

Pentecost 21 10/14/18
Mark 10:17-22 23B

SERMON TEXT IS THE APPOINTED GOSPEL READING FOR THIS SUNDAY, FROM THE 10TH CHAPTER OF MARK'S GOSPEL.

His bags are packed, he has his ticket in hand, the house is locked up, and the dog is boarded at the kennel because Jesus is setting out on his journey. But, he's going to have to wait a little while before He can actually take off. He has to wait because this man comes running up to Him, kneels before Him, and says, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life (v. 17)?"

That's a good question. Every human being, each and every one of us, wants to know what needs to be done in order to have eternal life.

And yet, this man's question sounds terribly confused. He asks what must I do to inherit eternal life. He wants to "do" something. If you inherit something, it is a gift; you don't "do" something to earn it. You have to wonder what's in this man's thoughts and heart that he would ask Jesus this question. So, it's best we just let Jesus handle the question.

Jesus responds by saying "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone" (v. 18). That's Jesus way of saying if you really want to know about good, I am going to point you to the one who is good – God Himself, the One who has eternal life that you are so desperate to inherit. Then, Jesus goes about answering the man's question. Jesus directs him to the Commandments of the 2nd Table, those which guide us in our relationship with our neighbor, "Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor you father and mother" (v. 19). The man asked "What must I do to inherit eternal life," and Jesus told him what he must do. If you are to "do"

something to inherit eternal life, do the Commandments, Jesus says. And, that is an excellent answer because this is what God's Word teaches, "You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD" (Lev. 18:5). You want do "do" something to inherit eternal life, do the Commandments.

Notice the response of this man, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth". His question has been answered. You would think he would get up, go home, happy and rejoicing, and Jesus would continue on His journey. He wanted to know what he had to do to inherit eternal life and Jesus said, "Do this," and the man said this is awesome, I've been doing this my whole life. Only thing is, the man does not get up. Kind of strange, isn't it? Question asked, question answered. But, he's still there, looking at Jesus. Why is that?

Could it be that he knows what you know? Could it be that this man on his knees is an awful lot like you? When you look at this man, you look at yourself. You know the Commandments. "Do not murder." You've never picked up a rock and murdered your neighbor. Check. "Do not commit adultery." You promised to be faithful to your spouse and you've kept that promise. Check on that one. "Do not steal." You leave other people's stuff alone. Check on that one. "Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud." And, you love mommy and daddy. Check, check, and check. All good, right? You kept the Commandments.

But, still the man is right there on his knees and you are right there with him. You know in your heart of hearts, you look good on the outside, but on the inside, it's not so good.

You know those words of Jesus that whoever calls his neighbor a fool "will be liable to the hell of fire" (Mt 5:22). And you know you've said worse

things than that. You've been awfully angry, especially with those who love you and you are closest to – your family, your co-workers, your classmates. And, you've allowed the sun to go down on your anger.

It may look on the outside that you've led a chaste and decent life, but what does your online viewing of those websites say about your lust and unholy desires?

Never stolen? How about being lazy at work, and stealing from your boss? Copied your neighbor's homework, by chance? When your neighbor needed help, did you help them improve and protect their property?

Have you gossiped? Spoken ill of your neighbor? Especially, in this political season, if someone belongs to political party or holds to a political position that is inconsistent with your own party or your position, you feel free to say whatever you want to say even when it destroys and defames that person's reputation, rather than taking issue with the position.

Honored your father and mother? How about with the posted speed limits?

Now you know why you are still there with this man on your knees, looking at Jesus. You have not kept the Commandments of God. You are guilty and you deserve only God's temporal and eternal punishment. You know what the Bible says in the book of James, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it" (James 2:10).

You know you are guilty and Jesus knows you are guilty, too. So, He turns to the man and He turn to you and says, "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" (v. 21). And on hearing that, the man is

disheartened and he goes away sorrowful “for he had great possessions” (v. 22). He has possessions in his life that he loves more than Jesus. He has stuff that he fears, loves, and trusts in more than God. He wants his possessions more than he wants eternal life. And when Jesus asked him to take a good look at his heart, he was disheartened by what he saw.

How about you? Jesus is asking you to take a look at your heart today. Are you disheartened? Are you disheartened in your heart of hearts because there is something – it could be your possessions, your money, your family, your time – that you fear, love, and trust in more than God? If you cannot keep the 1st Commandment, how can you keep the other nine? That’s why when Jesus says, “Go, sell it, get rid of it,” you go away disheartened and sorrowful.

Here’s the wonderful thing – why did Jesus say that to that man, and why does He say it to you? Mark says it is because Jesus “loved him” and He says it to you because He loves you. He loves you so much He asks you to take a look at your heart to show you your sin. In fact, He loves you so much that He calls you out of your sin.

Remember, when the man comes running up to Jesus and kneels before Him, Jesus is setting out on his journey. Do you know where He is going? He’s going to Jerusalem and He loves you so much that is going to continue His journey. He goes there to be arrested, tried, crowned with thorns, mocked, nailed to the cross, abandoned, and die. He goes there to carry all your sins to the cross of Calvary. He goes there to give His life as the payment and sacrifice for all your sins. He does that to pay the price of anything standing in the way of you having eternal life. And you can be certain of that because on the 3rd day, Jesus rose again from the dead for you.

And He does a most wonderful thing. By water and Word, He joins you to Himself so that you die with Him and rise with Him, so that you are dead to all the things that stand between you and eternal life. And, in that same water, He makes you God's own child. And as God's own child, you are an heir, an heir receiving all of God's good gifts in Christ Jesus – the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and everlasting salvation.

Those good gifts are given to you because of works. No, not your works, but the doing of your Lord Jesus Christ, who lived a perfect life keeping the Commandments for you, suffered and died for you because you did not keep the Commandments, and rose again for you, doing all that was necessary so that you could inherit eternal life.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.