

“What do you want me to do for you?” This powerful question of Jesus challenges us today to answer him.

As the blind man stood before Him, Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man wanted to see!

Last week in the gospel, Jesus asked James and John, “What do you want me to do for you?” James and John wanted glory!

Two weeks ago we heard Jesus ask the rich young man, “why do you call me Good? What is it you want?” The young man wanted the answer to a question – he wanted an easy road to salvation!

The rich young man didn't get the answer he wanted, James and John didn't get the answer they wanted, but the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, did! Do you believe you would?

We can learn a lot from the way Bartimaeus asked and responded in the way we ask God for things. There are three things that are necessary before we ask God for something.

First, we need to reflect on exactly what we want, specifically and measurably and what it will mean if we get it and believe it can happen.

When we hear Jesus ask the blind beggar what he wants - it may seem a silly and obvious question to us – we who have two thousand years to get used to Jesus as a miracle worker – we would say of course he wants to see!

Of course, he would want to change, but that is not always true. The blind man could have asked for shelter or protection or a guaranteed income or many ordinary human things that any generous person might have given him, but his faith made him ask for a miracle.

Again, that may seem silly, but think about it. As soon as he could see, the free handouts would stop. The life he knew would be over and he would have to go out and learn and work and there could be no more reliance on pity from others because his disability was gone. He asked anyway.

James and John didn't know what sitting at Jesus' side in glory would mean, that they would pay the price of their lives. They may have asked in hope but not in faith.

The rich young man didn't know what it meant to ask for a guarantee of salvation, that for him it would take turning away from his riches. He had a general goal but hadn't thought about what must change and he didn't believe the answer.

Since they didn't know what it meant, they weren't ready for the answer.

When we think about Jesus saying to us, “What do you want me to do for you?” and when we are ready to ask God for something in prayer, we can't just say “I want to be happy!” if we don't really understand what happiness is for us.

Think first, ask later. We know that happiness does not come from wealth, we know that happiness is not simply having fun. We know happiness is not just being distracted from our problems but instead overcoming them.

If being happy for you means staying close to your family, then ask God to heal the division among you. If being happy means you've got the confidence to speak up in a certain situation then you need to then ask for that courage. If being happy means you can stop worrying about having enough then ask for enough and for the ability to be content with enough without needing more and more.

When we ask for something specific, then when someone asks us, "Did God answer your prayer?" you can say "Yes, He did!" instead of "I don't really know!"

Secondly, we must be ready to respond to God's answer right away. Make no mistake, when we pray and ask with humility and faith, God will respond if you really take the time to listen.

When Jesus called, the blind man came right away.

If we want to receive from God, we need to have that same readiness, that same sense of urgency that the moment is now, that same faith to say "Yes!" without saying "Let me think about it for a while!"

The blind man made a commitment to his answer, he was willing to be ridiculed by others, risk the world and the life he knew, he was willing to change. He even threw off his cloak, his most precious possession and left it behind when Jesus called.

Jesus called him, and Jesus calls us today. Are we ready to respond right away?

Was it easy for the blind man to commit and to follow Jesus because he already knew how to depend on others. God wants us to depend on each other. He doesn't want us running around singing "I did it my way!" because it is only by depending on each other that we stop thinking of ourselves first.

Third and last, we must be persistent, and believe that our answer will come. We must persevere even when circumstances seem piled up against us because we know God does hear, and he will answer, even if we don't always understand his timetable.

Bartimaeus kept shouting, even when the crowd told him to keep quiet. He kept pleading, even when others told him not to bother Jesus.

He didn't stop to think whether or not he deserved help, or whether he was worthy to talk to God's Son or whether something else was probably more important than he was just then. He simply asked and asked again.

God doesn't expect us to wait until we are perfect or completely holy before we talk to him, he just wants us to try. In his own words, "I came to call sinners!" and that means all of us, you and me.

We need to ask ourselves, if Jesus was walking by, would we call out? What is our disability, our blindness, our cross, our burden that we want to be gone or are we comfortable with where we are and would we merely watch him pass by?

We need to be ready, my friends, because Jesus is coming here today. He will visit us in the form of bread and wine and we will be blessed with the privilege of sharing his actual body and blood in Holy Communion. He will be even closer to us than he was to blind Bartimaeus who stood before him so many years ago because he will be living inside us.

So, can we learn from Bartimaeus how to ask our Lord for the things that are dearest to our hearts and reach out to him? When he asks, "What do you want from me?", what will we say?