

## SERMON FOR SUN. OCT. 17, 2021

Pent 21B Mark 10:23-31 “The God Who Loves Us”

Dear fellow redeemed of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in last week’s Gospel lesson, we heard of a rich young man who had come to Jesus full of excitement and hope.

He wanted to enter the kingdom of God and he was willing to do whatever it took to do so . . . except for one thing: he would not let go of his wealth. And so, he went away, filled with sorrow.

Today, we hear Jesus’ response, and we hear that not only this rich young man sad, but Jesus was also filled with sorrow.

Can you hear the sorrow in His voice, as Jesus, with a heavy heart and perhaps still looking at the young man walking away, says to His disciples: **“How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”**

Mark tells us that **the disciples were amazed at his words**. Perhaps because they thought that those God has so richly blessed would be those most thankful to Him! Or maybe because they assumed that God favored the rich which was why they had such great material blessings.

But it is often not that way, is it? Gifts become gods, and what has been given becomes more important than the Giver of all good gifts.

So important that we will not let go of it . . . or maybe even *cannot*, because we cannot imagine life without it.

And while that is a danger with *all* the things that God has given us in this world and life (or that we *want* Him to give us!), Jesus wants you to know that wealth and the possessions it can afford are particularly spiritually dangerous.

And whether you live in first century Israel or 21st century America, it doesn’t take long to see how true that is. Like the rich young man, our wealth makes us sorrowful, not joyful, fretful, not secure.

Consider Solomon, who wrote the Old Testament reading today from Ecclesiastes. If anybody in history had it made, it was him! His riches, his kingdom, his wisdom - he had it all . . . and yet he was miserable, sorrowful.

Material things had become his gods, **and while he loved them, they did not love him back**. And the more he loved them, the emptier he became, the more loveless he became, and the more hopeless and vain acquiring wealth seemed.

This is a pattern that repeats itself far too often. We think: **“If I can just have this, then I’ll be good.”** But **this** always leads to **that**.

Godliness with contentment is great gain, but not many of us are content. This discontent plays itself out in various ways.

That is why so many credit cards are maxed out. It is why so many families are being destroyed. It is why so many who have so much have so little joy and contentment.

Why? Because ***we love what we have, but what we have doesn't love us.***

And so we search, and we cling, and we work, and we hope yet, like Solomon, what we once deemed crucial and valuable one day seems so empty and hollow the next.

So, godly joy is absent. Instead of love, but find sorrow. We find false gods who take but do not give back.

That's why in the verses of the Holy Gospel we heard last week, there was a little comment in the middle of the reading that seemed inconsequential, but which turns out to be so important. We were told: "**And Jesus, looking at him, loved him.**"

That's the crux of it all right there. It is the difference between all false gods and the one true God: ***only the One true God loves you.***

All other gods take; the one true God gives.

All other gods leave you empty; the one true God fills you.

All other gods give sorrow; the one true God gives life.

And so in love, our God did something much more difficult than threading **a camel through the eye of a needle.**

He sent us a Savior. Jesus wasn't engaging in holy hyperbole, no ***Jesus meant what He said.***

Unless and until you can put your big, fat, sinful, camel-self through the eye of a needle, you will never get yourself into the kingdom of heaven. The disciples understood this, which is why they immediately asked: "**Then who can be saved?**"

Jesus tells them: "**All things are possible with God.**"

God didn't put a camel through the eye of a needle, He did something much, much *greater*: **in love, He put His almighty and infinite Son through a virgin's womb.**

That His Son, clothed in our flesh and blood, love us to death. That we who are dead in our trespasses and sins and clinging to our false gods, be loved to life.

And so Jesus comes to give us what no one and nothing else can: love. True love. Eternal love.

And so in love He is born, and in love He lives. In love, He ascends the cross, and in love, He dies. In love, He takes our sins, and in love, He gives us forgiveness and life.

For just as with the rich young man, so it is true for you: ***Jesus, looking at you, loves you.***

Not because you deserve it, but because that is who your God and Savior is and what He does: love.

Today the almighty and infinite Son of God comes to you in the bread and wine of His Supper, doing something ***much greater than putting a camel through the eye of a needle.***

***He puts*** His body into your mouth and pours His sinless blood over your sin-parched lips, thus giving life to the dead, forgiveness to the sinful, and salvation to the needy.

Not because bread and wine can do such great things, but because when God declares something to be so, He can.

He can, and in love, He does. So that you do not walk away from Him in sorrow. In fact, that you do not walk away from Him at all, for He goes with you wherever you go each day.

Here He gives you the greatest gift of all: *the gift of Himself*, to be with you always. That we may cling not to the things of this world but to Him.

To Him who ***has been tempted as you are tempted, and who can thus sympathize with you in your weakness.***

That at all times and each day we have the mercy and grace we need. For whatever struggle you have, for whatever problem you face, for whatever temptation comes your way.

In troubled times it's hard to cling to your Savior when the world seems to offer such easy alternatives and solutions.

And so seduced, many walk away from Christ, clinging to false hope, false promises, and false gods.

So Jesus gives you this promise today, that ***“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, 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.”***

That's three promises, actually, that Jesus gives you there: 1. The promise of the church as your family; 2., The promise that your enemy, Satan, will persecute you, but that you will overcome; and 3. The promise of eternal life.

So you see, You and I are very rich young men and women indeed. Not, perhaps, rich in the things of this world, but rich with the kingdom of God.

And those heavenly riches are what Satan wants! He knows the riches of this world - he doesn't care about them.

The reason he persecutes you is to try to rob you of what you have and what Satan knows he can never have: the kingdom of God.

But to you, dear children of God have been given the kingdom of God and no one, not even the old evil foe can snatch you from the Father's hand.

For you, the Son of God has come.

For you He lived and died and lives again. For you - that you who are last in the eyes of the world might be first in His sight.

In His sight - the one who looks at you and loves you. And when you have that - when you have Him - you have all that you need. And though you lose everything in this world and life, though you may not be able to rub two nickels together, you are still rich - very rich indeed! **Amen.**