Twenty First Sunday After Pentecost – October 13th, 2024

Introduction to the Day

The rich man who comes to ask Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life is a good man, sincere in his asking. Mark’s gospel is alone in saying that Jesus looked on him and loved him. Out of love, not as judgment, Jesus offers him an open door to life: sell all you own and give it to the poor. Our culture bombards us with the message that we will find life by consuming. Our assemblies counter this message with the invitation to find life by divesting for the sake of the other.

**Greeting – The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

And also with you.

**Welcome**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,

who forgives all our sin,

whose mercy endures forever.

**Amen.**

Let us confess our sin and come to God for healing.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Gracious God,

**have mercy on us.**

**We confess that we have honored you with our lips, but have harmed our neighbors with our tongues.**

**The cravings at war within us cause conflicts and disputes.**

**In our desire to be first we make distinctions among ourselves.**

**We place the needs of the poor and the suffering last.**

**In your great mercy, forgive us our sins.**

**Draw near to us with grace in time of need,**

**and turn us to follow in the way of Jesus Christ,**

**our Savior and Lord.**

**Amen.**

God promises to forgive our iniquity

and to remember our sin no more.

By grace you have been saved.

In the name of ☩ Jesus Christ,

the source of eternal healing,

your sins are forgiven.

**Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn “Gather Us In” #532 vss 1, 3, 4**

**Prayer of the Day**

Gracious God, we thank you for the community that is Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd. We are grateful for the lives impacted, relationships built, and the mission we share in the neighborhood and larger community.

We turn our hearts and minds to the future, knowing that your work is not done here. Enlighten and enliven us to come together in confidence, courage, and hope. Fill us with your life-giving love. Give us generous hearts to commit fully to the work of the **“Building Together for Generations to Come”** Capital Campaign.

Stir in us a desire to contribute to a creative and faithful legacy. As we go forward, bless this campaign to be a blessing to others. May all that we do lead others into a relationship with you and bring honor and glory to your name. AMEN

**Capital Campaign Verse - Colossians 2:6-7**

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him,

established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

**Reading - Psalm 90:12-17**

**12 So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.**

13 Return, O Lord; how long will you tarry? Be gracious to your servants.

**14 Satisfy us by your steadfast love in the morning; so shall we rejoice and be glad all our days.**

15 Make us glad as many days as you afflicted us and as many years as we suffered adversity.

**16 Show your servants your works, and your splendor to their children.**

17 May the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us; prosper the work of our hands; prosper our handiwork.

The word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel – Mark 10:17-31**

17As [Jesus] was setting 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?” 18Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’ ” 20He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” 21Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” 22When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

 23Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” 24And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” 26They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” 27Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

 28Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” 29Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

The Gospel of Our Lord.

Praise to you, O Chri**st.**

**Sermon**

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

“Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God.”

I’d imagine your attention trailed off after you heard that line, so let’s just go back to it. You likely found yourself trying to imagine what it would even look like for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. It is an odd image. One that makes no sense. But, the point Jesus is making seems pretty clear.

It is impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. That is your Gospel Good News for today. Okay, maybe not.

Let’s all take a deep breath and a step back and look at this again.

Jesus is approached on his journey by a rich man who comes and humbly kneels before him. Likely having heard the preachings and teachings of weeks past, that have been all about how we are to be a part of God’s expansive grace and open up the Body of Christ to all who long for it, the rich man comes and asks, “what must ***I*** do…to inherit eternal life?”

So, Jesus educates him, or more accurately he reminds him of what he knows. “You know the commandments…yes?” In naming these commandments, notice that Jesus does *NOT* mention the commandments that speak to our relationship with God. 1. Have no other God; 2. Don’t make wrongful use of God’s name; 3. Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. This closer look shows us that Jesus is already keenly aware that this rich man’s focus has been on those earthly things that he has been warning us about holding onto, while forgetting about our relationship and connection to God our creator.

And, sure enough, he tells us just as much, “looking at him, and loving him, he said, ‘You lack one thing…” I would argue hear that the one thing that he lacks is the greatest commandment and the second that is like it. Love God with every fiber of your being and love your neighbor as yourself. What does that look like? “Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.”

