

## Written Copy: Mark 10:28-31 "Must We Leave Everything?"

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday @ Pentecost-Proper 24

Sunday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### Text: Mark 10:28-31

<sup>28</sup> Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." <sup>29</sup> Jesus said, "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, <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

### The text's intent

Jesus is providing a commentary on His interaction with the Rich Young Man. In the disciples' mind the rich were blessed by God and had His special favor. It this young man is not considered good enough how can earn eternal life? And they have given up everything to follow Jesus, does their sacrifice have no meaning, no bearing on their place in the kingdom? Jesus answers that as far as man is concerned, it is impossible for him to earn entrance into the kingdom, as impossible as it would be for a camel to be pushed through the eye of a sewing needle. But what is impossible with regards to man, is never impossible with regards to God. What man cannot do on His own Jesus has come to do for all men. He calls His disciples "dependent children", those who are no longer depending upon themselves or their earthly wealth or status but on Him alone. God has worked that miracle in their lives. Their giving up all that they had was not to enter the kingdom, but was a result of their entering, it was the result of their answer to the call to faith. All that they have given up will be more than replaced by the God who continues to grant gracious gifts through their fellowship in the Church. But along with that will be persecution. But the end result of God's supernatural work in them will be the unimaginable blessings of eternal life. But Jesus adds this note about their place in the kingdom now and looking forward to eternal life: those who see themselves as being in a place of prominence will be humbled, while those who see themselves like a child, least of all and servant to all will be exalted to reign and rule with Him.

### Focus Statement:

What is impossible for man to do, earn his way into the kingdom, either by selling his wealth, or even getting rid of his false god, is not impossible when God Himself is at work. Christ came to do what is impossible for us, to earn our way into the kingdom by His suffering and death. He gave up all that He had and humbled Himself to serve as our sacrifice. He obeyed all the laws and earned eternal life for us. And by His Gospel call makes us good enough to be in His kingdom now and forever.

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

We hear Jesus' call to the Rich Man to sell all that he has to earn eternal life and our hearts twinge, as those who have been blessed richly and abundantly. We hear Jesus describe the impossibility of any man to enter the kingdom as being harder than shoving a camel through the eye of a sewing needle. We worry that He may tell us to start selling our most prized possessions and give the money to the poor in order to be His disciple. We worry about whether we are first or last in His kingdom.

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

When Christ is on the throne of our life, we are no longer breaking the first commandment by having other gods. Because we've been saved, we now see our wealth as His gracious gifts to be used as such. And whatever we are called to give up is more than replaced by His continued gracious gifts to us, especially through the fellowship of believers. We allow the Spirit to humble us when we make ourselves important, because He will exalt us to rule with Him on the Last Day

### Subject Sentence: Christ calls, Christ earns, we follow by giving up

## **Introduction: Discomfort in the Gospel Message**

**Mark 10:28 Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you."**

I want to stop and let you consider this verse for a moment. Consider it, look inside yourself, and see how it really hits you. Does it cause any consternation within you? Think back to Jesus' call to Peter and his brother Andrew: **Mark 1:16-18** <sup>16</sup> **Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.** <sup>17</sup> **And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."** <sup>18</sup> **And immediately they left their nets and followed him.** And this wasn't just the case for these two disciples. When Jesus called the other 10 to be His disciples, they dropped what they were doing, gave up the life and the vocation they had, and followed Him. Now stop and consider for a moment, what if Jesus, when He called you, asked you to leave everything to follow Him?

**Mark 10:17 "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"**

Last week we heard a Rich Young Man approach Jesus with a question that should have some importance in our life as well as the lives of our loved ones. It's a question that many people don't give a lot of thought to, both those inside the Church and outside the Church. But it's the question that lies behind the answer to another question I have asked those who are nearing death: "When you draw your last breath in this world do you know where you will take your next one?" The answer often is "I think I will be in heaven, or at least I hope so." But they are not sure. This is not a sure and certain hope. This is someone wondering and worrying. They are not sure where their next breath will be because they are wondering "What must I do to inherit eternal life?", as well as the follow up to that question, "Have I done enough?"

Do you recall how Jesus' answered that Rich Young Man's question from last Sunday's Gospel Lesson? **Mark 10:21** **And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "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."** What if Jesus was saying that to you? How would you respond? Would you respond in the same manner that the Rich Young Man responded? **Mark 10:22** **Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.** Does this cause any consternation, any heartburn, and discomfort in your soul?

