taken captive, those who are in pain. All of them. Because in the great web of life we are interconnected.

Because of our interconnection and because of God's interconnection with all beings, as we come to God asking for the deepest longing of our hearts to be met, we are asking on behalf of all beings. We are joining with Jesus in his work of intercession. We come in service to God as we make our gift – our gift of praise and thanksgiving – and as we do so, we offer a blessing to all life.

So as we continue with our work of making liturgy together this morning, let us ask God to meet our needs and the needs of others even as we ask in return, “Holy One, what do you want me to do for you?”