**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**October 9th, 2022**

**What do you Need?**

1. **Introduction**

This week, we are into the fifth week of the series, “I’ve been meaning to ask…” which invites us to live in authentic curiosity with one another. In the last four weeks, we’ve been able to assert that we can celebrate both the diversity and differences among us, while also remembering that we are all called beloved by God. In our second week, we thought about those spaces where people aren’t often called beloved – the places that are hidden from view, those with a bad reputation – and how we, as the body of Christ, can continue to strive towards a kingdom of equality.

In our third week, our question changed to, “Where does it hurt?” and we delved deeply into the personal stories we hold where hurt resides and the call to create a community that invites us to share those stories and for them to be validated and honored. Last week, we started to dive into the bigger questions about the systematic stories that swirl around us and the stories that point us to action.

This week, we have a good follow up question as we think about our identities and our stories. In light of all that we’ve explore, let’s start to ask the tangible and not so tangible question, “What do we need?”

1. Rev. Remington

I’m glad to share the video from Rev. Remington with you and, I

promise to keep my sermon shorter because of it. But, she brings up some very valid points that need to be reinforced. Sometimes, our need can be as simple as, “I need you to pick up some bread on the way home from the grocery store.” Okay, I can handle that – it’s a simple request, pretty concrete, I can do that.

Sometimes the need is a little bit deeper, but we can still meet it, “I need to know you love me.” I can say those words, I can look you in the eye, I can articulate it. “I love you.” Will you hear it? Will you believe it? That I don’t know, it runs deeper, but it’s certainly a need I can seek to address.

And then there’s those needs that we wish we could all respond to with assurance. “I need to know this pandemic is over. I need to feel the Spirit moving within me – I need direction. I need this depression or anxiety to flee from me and I don’t want to feel this way anymore.” Those…those are certainly needs, but they get way less tangible. I can’t run out to the grocery store, I can’t find a magic pill or solution, it requires something else from me, from us – when we hear needs like that.

Those needs are ones that require presence, assurance, prayer, honesty, and maybe some follow-up questions. Those are places in which we say, “I don’t know how to help you with those needs, but I’m really glad you shared them with me. How can I help? I can walk with you, I can pray with you, I can scream at the skies with you, I can seek to find solutions with you or I can just stop and listen.” The needs are great, but there are ways we can journey with people. It is a gift when someone shares their story or their need with you – it is a place of privilege, honor, and trust that doesn’t often happen in our society.

1. Job’s friends

The hardest intersection of this question is when you ask, “What

do you need?” and the very honest and real response is, “I don’t know.” And we ourselves can be in the same situation where we don’t know what we need when we are faced with a dilemma. Sometimes the need reveals itself, sometimes it does not, but these, in my mind, are often the hardest spaces, because we simply don’t know what to do. Life feels a little more fragile, a bit more in flux, we can feel a little bit helpless. Yet even in this space, there is an invitation for us all to be with one another, in friendship and in community, to simply witness to one another and to wait out the need that may appear.

When we look at Job’s three friends who have come out to see Job, they know the troubles he has seen. They know he has faced trauma after trauma, and so they come out to see their friend. At first, their response is one of this screaming at the skies, unabashed anger, where they can’t even recognize their beloved friend. They yell, they tear their clothes, they throw dust, and they weep. They feel the suffering on behalf of Job, they witness to it.

Have you ever been in this position, in some sense, before? Right now, I’m watching one of my teenage friends who is also a Presbyterian pastor, who just got married within the last three years start to watch her husband go through hospice. Her husband was diagnosed shortly after their marriage and they went through drug trial after drug trial, to terrible side effects, to a realization that all of this fighting would lead them nowhere. Even from a distance, I see her honesty as they walk this road and her request from her friends was, “Don’t say ‘I’m sorry’, don’t give me pity, I’ll just cry – but be angry with me.” That was a need that we could fulfill on some level, with a slew of cursing and anger and astonishment that this could be happening. This is not fair, and we let the skies know it.

Have you been there, in that place, with a friend – where yes, it isn’t your grief or your trauma, but you can deeply feel the sense that nothing about this is okay. On your behalf, I kick up dust and yell at the skies.

Though as we turn back to the text and continue to listen to the story of Job’s friends, the tone changes significantly. Things settle into silence as they sit with their friend for seven days and seven nights. No word was spoken perhaps because there was no word that could have ever filled the silence with something meaningful. They saw the suffering, and they witnessed to it by simply being there. They didn’t run from the pain, they didn’t dismiss it, they sat there.

That’s where we are starting to go with our friend whose husband is in hospice. The anger is quieting, and though I think many of us want to continue to yell at the skies – you just can’t keep that up. So we wait, we sit silently, we pray, we seek peace and comfort beyond understanding. Just like Job’s friends – we are in a place where there are no words that could make it any better, so we just sit where we are, knowing that if there is a need that can be fulfilled, we will be asked.

1. What do you need?

I’m aware that I’ve brought the crowd down here, but Job

doesn’t lend himself to joyful metaphors or descriptors. Yet, maybe that’s okay, because this is a very real example of how needs can change and develop in the course of days or weeks. What you need today may not be what you need tomorrow. Maybe, again, you don’t know what you need, but we’re all on standby, promising again and again that we’re not so far away.

And maybe our time might be well spent asking what we need. If you were ask me right after worship, “Pastor Becca, what do you need?” Other than chocolate, I’m really not sure if I could answer anything more meaningful. It takes work to figure out what we need.

1. Figuring it out

I encourage us all, myself included, to take some time to think

about what we need. It is not a selfish question. When we get what we need, or even name it, there’s more space for us to press forward in doing the work of Christ. Sometimes not knowing what we need, or a lack of our awareness, makes us feel like our feet are in molasses. When we are released of that, we can live in the joyful presence of God in new ways and we can be open to helping others more fully.

So, my friends, “What do you need?” Amen.