

Pentecost 21 {LWML Sunday} 10/13/24  
 Mark 10:17-22 23B

***“THEN COME, FOLLOW ME.”***

*But he left the linen cloth and ran away naked (Mk 14:52).* Those words are not meant to offend our sense of Christian piety, but to show a young man’s devotion to Jesus, especially at the time of our Lord’s betrayal and arrest. Many Bible scholars contend the young man who gave Jesus the clothes he was wearing was Mark, the very same rich young man who came to Jesus in our lesson. We know that Mark was from a very wealthy family. And, he was steeped in Jewish tradition which taught that you saved yourself by keeping the law of God; in other words, you saved yourself by your good works.

But given this is Mark – and, I firmly believe this rich young man was Mark, the same Mark who wrote the Gospel that bears his name -- the word Jesus spoke changed him. He went from loving his earthly possessions more than anything to, quite literally, giving Jesus the shirt right off his back.

This Sunday, Jesus speaks that same Word to you, “Come, follow Me.”

I. The Evangelist begins by telling us that as Jesus set out on a journey, *a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* He wants to do something. He wants to earn eternal life by his works. So, Jesus holds before him the commandments of the 2nd Table, those which direct us to love our neighbor, *“Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.”* Jesus preaches the law to him so show him his sin. Jesus wants him to see that

he has not been the kind of neighbor God demands that he be. 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, this rich young man man boasted that he had perfectly kept God's Commandments from his youth.

So Jesus continues, *"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 that the **attitude** of his heart was all wrong. He trusted in his material things more than Jesus. He loved the things of this world more than God.

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).

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

II. 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, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> day, Jesus rose again from the dead for you.

And, the Living Jesus calls to us, *“Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”* Unfortunately, I once heard of a sermon on this text in which the preacher said that no millionaire would ever get into heaven. That was a genuine misunderstanding of the words of Jesus. The richness Jesus is condemning has nothing to do with how much money or material possessions we have, but **in the attitude of our heart**. Jesus is not condemning us for having material possessions or savings in the bank. Jesus is calling to you and to me: “Fear, love, and trust in God above all things and come, follow me.”

III. 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. Through that blessing washing of regeneration, Jesus forgives us all of our sin, raises us to a new life in Him, and gives us a clean heart which loves Him more than anything!

But, as we follow Christ, we must ever remember that we walk in

danger all the way. The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh lead us to daily fear, love, and trust in many things other than our Creator and Redeemer.

What are the barriers in your life which beckon to you to place your trust in them? **Pride**, which closes our eyes and fixes our attention on self? **Possessions**, which keep us from true worship of God? The **cost** of discipleship itself leaves us sad and crushed, focusing the attention of our flesh not on what we gain in Christ, but rather what we must give up for Christ?

As God forgives us with His Word and as we eat His Body and drink His Blood, He strengthens us to be faithful so that we can love Jesus more than the things of this world, which is why we pray this day, “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.”

We find in Christ our heavenly treasure. And today, we can live as the “Little Christ” God has made us in our Baptism, serving our neighbor, and glorifying God by what we do.

Which is exactly what the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, the LWML, does. The LWML was established in 1942 as the official women’s auxiliary of the LCMS. For over 80 years ago, they have joyfully proclaimed Christ, support national and international missions, and equipped women to honor God by serving others.

May I share one example with you? The Mite Box. The Mite Box is intended for regular contributions of “mites” – offerings above and beyond the offering given local congregations and the Synod. You put all those mites and gifts together and, with a start of one grant for \$ 15,000, today the LWML has a mission goal of \$ 2,350,000 to fund 31 grants.

May I put that in even clearer focus, for you? Our little North Dakota District, 78 congregations of us, gave our two Concordia students this year in scholarships ... \$ 11,800. Roughly, about half of that amount came from what you are going to do in a few minutes – LWML mission mites.

Living and moving and having our being in Christ, we live as the wise stewards we are, doing all to the glory of God.