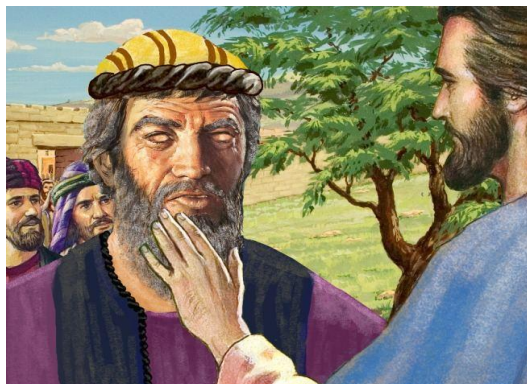


October 24, 2021 – 10:00 am
22th Sunday after Pentecost



“Teacher, I want to see.”

Mark 10:51

**ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

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***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

God is gathering us from many different places.
No one is worthy, but all are invited.

God lifts us up when we stumble and leads us back.

God cares for us amid our pain and losses.

We are delivered from our fears and saved from
trouble.

Happy are those who take refuge in a loving God.

Our lips pour forth laughter and joyous singing.

We join in shouts of praise to God Most High.

Taste and see how good God is.

Trust in the One who awakens joy in place of tears.

We will bless our God in all times and places.

Let us exalt God’s name together!

***RESPONSIVE INVOCATION:**

All-powerful God, we invoke your presence among
us, for we need the knowledge and energy you alone
can provide. Your ways are wonderful beyond our
understanding.

**When our strength is spent, our vision clouded, and
our hope gone, you reach out to us in ways we often
fail to discern.**

We take heart to think that you are calling us to
yourself, opening our eyes to see your wonders as if
for the first time.

We want to be a part of your faithful remnant in a world that too often loses sight of the holy.

Help us, we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Hebrews 7:23-28

(The author of Hebrews is telling his audience that Jesus is better than any priest. When we see the word “he”, we can substitute the word “Jesus”.)

²³ The others who became priests are numerous because death prevented them from continuing to serve. ²⁴ In contrast, he holds the office of priest permanently because he continues to serve forever. ²⁵ This is why he can completely save those who are approaching God through him, because he always lives to speak with God for them.

²⁶ It's appropriate for us to have this kind of high priest: holy, innocent, incorrupt, separate from sinners, and raised high above the heavens. ²⁷ He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day like the other high priests, first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people. He did this once for all when he offered himself. ²⁸ The Law appoints people who are prone to weakness as high priests, but the content of the solemn pledge, which came after the

Law, appointed a Son who has been made perfect forever.

GOSPEL: Mark 10:46-52

⁴⁶ Jesus and his followers came into Jericho. As Jesus was leaving Jericho, together with his disciples and a sizable crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, Timaeus' son, was sitting beside the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was there, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, show me mercy!”

⁴⁸ Many scolded him, telling him to be quiet, but he shouted even louder, “Son of David, show me mercy!”

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him forward.” They called the blind man, “Be encouraged! Get up! He's calling you.”

⁵⁰ Throwing his coat to the side, he jumped up and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

The blind man said, “Teacher, I want to see.”

⁵² Jesus said, “Go, your faith has healed you.” At once he was able to see, and he began to follow Jesus on the way. May the ancient words speak to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: “Who Decides Who is Worthy?”

Here we are on another dusty road. Remind me to get a new pair of sandals when we get to Jerusalem. We’ve walked so many miles in the last three years, my sandals have falling apart. Some of the men are walking barefoot, mostly the fishermen. I’m not fond of going barefoot. That’s for children and those who can’t afford some kind of footwear.

My name is Matthias. I was baptized by John at the River Jordan. I was there the day that John baptized Jesus. It was an astonishing and bewildering experience. Everyone there could tell that there was something special about this man, Jesus.

After John was arrested, I decided to find Jesus and try to understand who he is. It’s been a three-year adventure with highs and lows. Jesus has said some unbelievable things, but I feel privileged to be one of his 12 disciples. I have worked hard and I have earned my position to be so close to this man, Jesus. And now I am walking with Jesus to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover with him.