## What Does Jesus Want To Teach About Our Stuff and Salvation

Now if we were just to leave it right there, if we didn't have the section of the Gospel that is our assigned reading for today, we would have what many would call an excellent Stewardship Lesson. You want to be a good Christian and earn enough brownie points with God to live forever with Him in eternal life? Give all that you have to the Church so that we can bless the poor. Or at least give a good percentage of it. But if I was to preach that I would be leading you all astray from what Christ would have us know from this passage. I would be as evil as those Gospel of Prosperity preachers on TV who tell you that if you send them a big fat check God will surely bless you with abundance, because that's what Jesus came to give to you: peace and earthly prosperity. If I was to preach that I would expect you to get up and march out of here. But I'm not. Preaching that is a lie from the pits of hell. That is not what Jesus is saying to you and to me here today.

But thank God the Gospel Lesson doesn't stop there. It continues on with an important message for those TV preachers, as well as for you and for me. As the Rich Young Man leaves, Jesus looks intently at His disciples, not just looking at their facial expressions, but a look that knows their thoughts as well. He knows this is an important teaching moment. **Mark 10:23-24a** <sup>23</sup> **And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"** <sup>24a</sup> **And the disciples were amazed at his words.** Why are they amazed? Perhaps in their minds those who have great earthly wealth are greatly blessed by God. They can give large sums for their offering, they can afford to give the best lambs for sacrifice, surely God looks down with favor on them. How can it be difficult for them to earn eternal life?

Now we on the other hand might be breathing a little easier at this. When we look at our life most of us don't judge ourselves to be rich in the way that this Rich Young Man was. None of us are CEOs of the Fortune 500 companies. I'm not aware of any millionaires here among us, are you? But what would the rest of the world say about our lifestyle and our social standing? How many people in other countries might call you "rich"? When most of the world stives to live paycheck to paycheck, how well off are we? In a post found on CNBC.com the headline reads **"63% of Americans have been living paycheck to paycheck since Covid hit"**

Maybe you are one of those 63%, or close to it anyway. Maybe you feel that lets you off the hook. But what Jesus says next won't make you feel any better. **Mark 10:24b-25** <sup>24</sup> **But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God!"** <sup>25</sup> **It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.**" Notice in His second statement is general. How difficult it is for not just the rich, but anyone to enter the kingdom of God. How difficult? It would be easier to shove a full-grown camel through the eye of a sewing needle than for the rich person, or any person in fact, to enter the kingdom of God. Now, I don't know how big the needles were that they used back then, but the pictures I've seen don't make them any

bigger than what is used today. What is Jesus' point? It is impossible for any man, rich or not, to earn their way into Jesus' kingdom. That was exactly what the Rich Young Man asking in **Mark 10:17** "**Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?**" What must **I do**? Similar questions would be "How much do I need to give, how often do I need to attend church, how many stewardship events do I need to be a part of in order to earn eternal life?" Jesus' answer is, "**You could never do enough. But that's OK, I've done enough for you.**"

Why can we never do enough? Why tell that young man that he had to give up his wealth? Why warn us that it is hard for a person of wealth, or any person to enter His kingdom? The same reason why Peter's statement causes us unease. Because each one of us has a god that rules on the throne of our heart. That young man's god was worldly wealth. What is your god? What thing vies for the place that only belongs to Jesus? Is it money, your house, your possessions? Maybe it's you and your pride in all that you've worked hard for and accumulated. If Jesus isn't ruling, some false god is. And that prevents us from ever being good enough to earn eternal life.

But notice in Mark 10:24 Jesus addresses His disciples as "children". The term He is using is more accurately translated as "Dependent Children", those who are still living at home and being nurtured and cared for by their parents. He calls His disciples "dependent children" because they are in living dependent in Him. By faith they see Jesus as their Savior and their Lord. He called them to join Him, and they dropped everything to follow Him. How could they do that? The call of Jesus has the Holy Spirit at work to change their hearts and their minds. No longer were the false gods of the world, or they themselves ruling on the throne of their hearts. By the power of the Holy Spirit working through Jesus call He was ruling. The same thing is true of you when He called you.

You are here because Jesus called you in Baptism. **1 Peter 2:9** **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** When He called you to faith, it was faith in Him not only being your Savior, but your Lord. He changed your heart from trusting in yourself or your stuff, to trust in Him alone. By faith you trust in Jesus' death and resurrection being enough to earn for you a life lived with Him now, and eternal life to come. Jesus did what you and I could never do. He is God the Son who gave up His position with Father to come down and take on humanity, to become one of us, so that He might take your place on the cross and die your death. So that He might earn for you what you could never earn, life now and eternal life to come. Jesus took His disciples, and us, to the point of despair with the hard facts of the Law so that He could give them and you and me the wonderful, beautiful Gospel truth (**Mark 10:27**) **Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."** Jesus came to you in baptism and did the impossible, He gave you a new heart and a new life to be lived in faith toward Him and in fervent love toward one another. Jesus has already done the impossible for you.

