

Sermon: "Listen to the Shouts!"

Scripture: Mark 10:46-52

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Let's face it, interruptions can be annoying. Especially when we have a plan for how the day is going to go or when we are constrained for time in the midst of a busy schedule, most of us are less than welcoming of the unexpected disturbances that enter life. But what if these interruptions that inevitably come have the potential to be holy moments in our lives if we will let ourselves and our plans be disrupted? If we let our plans change for the needs of those around us, what blessings might we experience and share?

When I was in college, working through my semester of student teaching as I pursued a career in math teaching which never came to pass, I discovered quickly the immense workload that our teachers handle and hold each and every day. Working with 120 students in 6 different classes, grading test and homework assignments, keeping up with data entry and paperwork required by the school and the state, and creating lesson plans for each day, I found that there was very little downtime. One day, I had a particularly full work load, with many things to grade in time for quarterly report cards going out soon and I knew that I would need every available minute throughout the day to get everything done. That was my plan. When my study hall period came around, I was especially grateful as it would be 40 minutes of time to grade. As the period began and I started my work, one of the students came up and told me that he was going to the guidance office. He didn't ask, he told me. Looking at him, I could tell that he needed to go, and so I signed him out and off he went. As the period continued, I got to work. Maybe 20 minutes later, he came back from the guidance counselor. I asked him if everything was okay. He looked at me and in a very "matter of fact" way said, "Yes. I'm dropping out of school," and he walked back to his seat. At that point, I had a choice to make. I could either go forward with my plan for the day and keep grading, or let my day be interrupted by the need of one of my students. So I put down

my pen, and walked over to him, sat down, and we began to talk. I asked about what was going on. Why he came to this decision. What his plans were for the future. What I discovered was that he and his girlfriend were pregnant and he was dropping out of school to be able to support his new family. Our conversation continued, and as we talked, it became clear that he had thought this through thoroughly, he had talked to his parents, he already had a job lined up, he had dreams for the future, and he was ready for this step of life. Now some may think that I should have tried to talk him out of this decision, but I listened, asked questions, and learned that he was not making this decision lightly but with much discernment. So in the end, I wished him well.

Now, his best friend was sitting with him as we chatted and when we finished, he said that he thought it was so cool that they could talk to a teacher about this and be heard and have their decision respected. Then the bell rang and study hall was over. The student thanked me for the talk, for checking in with him, and he left. Sitting with him and joining him on his journey was exactly where I needed to be. Even though my plans were interrupted and I now knew that I would have to spend even longer at the school after hours to get the work done that I needed to complete, I would not have traded that moment of joining this student on his journey for anything else.

As Jesus was on his way from Jericho to Jerusalem which we heard in our scripture reading this morning, he too had a plan for his day. His plan was to travel and get from point A to point B. Then, an interruption. The shouts of Bartimaeus rang out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Others tried to keep this man from inhibiting the plans of Jesus, but when he heard the cries, Jesus let himself be interrupted. He put his journey on hold to enter the journey of another. In allowing his life to be interrupted, with no resentment toward the interrupter but rather fully embracing the moment, being present in the unexpected, he changes the life of Bartimaeus.

Being open to the interruptions and the unexpected shouts into our lives, whether verbal expressions of need, someone's path physically crossing ours, or in forms of expressions and even in our intuition- allowing ourselves to be interrupted is holy and

sacred. When we set aside our plans, our journeys, and enter the journey of another as Jesus did, we have the potential to change a life and at least offer a moment of blessing. Sure, some interruptions may just end up being a nuisance, but if we are not open to the change and the interruption, think of what we might miss our opportunity to follow Jesus and live our faith.

On this Reformation Sunday, as we remember the beginnings of the protestant church that lead us to this place here today, we are reminded of the power that being open to interruptions can have. And the importance of us as a church to be open always to the ways that we may be called away from our plans, our hopes, even our dreams for the church, for a holy journey yet to be discovered.

And on this Mission Sunday, celebrating the work of the organizations receiving gifts from our Annual Summerfest, we rejoice in the ways that all of these groups and organizations journey with others, responding to the shouts of need, cries for justice, and more as they work in our communities.

Beloved People of God, may we all be open to the interruptions, for in them, we may find opportunities to share peace, hope, joy, light, and life. We may just find ourselves in service to another, and once again, find ourselves living as Jesus has taught us to live. So be it and may it be so. Amen.