**Text**: **Mark 9:38-50**

 **The Bethel Pulpit**

 **Pastor Margo R. Martens**

 September 30th – 19 Sunday of Pentecost On the web at [www.bethel-madison.org](http://www.bethel-madison.org/)
 312 Wisconsin Ave, Madison WI 53703

Ever feel like you have too much to do, wishing you had MORE than two hands…

MORE than 24 hours in each day? You look at your daily or weekly planner and you see that you cannot possibly squeeze in even one more meeting, and certainly no chance to find a few minutes to simply sit and take a break?

You are not alone…and we, in this 21st century, are certainly not the first ones to feel like this. The Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life remind us that even Jesus had too much to do. That’s why he asked for help. Already in the 1st chapter of Mark, Jesus is asking for help, as he called Simon Peter and his brother Andrew…then James…then in chapters 2 & 3, he ups the number of helpers to 12.

But even the 12 disciples are not enough help for Jesus. According to the 10th chapter of Luke, we hear the reality that Jesus appoints 70 others. Even more interesting is the reality that Jesus is standing on the shoulders of Moses, who, according to the 11th chapter of Numbers is, quite literally, yelling at God, telling God that he, Moses, desperately needs help. And so, all those centuries before Jesus, God tells Moses to choose…are you ready for this? Yes, to choose 70 people to help him with all the work that needs to be done.

How easy is it for you to ask for help?

I hope we take these examples from Moses and Jesus seriously, as we dare to acknowledge that none of us, not even ONE of us, can carry on our work if and when we depend solely on our own energy, resources and abilities.

So it is that we, your staff here at Bethel, are depending on YOUR participation with us, at this critical time in our faith journey. Last week, a candidate for the Lead Pastor position at Bethel came for two days of interviews with the call committee, the council and the staff. Just this week, he withdrew his name from consideration for a potential call to Bethel.

We are disappointed in this news. And ‘disappointment’ is too light a word to fully express the reality of our feelings. And so, we say to you, our partners-in-ministry, ALL of you : we continue to need your help.

Lucky for us, God has provided far more than 70 pairs of hands to work with us. Lucky for us, God has given all of us to each other to be sure that Bethel’s faithful ministry continues to be vital and strong.

And, most important of all, God is walking this journey with us . We have God’s promise of presence (Matt. 28:20) “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age”

Empowered by your energies and your creativities, new dimensions of ministry have opened here at Bethel. This past Saturday, we hosted a community wide seminar, addressing the pragmatic and emotional issues of living with the ravages of Alzheimer and Dementia illness that are increasingly prevalent among our aging men and women. The day culminated with a worship service with Holy Communion that was designed to be user-friendly to ALL people, totally inclusive of all who continue to need spiritual and communal support, regardless of their diminishing cognitive abilities. We, as your staff, will explore how we might find more ways to support one another through such ministries.

Come to worship on Sun., Oct. 14 at 9 a.m. ! ALL of Bethel’s people will gather in the sanctuary at the same time, rather than at the usual and various worship times. Our children not only will be with us for the entire worship, but they will also take important leadership roles. At this worship, it is our privilege to welcome new members into our congregation. We need YOUR voice and YOUR presence at worship as well as with us at the brunch which follows worship.

We truly look forward to the time when God brings to us a faithful and dedicated pastor, who feels called to work with us. Until that time, God is with us. Until that time, we are faithfully carrying out our traditional ministries, as well as opening windows to let in new ideas, new challenges and new opportunities.

I invite you to pray with me. This prayer has sustained me through many years of wondering what might be next, both in my personal life and in my years of ministry with a variety of congregations:

*“Lord, you call your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,*

*by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown.*

*Give us faith to go our with good courage, not knowing where we go,*

*but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us,*

*through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*