

21st Sunday after Pentecost
“One Thing” (Mark 10:17-21)
October 13, 2024
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Mark 10:21.

**“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.”**

So far the text...

One came running and knelt before Jesus. Who was this man? Our parallel readings from Matthew 19, and Luke 18 describe him as a very rich young ruler. How this young man acquired his wealth and what he ruled is not given to us in the Bible. Most likely he was a ruler of the synagogue, very acquainted with the Word of God. The commandments were not a new revelation for him for he boasts that he has known them from his youth and kept them all!

He certainly recognizes Jesus as a Teacher of God’s Word and comes to Him with a nagging question. “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Probably this young man was born into a wealthy family and had received a very rich inheritance. He was set for this life, but what about the next life? He was concerned about receiving this inheritance of eternal life.

His great wealth made him immune to the fluctuations of the economy. He could easily withstand high inflation with his plentiful reserves, unlike the common man who quickly goes into debt when food prices quickly rise 20 percent like that have in the last three years here in the United States.

This rich young man had everything going for him, except one thing. Jesus looks into his heart and quickly sees its emptiness behind the outer layers of rich clothing and worldliness. And that one thing that the young man lacks, Jesus brings to his attention by starting with the very greeting that he gives Jesus. With great love, Jesus tests this man. Pass the test and you receive eternal life. Fail and leave in utter sadness.

“Good Teacher”. Why do you call Me good? **“No one is good but One, that is, God.”**

Are you calling Me God? Do you believe that I, Jesus of Nazareth, am true God? Do you therefore trust in Me above all things? Above your riches. Are you willing to depart with your riches to follow Me? This was outline of the test.

First, examine yourself and know that no one is good. Scripture tells us this clearly in Psalm 14.

“The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. 3 They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.”

And to help with the self-examination Jesus lists some of the commandments, doesn't He? Of course, we just finished going through the Book of James in September in our epistle readings and James 2:10 is most applicable here in this situation.

“James 2:10

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”

The rich young man heard Jesus review the commandments with him and he quickly responds, “Not a problem. I've kept them all from my youth.” Yes, I've been a good boy. But, God requires perfection, sinlessness, not just from this young rich man, but from all of us.

His test is our test. His self-examination is our self-examination, for all who are here in worship and all who are listening to this live stream. There is not a single person, pastors, elders, presidents who can truthfully say that they have kept all the commandments perfectly. Fact check yourself and you will find yourself lacking.

Jesus helps this young man with some fact checking by zeroing in on his most obvious weakness – his love and trust in money. Again, who or what is your god? Is it money or the Good Teacher who is speaking to the young rich man? For where you find your contentment is your god. Riches are a blessing from God, of course, and God wants us to enjoy them. But they can never be our refuge and strength. They can never be THE source of our happiness. For if they are taken away, is there only sadness and depression?

How quickly can riches be lost with a tornado that touches down or flood waters that sweep everything away as we have witnessed with hurricanes Helene and Milton in these last weeks. What is the reaction of the Christian when faced with losses of property and possessions? What is your reaction? Is it Paul's response as he says in Philippians 4?

“I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to [d]be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Jesus puts the young rich man to the test by telling him to sell all his possession and give it to the poor. Your god, money, won't save you and give you eternal life. Why do cling to it like does? Give it away and cling to Me! Follow Me! Trust in Me and you will have treasure in heaven.

The one thing that this young rich man lacked was trust and faith in the one true God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He, of course, lacked many things in the many ways he had not kept the commandments. He lacked the righteousness needed to enter heaven for he like all of us had not kept the commandments perfectly. But what he then truly lacked – the one thing that is necessary – was a complete trust in Jesus. For Jesus is the one way to heaven. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father except by Jesus. John 14:6.

And this rich young man clung to what was his god and rejected the hand of the one true God. In great love, Jesus reached out to him to show him the one way to heaven, but he rejected it. Oh, how so many people reject the invitation of Jesus! May it not be any of us who are hearing His word right now.

The rich young man left in sadness. For there is only sadness where there are no true riches. No amount of wealth can gladden the soul and take away the sting of sin and death.

Jesus had just held a little child in His arms right before the rich young man had come as we heard last week. Jesus had just said this:

“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”

How does one enter the kingdom of God – through faith in Jesus, simple trusting faith.

After the rich young man had departed, Jesus talked to his disciples and said.

“Children, (yes, you who trust in Me with a simple faith) how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!”

The rich young man very likely had an upstanding reputation with no public gross sins that the people could point to. If anyone could get into heaven, he would be a good candidate. He had everything going for himself – riches, power. So, the disciples say among themselves, “Who then can be saved?”

And Jesus gives them and all of us the plain truth. **“With men it is impossible”**. Impossible. Yes, men can launch a rocket from Boca Chica like this morning into the heavens and catch the booster, but sinful man cannot enter the kingdom of God.

But Jesus quickly relieves our sadness by saying:

“but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

Jesus came and offered His sinless self for the sins of all people once and for all on the cross and rose to prove that it is true. He gives the impossible to the world. His payment of sins for all people by His shed blood. He offers this very body and blood to us to eat and drink for the remission of sins, for all the commandments that we have not kept, for all the gods that we have put before the one true God. And He says go in peace.

Your baptism seals to you the inheritance of heaven itself. Commit to memory Titus 3:4-7.

“4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He

saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Heirs of eternal life through your baptism. Your inheritance has been graciously given to you by Jesus. You couldn't earn it. That's impossible – not by works of righteousness which we have done - But according to His mercy He saved us!

How? By the washing of regeneration! Baptism! You are justified by His grace! Jesus has worked the impossible for you! This fact has been checked. It is the truth! Follow Him now. Forsake all gods, take up your cross and follow Him alone to heaven!

We don't know if the rich young man ever repented. We do know of another rich short man who did. Zacchaeus was his name. And after he received Jesus invitation to come to his house, Zacchaeus believed and voluntarily gave half his riches to the poor and repaid four fold anyone who had defrauded. What did Jesus say to him?

9 “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:9-10)

Lost but now found. Earthly riches forsaken for heavenly treasure. The impossible done by Jesus. Yes, Jesus is good. And He calls all who trust in Him good and holy. For you are a...

“chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” 1 Peter 2:9

Amen.

“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)