Wherever we go crowds develop around us. The reputation of Jesus as a teacher brings people who would to hear every word he says. That’s the way Rabbi’s teach. You have to walk beside them and listen. They rarely stop to teach.

The other reputation Jesus has is that of a healer. Every sick or injured person in the region wants to be close to Jesus and maybe they will be healed. I’m not surprised. It’s awful to be sick or injured in some way. They can’t work and they usually lose their family. Their only way to survive is to beg in the street. They’re usually dirty and wear rags. How disgusting?! I wonder how they have sinned to make God punish them with such infirmities.

The crowd around us now is probably almost 50 people. I can barely hear what Jesus is saying. The air is hot and suffocating. It’s almost hard to breathe with that many people pressing in on us.

And then I hear a voice, a shout. I can’t make it out at first, but then everybody stopped talking so we can hear what the sound is. “Jesus, Son of David. Show me mercy!”

Son of David?? Nobody calls him that. Many don’t even believe Jesus is the Son of David. Who is this guy? And how dare he interrupt what Jesus is teaching? Someone tell him to be quiet. And then he said it again, “Son of David, show me mercy!”

Someone in the crowd said it was a blind beggar shouting out. He was sitting beside the road. Oh no! It’s another one of those sinners dressed in rags. Does he really think he is worthy to get Jesus’ attention? He’s slowing us down on our journey.

Jesus has stopped. He quietly said, “call him forward.” WHAT? JESUS WANTS TO TALK TO HIM? Really? Jesus, is he worthy of your attention? Well maybe Jesus will point out his sins and send him to the temple to pray.

The crowd parted to make a path for this blind man to find his way to Jesus. Someone said to the man, “be encouraged! Get up! He is calling you.” When he got next to Jesus he knelt down. Jesus spoke to him in hushed tones. “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man answered, “Teacher, I want to see.” And Jesus did it again. He cured this blind beggar. Jesus didn’t say anything about how the man had sinned. Jesus did not judge him as a bad person. Jesus found him worthy of being cured.

I don’t understand what just happened. Then I remembered a lesson Jesus taught us yesterday, “THE FIRST WILL BE LAST AND THE LAST WILL BE FIRST.”
Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with personal silent prayer God of all. Creator of all. We sometimes forget that all of us are your children and that we should love each other just as you love us. As we listen to the teaching of your Son Jesus, may we pray for

understanding and learn to stop judging others. Only God can judge. It is not our job.

We pray that this lesson of love for all may spread to all and that peace can be achieved at last. Jesus is our peacemaker if we just listen and obey his teachings. May we learn that the first will be last and the last will be first. We should not brag that we are first, for we may be last, sitting beside a dusty road begging for money, yet being recognized by Jesus.

We pray for all those on our prayer list and those we hold dear to our hearts. May they find peace and comfort knowing you are with them always.

We pray for our community and our world, that all of us should recognize all of us and find ways that we may help those we consider the “least of these”, just as God does.

As Jesus has taught us to pray, we speak the words together . . .

THE LORD’S PRAYER: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your 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, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION:** Hear our prayer for all who may be helped by what we give. We offer more than money; we offer ourselves. May the sympathy and comfort we share with people in need serve to draw them closer to you. Keep us strong, that this church may give radiant witness to truth, constructive opposition to evil, and merciful redemption to those caught up in the wickedness of our times. Amen.

***RESPONSIVE COMMISSION AND BLESSING:**

Take heart; your faith is making you well.
You will know wholeness and peace beyond your suffering.

**We have witnessed miracles of transformation.
Christ grants insight and deep inner healing.**

You are chosen as disciples and apostles of good news. You have gathered to learn; now go out to witness.

**It is hard to share good news that people resist.
We fear we do not know enough to defend our views.**

God needs no defense from us but welcomes our thanks. We can tell others about our own journey with God.

Our gladness and our humility are genuine.

We pray that God will work in and through us.

Amen. Amen.