

## **Joy**

Mark 10:46-52

October 28, 2012

(Choral anthem: *a joyful alleluia*, by Gordon Young)

That's joy! That's what joy sounds like!

But joy has many sounds. It also sounds like this ... (extended silence)

Can you hear it? I know you can hear it, because you know what joy sounds like! You know what joy feels like!

Joy has many sounds. Sometimes it comes as an "alleluia." Sometimes it comes as a squeal of delight. Sometimes it comes as clapping hands. Sometimes it comes as a sigh. Sometimes it comes as a trembling jaw and a tear on the cheek. And sometimes it comes with no sound at all, just a warm, rushing, tingling, shivering feeling that flows into every corner of your body.

Do you feel joy now? Do you have joy now?

It's a fair question to ask, because joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Joy is one of the signs of the work of God's Spirit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. If God's Spirit is working in us, if we are letting the Spirit direct our lives, we should have joy.

Remember that when we talk about the fruits of the Spirit, we are not talking about anything that comes naturally to us. Joy does come naturally: on a sunny day, at a birthday party, when your team wins, when you cast your fly into the fast current just upstream of a rising trout and bang! -- he takes it.

But there is another deeper, stronger, fuller, more lasting joy that comes not from favorable events and happy circumstances, but as a gift from God. And it is this joy that is one of the marks of a Christian, one of the signs that we are following a different way, the way of the Spirit.

Last Thursday, I talked a lot about joy, at the memorial service held in this sanctuary for Carol Maurer. Her dying was hard and painful and unwelcome. All of us gathered in the sanctuary felt the same sense of unfairness and loss and grief. And yet it was right to talk about joy, because there was joy!

You only had to look, you only had to listen, and you could see and hear the joy: the joy of strong love undaunted by suffering and undiminished by death,

the joy of family bonded strongly together in support of each other and in gratitude for the gift that was her life, the joy of real faith that makes a real difference, because God ... is. You wouldn't think there would be much to be joyful about on such a day, but there was joy!

Bartimaeus didn't have much to be joyful about. He was blind and a beggar. He didn't have much, if anything, to call his own, even a name. He was, we are told, the son of Timaeus, and that was his only name: bar-timaeus, son of Timaeus.

Was he born blind? Did his parents pity him so much, or pity themselves so much, that they didn't feel it right to honor his pitiful life with a name? Who knows? Maybe. Or maybe not. He did say to Jesus: "I want to see ... again."

But we do know, in any case, that Bartimaeus had little, if anything, to be joyful about. But there was joy!

Was there joy because he was healed? Because he got from Jesus what he wanted? Because he was able to see again? Of course, there was joy in that! It would only be natural.

And yet, if that were the sum of his joy -- getting what he wanted -- wouldn't he have said, "Thank you very much" and gone his own way? Wouldn't he have shaken Jesus' hand or given Jesus a hug and gone back to his life, or, rather, gone ahead to having a life, having a real life of his own for the very first time, or at least, for the first time in a very long time? That's even what Jesus told him to do: "Go, your faith has made you well."

But Bartimaeus didn't go. He stayed and he followed. He followed Jesus on the road. He followed Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. He left his restored life for a new life, a new life with Jesus.

This is Bartimaeus' joy: following Jesus, being with Jesus. I think his joy began even before Jesus gave him his sight back. I think Bartimaeus' joy began when Jesus called for him. The people along the roadside had it right: "Cheer up!," they said. "Cheer up! He is calling you!"

Cheer up! He is calling you! He has heard you. He has taken notice of you. He wants you. He is calling you. Cheer up! He is calling you!

Cheer up! He is calling ... you! Jesus is calling ... you. How does that feel?

And what does that mean? Will Jesus ask you: "What do you want me to do for you?" Maybe. But, who cares? He is calling you! He has heard you. He has taken notice of you. He wants you. He is calling you. How does that feel?

This is joy: to go with Jesus, to follow Jesus, to be with Jesus. Joy is his gift. Joy is ... him.