

Twentieth Sunday After Trinity
October 14, 2018
Pastor Matthew Ude

Mark 10:17-22 ¹⁷ Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. ¹⁹ "You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" ²⁰ And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." ²¹ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." ²² But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

The important part of this text is verse 21 – “Jesus, looking at him, loved him”

Notice how much Mark emphasize that Jesus really looked at him. You don't have to be an incarnate deity in order to see many of this man's failings. They are right there on the surface of our text. His arrogance, his hypocrisy, his selfishness, these things are all right there in the text obvious to us all. But Jesus saw the man. He saw more than this. He saw his heart and his soul. He saw all the dirty secrets, all the lies, all the lusts and foolishness.

What shameful thoughts we would see if your minds were open to us right now, if we could dig into the depths of your memory and put the images and feelings on a screen?

.Jesus saw all this and his reaction was, love. He loved the man.

We try so hard to hide these things even from Jesus. But we can't and why should we? We try so hard to hide them to be worthy to be loved. But Jesus knows and sees them anyway and his reaction is to love us anyway.

The man came running

Why was he running? He was so eager to get to Jesus. He was so eager to kneel before him. He was so eager to ask his question. But why? Well you might say he wanted to know how to gain eternal life, and isn't that a good thing? I think what he wanted was for Jesus to say, "hey good job." You don't have to do anything more. Your good to go. I think it's pretty obvious from the text that is what he wanted and what he was expecting

This is a common human failing. Deep down we know it's not true. Deep down we know how sinful we really are. So we try to get others to reassure us. We really want others especially Jesus to tell us, yeah it's all right, you've done a good job.

As Paul warns,

2 Timothy 4:3-4 ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Many people these days that is all they want is a pastor that will tell them what good people they are.

But Jesus loved him and us too much to lie and pretend like it's no big deal. Jesus preached the law; Jesus kept preaching the law hoping the man would stop pretending and confess his sin. Because Jesus loved him he desired that he would recognize his own sin.

what shall I **do** that I may **inherit** eternal life?

Again the man shows his ignorance. This man comes before Jesus professing to know the scriptures, professing to have studied them every day of his life. Yet he doesn't understand anything.

I DO – over and over again the scriptures clearly teach that man does nothing. God does everything.

That I may earn or possess my inheritance – Over and over again scripture teaches that the kingdom of God is not anything we can earn or buy. It is a free gift which God gives to all.

Sure this guy knew the Ten Commandments, but he forget all the stories that are so much more important.

God **gave** the garden to Adam and Eve. They didn't earn it and when they sinned God **gave** them the promise that he would send a savior. He didn't tell them they needed to climb back up to his good graces.

While Abraham was still in UR, and still worshiping false gods, God **gave** him the promise of a son through whom would come the messiah. There was nothing that Abraham had to do except sit back and wait to see how God would fulfill his promises.

God brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. Even when they kept complaining and trying to go back, God dragged them out.

God gave them a new land, before they learned to obey, before they were worthy. They didn't earn it but it was **given** to them.

Over and over again, story after story, God gives. Man does nothing.

What must I DO to BUY eternal life? This guy spent his life studying God's word and yet he had clearly learned nothing. He thought he knew everything and yet he understood nothing. And yet Jesus loved him.

And because he loved him, he wanted him to learn that the things of the earth are worthless in the eyes of God, that he could not buy the gifts of God with either money or works. But that they are freely given to everyone.

So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God.

With these words Jesus does not deny that He himself is good, but he rejects the idea of what is good that his man is proposing. This man does not see Jesus as God but as a man. When he calls Jesus good he is assuming in his heart that man can achieve goodness. And when he kneels before him, he does not worship him as his savior, but instead he sees in Jesus a man he would like to emulate and thus he would like to become.

The Savior will not suffer this word "good" because it was not directed towards God but towards man. And it was said in the belief that this was something that man could attain. This man wishes to become like Jesus, knowing neither who Christ was nor the cross which Christ has come to bear.

There are only two ways that the man can answer Jesus statement. One is to admit that no man is good, and therefore he himself is not good. The second is to recognize that Jesus is God who had come to save him.

If we call Christ good because we know that we are evil and we seek his mercy and forgiveness, then we have what we ask for mercy and forgiveness. If we call Christ good because we think we can follow his example, then we know neither Christ nor forgiveness.

And yet Christ loved him. Even in this arrogance in which he thought that he could be like Christ, Christ saw him and loved him and sought to bring him to repentance so that he would receive the gift and not try to earn what was freely given.

"Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

All these things refers of course to the list of commandments Jesus just gave, which is what we usually call the second table of the law. That is all the commandments (4-10) which talk about how we ought to treat one another.

I said before that the guy knew the Ten Commandments but not the stories. But even the commandments he obviously did not know if he thinks he is able to say "all these things I have kept from my youth."

We can take just one example. You shall not steal. What does this mean? It means I will do nothing in word or deed to get for myself that which belongs to my neighbor. Even to look at our neighbor and say to myself, why should he get that and not me, I deserve that thing, is to steal in my heart.

How frustrating for Jesus to see this man's thoughts, to see every time he was angry or bitter or covetous, every mean and shameful word and action and then to hear him say, "all these things I have kept from my youth."

Yet again Jesus' reaction was not to get angry or give up but his reaction was love. Love that tried once again to get this man to understand, the problem is that your heart is evil.

"Go and sell all that you have."

Jesus doesn't require us to give up everything we own. Jesus does not teach that all rich people are going to hell. He is not proposing that communism is the correct way. He is telling this man and us LOOK AT YOUR HEART. You want to think you are a good person, look at your heart. What is it you love more the things of men or the things of God?

Jonathan Swift paints a very vivid picture of our hearts in his book Gulliver's Travels. Gulliver travels to the land of the horse people. There are living among them a group of savage humans, whom the horse people despise. They spend all their time living in filth and fighting with one another over the diamonds that lie everywhere on the beaches. Gulliver doesn't want the horse people to despise him so he lies and says that he doesn't care about the diamonds. He sneaks out at night to fill his pockets with the diamonds but as he walks back he sees one of the horse people watching him. He has to walk back in shame. Surely this man must have felt the same way. Walking away knowing he loved the bobbles of this life over the things of God.

How much does Jesus love us? He loves us so much that he gave us his law. He wants us to study that law daily so that we will be able to see that our hearts are filthy sin filled things. He gave us the law that we may see that our lives are pathetic and shameful. So that we will stop trying to brag and boost what good people we are. We will stop trying to earn our salvation. And instead we will gladly eager accept the free gift of life that he gives to us.

Despite everything Jesus loved this man, and us. For he did not send this man away without the Gospel.

"Take up your cross and follow me"

What is our cross? It is nothing more or less than this that we acknowledge that we are sinners, that whatever difficult or bad or suffering might happen to us is far less than we deserve, but that Jesus loves us anyway, died for us and freely gives us eternal life. This man did not yet learn repentance, but when he did Jesus wanted him to know that He Jesus would be there for

him, and the cross, to give him forgiveness and life eternal in his name. Just as he is there for us as well.

AMEN