

Sermon Title: **“Bold Faiths”**

Bible: **Job 42:1-6, 10-17 & Mark 10:46-52**

When: on the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, October 27, 2024

Where: about 25 people (plus YouTube Live viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

O Lord, let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. Your Desperate Prayer

According to the Gospel of Mark, there was a man named Bartimaeus, who was a blind beggar. When he heard that Jesus was near, he shouted out. But many people responded by asking him to be quiet. But he did not stop shouting out. Actually, he shouted and cried out even more loudly! That’s because he was desperate! And he knew that Jesus could heal his eyes. When Jesus called him, he rushed up to come to Jesus! When Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He answered, “I want to see.” According to his loud and desperate cry and according to his bold faith, he was able to see again immediately. I believe in God's miracles and Jesus’ healing. But these days, it seems like we do not experience the type of immediate healing or cure that happened to Bartimaeus. Many times, healing requires time and patience. Actually, it requires desperate and bold faith, just like the one that Bartimaeus had.

Do you have any desperate prayer requests for yourself? Then, you might want to shout out

and lift up your prayers to God, even if others cannot understand you and even though others might ask you to stop. That's because you are desperate, and you know that only God heals you and makes you well. This does not mean that you need to share your personal or private prayer requests with others in public. You can come to the Lord with your prayers, even when no one knows your prayer requests. God will listen to your prayers, and God will answer to you. In the meantime, your faith will become deep and bold. You might have heard of God's miraculous healing from others before. But you will see it with your own eyes.

2. Why Suffering?

A similar healing or restoration happened to Job. Today's reading of Job chapter 42 is the last chapter of the book of Job. Unlike the immediate healing of Bartimaeus, the healing or restoration of Job took 42 chapters. It might have been 140 years, according to Job 42:16, and it could have been 30 years or 170 years, depending on other resources. We are not sure exactly how long it took, but we can say that it was not short, not sudden, but long, and it feels like it is never-ending. Have you ever felt like Job?

Job was blameless and upright. He was innocent, but he had to suffer in many ways. I do not think that God wanted to test Job's faith, but the book of Job described that it was because God allowed Satan or the heavenly beings to test the faith of Job. Job lost his property, and even all of his children: seven sons and three daughters. He suffered from skin disease. His wife could not understand all of these sufferings. His friends were there, but they could not help him, and they could not comfort him.

Have you heard of Job 8:7, “Though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great”? Who said this? Did God say this? No. Then, did Job say this? No. One of his friends, Bildad, said this to Job not to comfort him, but somewhat to blame him and his children. According to Bildad’s understanding, because God was just, and because his children sinned, God punished them and took their lives. This means that Job should repent even now after all of the troubles, and then God would restore them. That’s why Job’s friend, Bildad, said, “Though your beginning [of repentance] was small, your latter days will be very great.” In other words, when we see some tragedies of others, do we tell them that the tragedies happened because of your sin or your children’s sin, and ask them to repent, and then their future will be great? No, right? This kind of understanding of God and people made God angry in the book of Job. So, before Job 42:10, in Job 42:7-9, God’s wrath was present, and Job prayed for his friends. We should remember that we do not know why things happen many times, and be careful to use the Bible and our understanding of suffering and God.

3. Hear, See, and Touch God

Suffering can happen, even to Christians, even to the innocent, and even to good people. There can be many efforts and theories to find out and explain the cause of one’s troubles and suffering. Even Job could not understand and explain. After all of the suffering, what Job confessed was “I had heard of [God] by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees [God].” His faith might be based on indirect learning or on others, but now it was founded upon his own experience. Job’s faith became bold, not any more light, but heavy.

In our faith journey, God does not promise a suffering-free journey or life. We will encounter suffering and tragedies, both explainable and unexplainable. But please remember that God sent Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to us, in order to be with us even in suffering. That is God's promise, to be with us. In our faith journey, I hope for us to hear more of God's miracles, to see the presence of the Holy Spirit with our own eyes, and even to touch Jesus' body with our own hands. Our faith will be bold, heavy, deep, and strong, and our faith has made us well.

Closing Prayer

Loving and living God, we come to you with our heavy minds. We come to you with many questions, doubts, and with many wonders. Please be with us, for our faith to grow bold and heavy. Please open our eyes to see you, your love, your grace and mercy. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.