

**“Still Life”**

The Rev. Ryan Wiksell



October 20, 2024

The Twenty-Second Sunday After Pentecost

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

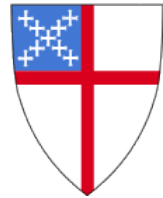
May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God.  
Amen.

- “Still Life” Movie (Free with ads on YouTube)
  - The main character, John May, lives a melancholy life
  - Both his office and his home are very plain and sparse
  - He’s worked the same job for 25 years
  - He has no family and no friends
  - It’s as if his world is at a standstill
- Which might be the reason he’s so good at his job
  - He works for the government, trying to find the next of kin of people found dead, who have no will and testament
  - He rarely tracks anyone down, and even when he does, they usually want nothing to do with the deceased
  - So John arranges funerals for them, according to their apparent beliefs or faith tradition
  - And he attends them. By himself.
- “Still Life” is a great title for the movie
  - Because John is living, but it’s a very *still* life.
  - And in his stillness, he is somehow able to connect with those who have no life left at all.
- Eventually his boss shuts the department down, arguing that it’s too expensive
  - “They’re dead. They don’t care” is his argument.
  - But John knows better. He is convinced that every human life is worthy of honoring, even if it ends dishonorably.
- I was reminded about this movie on Monday, when I was leading the Noon Eucharist at St. Mary’s downtown
  - And the acolyte told me that St. Mary’s had recently created a “scattering garden” where the ashes of unknown or unclaimed people could be laid to rest.

- And this seemed to me to be one of the most Christ-like ministries I could imagine.
- Just like the work of John May in the movie, no one is there to appreciate your work. Not even the person “receiving” the service. It’s kind of between you and God, and yet, you know that you are honoring the personhood of someone who was thoroughly forgotten.
- In our insistence on movement, on speed, on productivity...
  - We can’t relate with stillness at all
  - And maybe we fear death more acutely because of it
  - We don’t want to be still. We don’t want to be inert. Useless.
  - Like the blind man Bartimaeus in this morning’s Gospel
- Mark depicts him sitting on the side of the road in Jericho
  - Watching the world pass by
  - Jesus and his disciples, with a huge crowd, were leaving the city
  - And Bartimaeus got wind of the presence of a healer
  - So he shouted, but everyone tried to silence him
  - And remind him that he’s been forgotten for a reason.
  - He is still. He is inert. He is useless. And he needs to know his place.
- Bartimaeus can’t see these people
  - But more to the point, the people aren’t really seeing Bartimaeus
  - Not only is he blind—he’s invisible
  - In their insistence on constant movement, no one slows down enough to actually see him
- Except Jesus
  - In the middle of the reading, we see the words “Jesus stood still”
  - I’m imagining the crowd striding quickly along the road
  - Eager to get to Jesus’ next destination, talking excitedly about what great work he might perform
  - Perhaps he’ll even confront the Romans, or usurp Herod, or something big and dramatic that alters the course of history
  - But then Jesus just stopped. As if he just noticed his shoe was untied.

- And when Jesus stops, eventually everyone stops.
- What is it Jesus? What's wrong?
- Did you forget something? Do we have to go back?
- But that's when they hear the voice calling:
  - "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
  - Come on, Jesus, we have places to be
  - We have big, dramatic, historic things to do. In Jerusalem, not in backwoods Jericho
  - But in his stillness, Jesus is able to see the Still Life.
  - And he calls him out of his stillness, into movement
- And Mark describes that movement very well
  - That Bartimaeus "threw off" his cloak, and "sprang up" to meet Jesus.
  - But notice this: Jesus didn't expect Bartimaeus to catch up to him
  - And Jesus doesn't expect it from us either
  - When we are beaten down, lying still
  - When we are sidelined, forgotten, invisible to the world
  - Jesus stops everything. Jesus chooses to see us when no one else will
  - And the healing that results is almost an afterthought
- Praise God, Bartimaeus can see now.
  - But perhaps more importantly, Bartimaeus has been *seen*.
  - And I'll bet he went on to see others, just like Jesus saw him.
- I won't spoil the end of the movie Still Life for you. I'd like you to watch it.
  - It has a beautiful ending
  - And shows us how a person like John May, living a very still and unseen life
  - Can finally be seen in the end. All because he chose to be still and see the unseen. Remember the forgotten.
- In his life, and hopefully in our own lives...
  - We can be still enough to see those who are sitting on the sideline
  - And we can know that we are seen by Jesus, and are called to see others the same way he has seen us. Amen.

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the  
**Sunday closest to October 26**



Proper 25  
Year B  
RCL

*Track 1*      *or*      *Track 2*

Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Psalm 34:1-8,

(19-22)

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Psalm 126

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52

## **The Collect**

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **Old Testament**

### **Job 42:1-6, 10-17**

Job answered the LORD:

“I know that you can do all things,  
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’

Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,  
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

‘Hear, and I will speak;

I will question you, and you declare to me.’

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,  
but now my eye sees you;  
therefore I despise myself,  
and repent in dust and ashes.”

And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job’s daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this Job lived for one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children’s children, four generations. And Job died, old and full of days.

## **The Psalm**

### **Psalm 34:1-8, (19-22)**

#### ***Benedicam Dominum***

- 1 I will bless the LORD at all times; \*  
his praise shall ever be in my mouth.
- 2 I will glory in the LORD; \*  
let the humble hear and rejoice.
- 3 Proclaim with me the greatness of the LORD; \*  
let us exalt his Name together.
- 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me \*  
and delivered me out of all my terror.

- 5 Look upon him and be radiant, \*  
and let not your faces be ashamed.
- 6 I called in my affliction and the LORD heard me \*  
and saved me from all my troubles.
- 7 The angel of the LORD encompasses those who fear him, \*  
and he will deliver them.
- 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; \*  
happy are they who trust in him!
- 19 [Many are the troubles of the righteous, \*  
but the LORD will deliver him out of them all.
- 20 He will keep safe all his bones; \*  
not one of them shall be broken.
- 21 Evil shall slay the wicked, \*  
and those who hate the righteous will be punished.
- 22 The LORD ransoms the life of his servants, \*  
and none will be punished who trust in him.]

## **The Epistle**

### **Hebrews 7:23-28**

The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but Jesus holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

# The Gospel

## Mark 10:46-52

Jesus and his disciples came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was **sitting by the roadside**. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many sternly **ordered him to be quiet**, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus **stood still** and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

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*Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.*

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*The Collects, Psalms and Canticles are from the Book of Common Prayer, 1979.*

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