

Sermon- 10/14/2018- Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Text- Mark 10:17-31. Jesus and the Rich Young Man

Camels and Cash

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, we continue our big push to enlist more volunteers in the life of the worship. We have been focusing on "show and tell" stories. Don't forget, the point is to sign up. Walk the walk. So that you also understand that while Stewardship does have to do with time and talent, it also has to do with cash, our financial resources and how we allocate them. That's what's good about being an Interim Pastor. If people get mad about a sermon on money I can just say too bad. (I'm not here forever). The good folks at the ELCA headquarters in Chicago have chosen this Gospel today - Jesus and the rich young ruler. Is it about money or is it about priorities.

Let's take a look. It's one of the more familiar Gospel stories. A rich young guy has an encounter with Jesus. Let's break down the encounter and shed some light on what is happening. The rich young guy seems to be an OK type of person. Actually, appears to have his stuff together. Kind of a guy that any parent would want to date his daughter. Well mannered- refers to Jesus as a good teacher. Devout- asking big questions of Jesus- what must I do to inherit eternal life. Notice the emphasis on "do". The guy seems to have a good moral compass- "I have kept all the commandments"- heck most of us couldn't say that.

The rich young guy was probably an honor student at Neenah High School, varsity letterman, nice smile, and no doubt did all sorts of service projects and charity work within the community. If this guy wanted to join this church we would probably shout "Hallelujah."

Jesus knew he was good but also knew that here was a guy who needed his priorities rearranged. So he throws in the kicker- sell everything you have and give it away. Jesus also knows that the young guy wouldn't do it. So he walks away sad. What did Jesus sense in the young guy? Well, it's interesting for us as well. What Jesus felt in the picture of the young guy was that God was not the most important thing in his life. The stuff was.

My mind goes back to observing Orthodox Jews in Brooklyn when they leave a grocery store. They touch the Mezuzah. Inside the box is the phrase, 'Hear O Israel, The Lord our God, The Lord is One'. Helps them to focus, that in spite of all the stuff going on in their lives, God is in control of them. God is number one. Or the scene in the movie O God. Tracy, a 9 year old, makes signs to help the people focus. The sign simply says - Think God.

That's what the rich young guy needed and obviously us as well. To put God First. Jesus then gives out the classic phrase, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.' So let's break it down.

Jesus does not want us to sell all we have and give the cash to the poor. Jesus is not saying that all rich people are bad.

What he is saying is that we need to have our priorities rearranged. We need to live our lives focused on what does it mean to follow God in Jesus Christ. To put God first and all the other stuff after that. Not easy but doable.

Yes it's Stewardship time. A period of time that most of us avoid like the plague. You know the phrase - that's all my church does, ask for money.

Cute story about two ELCA Lutherans marooned on an Island. One of the guys is getting desperate, the other guy quite calm. The one guy asks the other how he can be so calm. The guy says, "I make \$10,000 a week and tithe faithfully to my church every week. It's Stewardship month at my church. My Pastor will find me." Ha.

So here's my prayer and wish for you at Our Savior's. In a short time you will get a letter with a pledge card with the express purpose of enabling you to put God first in your life. My prayer is that more of you will pledge - why? Your church can better plan, but more important, you will have made a commitment to put God First. My prayer is that more of you will sign up for Simply Giving. Why? Your church will receive your gifts even when you are not here. Again, putting God First. Don't go away sad, don't sell all you have, don't focus on Camels. But do focus on God being first in your lives. Then you will be happy. Amen. Let it be so.

