

I Wish

Isaiah 40:21-31, Mark 1:29-39

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See if you know any of these songs and the singers: “All I want is a room somewhere, far away from the cold night air, with one enormous chair, O wouldn't it be lovely!” Or how about “O I just can't wait to be King!” Or maybe “I'm not throwin' away my shot, no I'm not throwin' away my shot, hey yo I'm just like my country, I'm young, scrappy and hungry and I'm not throwin' away my shot!”

We heard from Eliza Doolittle in “My Fair Lady,” Simba in “The Lion King,” and, of course, Alexander Hamilton in “Hamilton.” Each one of those songs represents a convention in American musical theater: the “I Wish” song. The protagonist of the story lays out their hopes and dreams for the future and thus the tale moves forward.

If you think about it, many parts of the Bible are actually “I Wish” songs. Most of the book of Psalms and the books of the prophets. Mary's Magnificat as she awaits the birth of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, parts of Paul's letters to the churches are all meant to express the wishes, hopes and dreams of those seeking to serve God or to get God's attention or the attention of the people around them.

In the reading from Mark today, Jesus is at the very beginning of his public ministry. He is healing people in body, mind and spirit, so by his actions, we know he is wishing for wholeness for those around him. By that healing, he is teaching something about God and God's desire for wholeness for all creation. When his disciples come

to find him after he has gone away to pray, Jesus lays out his wish: "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." Healing, teaching, seeking more strongly to connect God and God's people; pretty powerful "I Wish."

But long before Jesus enacted **his** I Wish song, there came this utterly beautiful song in Isaiah; it is written as poetry, not prose; it is a song. "Don't you remember who I am?" God says through the prophet. "Look around you and you will see me everywhere! Didn't you learn long ago (those words full of pathos, "Have you not known? Have you not heard?) that I am always here, always with you, never wearying of you, especially offering power, hope, healing to the weak and powerless. Don't you know? Come to me, wait for the Spirit to surround you, and the weariness will fall away, and you will rise!" And the very next sentence beginning the next chapter is "Listen to me in silence!" Perhaps well paraphrased by a popular song of a few years ago as "Shut up and dance with me!"

You and I are just starting a relationship as pastor and congregation, and if we could all be together here, we might create an "I Wish" song for our story going forward. Since we are separated, I hope you will email me or USPS mail me some of your "I Wish" thoughts for this congregation and its ongoing mission. But it seems to me that we begin best by wondering what God's I Wish for us might be. We begin at the table of Christ, the "listen to me" table, a place where we are called to remember who God is, to remember that we have known and have heard! A place to bring our weariness, our own I Wish songs, in which we wish COVID would go away, we could all get our vaccines and be with our friends and family again, our country could truly grapple with issues like climate

change and systemic racism, that all would be fed and housed, and people would stop shooting at each other. The Big Wishes.

Here, however, is where we lay down our songs, our wishes large and small, and listen for God to sing to us, to remind us that when we eat and drink together, something amazing happens and we become the body of Christ, together even when we are physically apart. We can remember what that means by remembering the life, teaching, and hopes and dreams of Jesus. Every time we eat and drink, it is a new beginning.

In a moment, we will sing together the lovely song, "In Remembrance of Me" by Ragan Courtney. The words go like this, "In remembrance of me, eat this bread. In remembrance of me, drink this cup. In remembrance of me, pray for the time when God's own will is done. In remembrance of me, heal the sick...feed the poor...open the door and let your brother/sister/neighbor in." I wish. Amen.