And the man was grieved because he had much. And he didn’t want to let go of it. “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

There is a legend that Jesus was referring to a hole in the Jerusalem gate when he used this imagery. I say legend because there is no historical record of this actually being the case, and in fact the opening in the Jerusalem gate wasn’t actually referred to as the “Eye of the Needle” until the 9th century at the earliest. So, while this was an example added in later years it still illustrates the point Jesus is trying to make.

For a camel to get through the eye of a needle, whether that’s a needle pulling thread or a small window in the Jerusalem wall, it is going to have to get smaller. What are camels used for? Carrying possessions. To get through the eye of the needle, whatever that needle is, that camel is first going to get rid of all that it is carrying. The camel is going to need to let go of all that its owner is asking it to carry. That is step one.

So, what is Jesus saying to us in this text? Where do we find ourselves? Are we to stop off at the pawn shop on the way home and get rid of our things? Is facebook marketplace going to be flooded with estate sales of members of Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd? I don’t think so.

What Jesus is telling us, and what Jesus is doing in not including the Godly relationship commandments in the list that the man has adhered to, is telling us that it is not those things that define us. Jesus isn’t saying to full on let go of those possessions, but rather to let go of what it is that we tell ourselves those possessions mean for us as people of faith. We are defined number 1 by the mark that we all share and that is the cross of Christ in baptism.

It is in that mark that Jesus calls us into relationship with one another, and, echoing themes of weeks past, brings us into relationship with God. That is what defines us. Not stuff. Not our baggage. Not those earthly possessions that we could never let go of. It is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Because with God and for God, all things are possible.

Jesus again, and again, and again, and again, and now for a 5th week in a row, reminds us that to be a part of of the Body of Christ, the Kingdom of God, is to imagine how it is that God’s embrace may be made even greater. Who is it that we are missing? Who is it that we have been denying? What must we do, not to inherit eternal life, but to live out the promise that we already have?

Jesus closes by changing the command of a few weeks ago to be last and servant of all, to an indictment of those who live their life longing to be first. Like it or not, those who live their life being first and fighting for first, are going to be last. And, those who’ve lived their lives being knocked down and discarded and being in last, are going to be first.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

**Hymn of the Day “Take My Life, That I May Be” #685 vss 1, 2, 5, 6**

**Apostle’s Creed**

**Prayers**

Challenged by God’s Word in Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and the whole creation.

*A brief silence.*

Compassionate God, embolden the church to seek all who are lost, clothe those who are naked, and mend what is broken. May we be generous bearers of your eternal love. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Sustaining God, as we approach harvest time, we pray for farmers, field workers, and those who process crops. Keep us mindful of environmental threats to the nourishing food that feeds the world. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Steadfast God, inspire world leaders to share resources and work collectively to end global poverty, starvation, and preventable disease. Direct us to seek justice and equity, that all may live in peace. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray for those who are afflicted, tormented, grieving, oppressed, and lonely. We pray especially for Becky, Dawn, *Grady and Jace, Matt, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Cherri, Peggy, John, Judy, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Dan and Sharon, Roger and MaryLee.* Deliver the strength of your love and compassion to all who need it today. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Generous God, we give thanks for the first nations and tribes who inhabited this land (*local Indigenous tribes or settlements may be named*). We lament the harm done by colonization. Call us to deeper appreciation and care for the languages, rituals, and history of all Indigenous people. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Ever-living God, we rejoice to be heirs of the eternal life made real in Jesus' death and resurrection. We give thanks for saints of all times and places, first and last, who still inspire us to faithful living. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the saving grace you freely give, both now and forever.

**Amen.**

**Peace**

**Offering**

**Offertory Prayer**

Blessed are you, O God,

source of every gift of your creation.

By these gifts and with our lives,

help us to serve one another and all in need,

through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**Sacrament of Holy Communion**

**Lord’s Prayer**

Jesus welcomes you to this table.

Come, here is your God.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Holy God,

you have welcomed us to this meal

and fed us with dignity at your table.

Send us now to welcome others

and to be at peace with one another,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Sending**

Go in peace. Follow Jesus!

**Okay! We will! Thanks be to God.**

And all of Good Shepherd said,

**“AMEN”**

**Sending Hymn “We Are Marching in the Light of God” #866**

**Blessing**

God all mighty,

God most merciful

☩ bless you, keep you,

and give you peace.

**Amen.**

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