

Pentecost 21
Mark 10:23-31

10/18/15
24B

VS. 28-30

“He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” You may recall those words from last Sunday’s Gospel. A rich man ran up to Jesus and wanted to know what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus held before him the Commandments of the 2nd Table, those which direct us in our love for our neighbor and the rich man boasted, “All these I have kept from my youth.” Jesus responded to his boast, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” And, the Evangelist tells us, “Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”

Funny, isn’t it? The rich man goes away disheartened, but it seems Peter is quite heartened by the words of Jesus, “See, we have left everything and followed you.” And he can prove it, too. When Peter and his brother Andrew were down by the Sea of Galilee, for they were fishermen, Jesus came by and said, “Follow me.” And they left their business and followed Jesus. Not long after that, Jesus saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee, in their boat, mending their nets, and Jesus said, “Come, follow me.” And they did. They left their boat and their father and followed Jesus. And a similar thing happened to a guy named Levi. He was working in his tax collector’s booth and Jesus said, “Follow me.” And Levi, who we know better as Matthew, left his business and followed Jesus. Jesus found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” And Philip went to his friend Nathanael and said, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth.” And they left everything and followed Jesus.

They all left everything to follow Jesus. They left family, they left friends, their business, their livelihood, they left it all to follow Jesus. Think about this for a minute: these apostles did what the rich man could not do and would not do -- they left everything to follow Jesus.

And so have you! Yes, you have, haven't you? You can jump on that "I left everything to follow Jesus bandwagon," with Peter, can't you? Look at what you're doing this very morning. You're not sleeping in, out in God's creation hunting some creature, you are in Church. And look at what you are going to do with your hard-earned money. You're not going to hoard it; or go out and buy another toy for yourself, you're going to put it in the offering plate. And you've sacrificed your time to serve lunch at a funeral, you spent a gazillion years of your life teaching Sunday School, you haven't had an affair, you haven't lied, cheated, stolen, like that scoundrel of a neighbor of yours. Yes, yes, you've left everything to follow Jesus.

I. The POINT is: if you're following Jesus, you're making sacrifices. You've left things behind. You can say with Peter, "We have left everything in order to follow you." Now Jesus, the question is, "What are you going to do for us? Look at what I've done for you, Jesus. Now, Jesus, where's my present? I've done my part, now you do your part. I want my treasure."

Get ready for it, here it comes. Jesus says,

"Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life."

Swell. Fantastic. This eternal life stuff sounds great; we're all about that. And the land, that sounds good too, especially if it's a nice cabin on a quiet bay on Leech Lake, MN. But, this extended family business and this

persecution stuff? Not exactly what we were hoping for. Truth is, Jesus, we've left everything to follow you, and now we want our cake and we want to eat it, too. We want health, wealth, and prosperity in this life, and we will take eternal life when it comes. That would be really good for us.

Do you hear the words coming out of our collective mouths? We make following Jesus into nothing more than a quid pro quo. We left everything to follow Jesus, and now we want our reward. We did good for you, Jesus, so now, you better do good for us.

Following Jesus does not work that way. Following Jesus is not a quid pro quo.

II. Following Jesus amounts to, first and foremost, Jesus finding you. Calling you to follow Him. When He finds you, how does He find you? A poor, miserable sinner. A lost and condemned creature, unable to follow Him in way, shape, or form.

He invites you to follow Him in a most wonderful way -- at the font, by water and the Word. In that washing, He joins you to Himself so that you die with Him, are buried with Him, and you rise again with Him. And you leave all that stuff behind -- all that sin, all that death, all that hell, so that now you are a follower of Jesus.

III. And as a follower of Jesus, He blesses you, not because you're so great but because He's so great. He loves you and cares for you, so He gives you treasures. Not because you've earned them, but by pure gift. Treasures from heaven that are so amazing that they help you to follow Jesus now and to eternal life. He gives you a house, and brothers and sisters and mother and father and children and land. Look at these treasures He gives you and think about how precious these gifts are.

Let's start with a house. This is the very House of God, the very house you get to go to and receive from Him His forgiveness, care, concern, compassion by washing, meal, and Word, preached, heard, read, and eaten and drank. That's a precious gift that strengthens you to follow Jesus now and to eternal life.

And look at this extended family He gives you, these brothers and sisters and mother and father and children. They meet you here at God's House. He uses them to encourage you, to help you, to bear your burdens, to lift you up, to keep you moving along the path of following Jesus.

And when it comes to land, it's a marvelous land better than any cabin on Leech Lake. It is the promised land of heaven where you get to live with Jesus and He will wipe all the tears from your eyes.

When it comes to these persecutions, don't let them bother you. They are simply a witness that you are a follower of Jesus. Jesus Himself said,

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven."

This house, this family, this land -- these are the hundredfold gifts that Jesus gives to you who have left everything to follow Him. These are the gifts that strengthen and encourage you as you follow Jesus today and to eternal life.

And it only gets better. The day is coming when Jesus will come again in glory, to call you even from the grave, to re-unite your body and soul, and to take all of you, body and soul, to be with Him in this land of heaven, where you will feast at His banquet table forever and ever without end.

Peter says, "We've left everything to follow you." You can say that as well, for you have left things behind to follow Jesus. And to you Jesus has given wonderful, hundredfold gifts, gifts that encourage you, gifts that strengthen you, gifts that enable you to follow Jesus this day and to eternal life.

Amen.