

Hayward United Methodist Church

Pastor Samuel's Message for the Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost, October 10, 2021

"You Lack One Thing"

Text: Mark 10:17-31

Gospel Reading: Mark 10:21-25 (NRSV)

Jesus, 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." When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God." And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "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."

Prayer for Illumination (UMH 6)

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It is hard to understand the ministry of Jesus. Jesus came as the Son of God. But he came to serve and give his life for all so that everyone will obtain eternal life. The Gospel writers recorded the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. They wrote the Gospels through prayer and discernment. They reflected on the life of Jesus and experienced what God had to offer through Jesus Christ. It is absolutely necessary that we take time to pray first before we encounter the life of Jesus in the Gospels. Even the disciples back then had difficulty in understanding the ministry of Jesus. They were the first eye witnesses to the life of Jesus. Now the Holy Spirit guides the believers to comprehend the life of Jesus. That is why we wait upon the Holy Spirit to guide us to know Jesus and what he offers us today.

The Gospel of Mark records a story of encounter of a rich young man with Jesus on the way to Jerusalem. Jesus already set his face toward Jerusalem where he

would face the cross. On the way to Jerusalem from Galilee Jesus met and ministered to people. The story is called "The Rich Young Man." It is also found in Matthew 19:16-30 and Luke 18:18-30. This is an important story because it is found in all three Gospels. A man came up and knelt before Jesus. It is almost like a healing story. Many people who were sick came to Jesus and knelt before him and asked to be healed. It is as if the rich young man wanted some kind of healing from Jesus. He came begging Jesus to do something. What is the thing that he needed most in his life that he couldn't find it elsewhere?

First, the rich young man had a question. The rich young man came to Jesus and asked him, "Good Teacher, what I must do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk 10:17). He had a genuine question. Probably he heard about Jesus' preaching about the Kingdom of God and eternal life. Probably he went to other teachers to ask the same question he asked Jesus. No one gave him a convincing answer. So he came and put the question to Jesus. But he didn't know that he was talking to the Son of God. He didn't know what kind of answer Jesus would give.

Jesus gave a conventional answer. The rich man knew the law of Moses. Life was already promised to those who would follow the law of Moses. The law was given to the people of Israel through Moses to guide them toward God. The law represents the very heart of God. It is not only just for the people of Israel, it is for all nations. Anyone can come to God by keeping the law of Moses. Jesus himself kept all the law of Moses. He said that he didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law. He knew the validity of the law of Moses. So Jesus referred to the law of Moses. He began to enumerate the ten commandments. Because the ten commandments summarized all the law of Moses. The ten commandments are about God and human relations. Worship of one God should be translated into practice of loving one's neighbor.

Even before Jesus finished mentioning all ten commandments, the rich young man said, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth" (Mk 10:20). He never departed from the law of Moses. Probably his parents taught him to keep the law since his childhood. He was faithfully taught by his parents at home. He read the law of Moses and then he practiced the law of Moses. He kept all the ten commandments. That means he believed that God is one and there should not be any other god. He never wronged his neighbors. He honored his parents. He never bore false witnesses against anyone. Now he was a young man. He was

rich. He had many possessions. Probably he acquired all his wealth through rightful means. He never cheated anyone. He only earned what was due to him. He was very sincere in dealing with people. No one ever accused him of any wrong doing.

If the rich young man knew that he could obtain eternal life through keeping the law of Moses, why did he come to Jesus in the first place? Other teachers of Israel would have told him the same thing. He kept the law of Moses since his youth. Certainly he had the right to claim eternal life. The law has already promised life through keeping it. Did he simply come to Jesus to test? Did he come to Jesus expecting a different answer? Did he think that Jesus would prescribe more laws? It is not clear why he came to Jesus in the first place. His question was genuine. He knew the answer to his question. What is the question that you would like to ask Jesus? Are you searching for something that you are not satisfied with? Let's see what Jesus has to offer.

Second, Jesus's answer makes the rich young man grieve. Jesus did not say that the law of Moses failed to bring eternal life. He acknowledged the validity of the law of Moses. Otherwise, he would not have quoted the ten commandments. The rich young man was very sincere. He kept all the commandments since his youth. He did not disclose his whole life to Jesus. He was rich. He had many possessions. There is no mention of his richness to Jesus. He did not say that he had huge wealth. But Jesus knew his background. Jesus knew his state of life that he was living in. He couldn't hide it from Jesus. Jesus knew everything about him when he first approached him.

Mark says that Jesus loved him. Jesus came to love everyone. He wanted to reach out everyone in love. He knew his condition. He wanted to help him. He wanted to have eternal life. Jesus had to disclose what he should do in order to inherit eternal life. It is because he had love for him. Jesus loves us. He knows us very well. Because of love he wanted to help us. Jesus said, "You lack one thing." (Mk 10:21). There is something that kept him away from God. There is something that kept him from inheriting eternal life. The rich young man did not know that. He thought that he was in perfect relationship with God. He thought that he did not lack anything in life. He was a perfect young man. But Jesus knew his heart. He knew that he was lacking. He was so much attached to his possessions that he left out God in his life. He was not aware of that. Jesus made it clear that he

should not only sell all his possessions but he should give it away to the poor. The poor will not pay him back. He had to give up everything to follow Jesus. Jesus offered an invitation to follow him. Did he accept the invitation?

The rich young man came to Jesus with a genuine question. But the answer Jesus gave showed him. He was surprised. He never expected such an answer. He was more than willing to keep any additional law than to give his possession. Jesus was not against richness. He was asking the young man to put God first, not the possessions. Jesus knew that this young man put his possession first in place of God. The very first commandment is to worship God only. The rich young man worshipped his possession and thereby he violated the very first commandment.

The question is: what is the thing that he was lacking which he thought he was not lacking? With Jesus things are different. We may come to Jesus without knowing that we lack something. We may think that we are in perfect relationship with God. We may think that we have observed all that God has commanded. But we never know what we lack until we come to Jesus.

The story of the rich young man raises more question than answers. What is the thing that we lack which we think we do not lack? What is the thing that keeps us away from God? What is the thing that put our trust in? What is the thing that we consider as priority in life? Let's come to Jesus and see who we are in his sight? He will tell us what we lack? Are we going to accept and rectify what Jesus says to us or are we going to turn away not willing to follow Jesus?

Jesus said, "But strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:33). When we put God first in our life the Kingdom of God and the blessings associated with it will be ours.

God Bless.

Pastor Samuel

**Let's say the Benediction together:
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with us all. Amen.**