

20 S. after Pentecost 10/10/21
Mark 10:17-22 23B

“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.”

In your Confirmation vows, you were asked,

"Do you intend faithfully to conform all your life to the divine Word, to be faithful in the use of God's Word and Sacraments, which are his means of grace, and in faith, word, and action to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death?"

I call those vows to your attention this morning, because they are, in essence, what Jesus is saying to the rich young man in our lesson.

The Evangelist begins by telling us that as Jesus “was setting out on His journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’” Notice his words, “What must I do...” He wants to do something. He wants to earn eternal life. He is under the mistaken lie of the devil that he can save himself by his works.

Jesus holds before him the Commandments of the 2nd Table, those Commandments which direct us in our love towards our neighbor: “Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and your mother.” Jesus does this to show him that he has not been the kind of neighbor God demands that he be. Jesus preaches the law to him so show him his sin. Seeing his sin, he would know he could not get into heaven by his works.

But, it didn’t work. Instead of seeing his sin, the man boasted that he had fulfilled what God demanded of him.

So Jesus continued: “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.” The problem of this rich young man was not that He had money and riches, his problem was that the attitude of his heart was all wrong.

You know the Commandments. And you know what you see in this rich young man? You see yourself.

You know the Commandments. “Do not murder.” You’ve never ended your neighbor’s life. 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 don’t take other people’s stuff. Check on that one. “Don’t bear false witness. Don’t covet your neighbor’s stuff. 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 before Jesus. And, you are right there with him. And you know the reason for that. Jesus says, “Follow Me”. But, the attitude of your sinful heart gets in the way.

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? How about someone with a different political point of view than yours?

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

The Evangelist tells us that the rich young man went away from Jesus, disheartened, sad, because “he had great possessions”. Hearing those words of Jesus in our lesson today, you are disheartened. That is because you have feared, loved, and trusted in many things more than 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).

But, there is Good News for you, Dear Child of God. The Evangelist tells us that Jesus “loved him”. Jesus loved this young man. And, Jesus loves you, Dear Child of God.

Remember, when the man comes running up to Jesus and kneels before Him, Marks tells us 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. The Bible says this of Jesus, “Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Ro 5).

Jesus did obey the Father’s will, even when that meant going to Jerusalem 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.

You cannot save yourself by your good works any more than this rich young man could save himself by his works. But, you are saved by works. No, not your works, but as we have just sung in that marvelous hymn, by the works 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.

II. Martin Luther once said, “God has the power to convert and renew sinful people so that their heart is torn loose from all earthly things and they cling to Him alone.”

That is what God did in our Baptism. 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.

This day, we pray, “Lord Jesus Christ, whose grace always precedes and follows us, help us to forsake all trust in earthly gain and to find in You our heavenly treasure.”

God gives us His grace so that we do subdue His creation, as He instructed us to do, by ruling over our possessions and stuff, and not allowing them to rule us. We do not fear, love, and trust in them above

Jesus Christ. God wants us to enjoy the gift of life He has given us and have fun in His creation, so we enjoy the financial security and the material things God in His love has so richly blessed us with. But, always, Christ is our heavenly treasure.