

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 21  
Saturday, October 16, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, October 17, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

# “Our Daily Bread”

Mark 10:23-31

What we hear in our Gospel reading today is a continuation of what we heard last week. There was a rich young man who asked Jesus the wrong question. He asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replies, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”

So this rich young man addresses Jesus as “Good Teacher.” Now it is certainly not wrong for anyone in that day to refer to Jesus as “Teacher.” He was a rabbi. He was a teacher. On Easter morning, we are told in John’s Gospel that Mary Magdalene cried out, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher), when she realized that it was Jesus risen from the grave who was speaking to her.

However, very often, always in Matthew, and very often in Mark and Luke, when someone uses the title “rabbi” or “teacher” as a way of addressing Jesus, it is an indicator to the reader as to how Jesus’ interaction with the person addressing Him is going to go. In the coming verses in Mark 10, when James and John ask Jesus for one of them to sit at His right and the other His left in His Kingdom, they address Him as “Teacher.” Immediately after that, the blind man Bartimaeus cries out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” When someone who is faithful approaches Jesus seeking healing or mercy upon their circumstance in life, they very often call Him “Lord” or “Son of David.”

So the man asks, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus shows mercy to this man by answering his question with a question, rather than answering with the actual answer. “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.” What a merciful response. Jesus offers a leading question opening the door for this man to recognize Him as the One who is good, as the Messiah, as the Son of David. But he doesn’t make that confession of faith

So Jesus answers his question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus says, “You know the commandments: Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.” And the man says, “All these I have kept.”

Jesus says, (as a loving gesture we are told) “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 last part of that statement is really the important part: “Come, follow Me.”

The young man’s problem is that not only does he assume that there is something he must do to inherit eternal life, but he assumes that there is something he can do. So now Jesus gives him something to do. He must sell his possessions and give it all to the poor. It is not in the action of giving to the poor that he would earn salvation. If he sold all he had, gave it away, and would come and follow Jesus as a disciple, he would have eternal life because he would know Jesus as his Lord and as the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of David; and not just as another “teacher.” He would inherit eternal life because he answered the call to “Come, follow Me.”

We are told that he went away sorrowful because he could not leave behind his many possessions. This demand of Jesus to sell everything and give away everything was unique to this man's spiritual needs. His "god" needed to be destroyed to make room in his soul for the Living God, for Jesus. He chooses his wealth and his trust in his own piety and goodness (even though deep down he knows that it is insufficient).

It pays for all of us to "examine ourselves" and recognize the other "gods" which make demands on our lives. What is your "god" which gets in the way of your relationship with the Living God. For many people it is money. Luther often writes about "mammon" (money and possessions) being the most common false god.

In today's Gospel, we hear how Jesus used this encounter as an object lesson for His disciples. Time and again, Jesus warns His disciples about the deceitfulness of wealth. Having wealth is not the problem. The problem comes when a person does not have a proper understanding of the burden that comes with having been blessed with an overabundance of possessions.

As Jesus says elsewhere, with those who have been given much, much more will be demanded. And that is true in regard to money, possessions, talent, time; all that we have is a gift from God which we are to use to His glory and for the furthering of His kingdom.

Jesus is not suggesting that we sell everything that we own, give it away, and go off to some monastery. The church went through that period and it was not very beneficial for the spread of the Gospel. However, how we use our gifts;

how we use our talents; what kind of stewards we are of the blessings we have received; this does matter.

The intentional nature of how we return thanks to God speaks volumes about our attitude toward who we believe the owner of our life and our possessions truly is. As we just sang, “We give Thee but Thine own . . . all that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord from Thee.” This is why tithing has always been a good guideline. It makes us think about who is truly the owner of what we have. We set aside that portion for the Lord first.

When Jesus tells His disciples that 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, He is warning them against placing their trust in themselves or in their possessions or comforts of life. Satan is very crafty. It is so easy to seek and find hope and peace in the comfortable life.

Be honest with yourself. I know that in my sinful nature, I read those words that 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, but I sure would like to try.

As we look at our lives and the many blessings with which our Lord has cared for us, we are reminded at the end our reading today that we can be certain that we will have persecutions in this life and eternal life in the age to come. Beyond that, we are taught to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” And we pray that the Lord would shield us and give us strength to resist trusting in our riches or anything which separates us from the Living God and sacrifice which Christ made which is our only hope for eternal life – that we may daily answer Jesus call to “Come, follow Me.” Amen.