

Pastor Jon's October 10, 2021 Sermon

Text: Mark 10:17-31

I wrote this sermon as I watched the Brewer's first Playoff Game against the Braves. I was reflecting on how great of a year it has been for Wisconsin professional sports. Having the Bucks win the NBA championship was awesome. But why stop there? I want more. I want the Brewers to win the World Series and the Packers to win the Superbowl. How cool would that be?

When you are used to having all your basic needs met, and you have means compared to the rest of the world, you typically look at what you don't have and want for it.

A man of means comes up to Jesus in our Gospel for today, kneels at his feet, and asks, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He seemed to have it all, but he was missing something. He perhaps had a poverty in his spirit. He had an uncertainty about his future. How can you have so much, but still feel lost? Pastor David Lose in his blog "in the Meantime" called the man soul sick with all his possessions. That the one thing that is keeping him from enjoying the abundant life God promises here and now is all his possessions.

The young man asks Jesus, what must I do? His Jewish faith taught him that he had to do something to earn God's love and approval. I think his question was flawed from the start and Jesus knew it. Can you do anything to earn an inheritance? Or is an inheritance the gift of the giver?

And so, Jesus, tells him out of love, what he should do... to go and sell his possessions... to divest... and give the money to the poor and follow me... then you will find true treasure in heaven. Turning your attention to others or helping others can help draw you out of just thinking about ourselves. The man wanted a formula from Jesus on how to acquire eternal life, and Jesus, out of love, gave him a means to the end. But it was way too much for the man. He loved his possessions too much. He was the only person the Gospel to turn down the call of Jesus. He was shocked and went away grieving.

This man of means had reverence for Jesus, however, he knelt at his feet and called him good teacher. He is a good person who claims to have kept all the commandments since his youth. I am like, wow, how could a human keep all the commandments since their youth? But, the bottom line is, you can't buy or earn the gift of eternal life.

I see a few truths in this text that we can take with us today.

The first truth I see in this text is that Jesus loved the man in spite of his flaws and flawed question. Jesus looked at him and loved him, the only person in Mark's Gospel that says Jesus loved. Jesus spoke the truth in love to the man. But the truth cut to the heart. Jesus loves us in spite of our flaws.

The second truth is that Jesus knows us all too well. What competes for our ultimate trust in God? What idols do we cling to for our perceived happiness? What is holding you back from fully following Jesus and his mission?

The third truth in this text is that Jesus cares about the poor. Jesus isn't telling each one of us to sell everything we have and give it to the poor so we end up in poverty ourselves. But I think Jesus is saying that when we have means or wealth beyond our basic needs, it is meant to be shared. There is a justice component in this text to lift others up. And going along with that, you can't take it with you. You may outlive your possessions or have to replace them multiple times.

Then there is the part about the camel going through the eye of a needle. Jesus says, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a person of wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" Now don't get discouraged if you have wealth. I know many people who are very generous with their wealth and they love Jesus. I don't think this is a one size fits all proclamation of Jesus. It is a one to one intervention with this man.

If you take Jesus at his word, we all know a camel can't go through the eye of a needle. And second, for humans, it is impossible to work your way into the kingdom of God. Jesus says, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." It is a gift of the giver through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that ushers

us into the kingdom of God and eternal life. Eternal life is attached to our baptism and faith in Jesus.

Finally, Peter chimes in and says, Jesus, we left everything behind to follow you. What about us? Jesus says, when you leave things behind to follow me, you will gain those things a hundredfold, including eternal life. I know for me, being a part of Christ's church has given me and my family so much over the years. I am forever grateful for my church family during the 20 years of my ministry. You can't quantify it. I have so many friends and mentors through the church. And I know that if I am ever in need, God's people will reach out.

How is this story calling you to change? How is God calling you to follow?

Amen