## **What About the Stewardship Call to Give Up Everything?**

All this being said, Peter has an important follow-up question. **Mark 10:28 Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you."** Note that Peter did not have to give these things up in order to follow Jesus. He gave them up willingly after Jesus called Him, after faith changed his heart and mind, after his eyes were opened to see Jesus as his Savior and his Lord. The same is true of you. Perhaps you have given up quite a bit in your life lived out as a believer in Christ, as His disciple, as a member of this Church. But you did not do it in order to be saved. You were moved to do it as one whose heart and life has been changed by the Gospel.

So now how about those things we have given up as His disciples? As part of last weekend's "Stewardship by God's Design" emphasis we preached and taught that followers of Christ are to manage the gifts that He has given for His glory. We taught that all that we have and own really still belongs to God. He gives it to us to manage for Him, to be stewards of His varied gifts of grace. Does this mean that He is going to ask us to give until we are in the poor house? In order to be considered a faithful disciple must we give up everything the way Peter did? The way the other 11 disciples did?

Jesus emphatically tells you No! We "give up" the things of this world when we no longer let them rule on the throne of our lives as the most important thing. We give them up when we see them not as the end all, but gracious gifts that the Father gives us to use for our own lives, and in the lives of others in order to share the most important gift, that of the Gospel. Of course, when you follow Jesus, you stand against the way that the world lives. When that happens you may find yourself giving up friends and family members that can't understand how you see your stuff as gifts that still belong to God that you have the honor to manage. And there may be times that Christ calls you to give until it hurts out of love for another. What then?

**Mark 10:29-30 <sup>29</sup> Jesus said, "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, <sup>30</sup> 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.** Jesus is telling you and I that whatever we may give up in this life will be more than replaced. Now this is not a "Prosperity Gospel Message". I'm not telling you that if you give an offering of \$100 you will find an extra \$500 in your bank account tomorrow. But serving our Lord with our time, talents, and treasures brings blessings from God as we serve Him as members of His kingdom, doing it not to be saved, but because we have been saved and redeemed by His sacrifice on the cross. When we give of our time, talents, and treasures in the service of His kingdom we receive the joy that comes from the faith relationship we have with Him. When you seek to serve Him in His kingdom and do the ministry He has given you, He promises to provide whatever is needed for His plan and His purposes.

But it's not just you alone, it's you at work in conjunction with the Church. He blesses each one of us who make up His body in this place with His gracious gifts for us to manage individually, as well as His Church serving in the world. In either case He doesn't want us to give everything away. With those gifts He gives us to manage He expects us to support our families, as well as the family that is the Church so that we can continue on in the mission of building one another up so that we may be filled and prepared for service to Him in our various callings in life, as well as the ministry He has given for this Church to do. While He did call Peter and the 12 to give up all they had, there call is not the same as your call. He calls some to be missionaries, He calls some to be Pastors, and these calls do require that those called give up more of their earthly stuff than others. But most of you are not called in to those vocations. Your lifelong task is to wrestle with the Holy Spirit concerning how much of your time, talents, and treasures He wants you to keep for yourself, and how much He wants you to give back in service to Him and the spreading of the Gospel. He does bless faithful management of these things with continued and varied blessings according to our call and life situation. And the blessings we receive don't end with this life. We look forward to blessings and gifts beyond imagination in eternal life to come.

## **Conclusion**

Must you sell all you have and give it to the poor in order to enter into Jesus' kingdom? No, not unless you are trying to earn **your way** into His kingdom. And why would you ever try to do that? It's impossible to earn your salvation. Jesus has already done that for you on the cross and the empty tomb. Must you leave everything like Peter did in order to follow and serve Jesus? Not in the manner that Peter did. Unless He calls you to be a missionary or head off to the seminary. Jesus wants you to keep your house, your car, your job, and your vocation. They are all gracious gifts He has given you. What He does want is for you to give up exclusive ownership of them. He wants you to remove them from the throne of your heart and your life and let the Holy Spirit put Jesus back on that throne where He belongs. That consternation you feel is the Holy Spirit working repentant faith in your heart and your life. He wants you to know that what you give back to Him is not lost, its just replaced, sometimes in more valuable ways. Some of the money that you give might come back to you in an unexpected way, but it would be for the purpose of putting it back into the work of taking care of your vocational responsibilities and for building God's kingdom here on earth. And we are repaid with the love and fellowship we have as the Church where you can find your need supplied with surplus. Here in the body of Christ that is the Church your gifts of time, talent, and treasure benefit me just as mine benefit you. And together we work to share the saving Gospel with those who are wondering and worried about "What I must do to inherit eternal life?" and "Have I done enough?" They need to know the sure and certain Gospel answer that Christ has given to us and wants us to pass on to them: ***"You could never do enough. But that's OK, believe that I've done enough for you."*** Amen.