**Mark 10:17-22 October 10, 2021**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from the Gospel of Mark the 10th chapter here re-reading these words. “And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Nothing derails the motivation to try something new more than startup costs. This was true in my life when I was curious about hunting and I do not come from a family of hunters. My wife’s family does, and just about all of the men in her family go hunting every year. In conversations with them about hunting I quickly found out what kind of investment it would be to even try hunting on my own. I would need a gun, obviously, or a bow if I was going to go during bow hunting. I would need arrows or ammunition. I would need gear meaning the right clothing and also I would need a stand which can range in price and quality. I would need tags if I were by the grace of God alone to find a deer and shoot it, and that’s just a tag for a deer, if I wanted to hunt for say, a bear, I would not only need to apply but I wouldn’t even get one for years. The biggest hurdle though is I would need hunting land, and if you want to talk about start up costs, the biggest expense would be buying your own hunting land. After looking at all of these expenses, not even taking into account the amount of time you have to invest to go hunting, I ended up buying a pellet gun and a few targets, and shooting them in the backyard for fun.

If you’ve ever undertaken something new you know my struggle, you see that there are certain sacrifices that have to be made. Something has to be given up in order to start. Usually you have to give up money, and a hobby isn’t the only example of this, you have to give up money if you were to join a gym and pay for to use the facilities, or if you signed up for a subscription based service. But money isn’t the only thing that has to be given in order to join new groups and do new things. Think about how much time, money, and effort you would have to put into learning to play a new instrument like the guitar, or the drums. Or if you join a sports team, how you have to give up money for equipment, time to practice, and energy as you continue to play. There is a cost and a sacrifice to doing new things, or gaining new things. And most times the reward is worth it, but other times, the cost is too high. Some dreams never come to fruition.

The cost was too high for many who come to Jesus seeking to be his disciple. This was certainly true for the rich young man, who comes to Jesus already confused about the true price of discipleship, and what it takes to inherit eternal life. From the very beginning this man seems confused, because the nature of his question doesn’t make a whole lot of sense. “Good Teacher, he asks, what must **I** do to inherit eternal life?” The focus is solely on himself, and what he must do, or what he must give up in his daily life in order to receive this amazing reward and what we know in our study of the Scriptures as the **gift** of God. And his confusion is shown in the fact that he asks what he must accomplish in order to receive an inheritance, which is something that is given not earned.

What must he give up? What must he do? The answer is best understood in what Jesus said just before this lesson in the very same chapter, words from our Gospel lesson last week where we find Jesus Christ in the midst of little children. “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child, shall not enter it.” A child gives up nothing by being born, they don’t give they are given life. A child born into a family doesn’t give anything to be part of it, they are brought into the fold, they are named and given a place at the table, and a room where they can sleep. They are given more than just a name though, they are written into an inheritance since they are part of that family.

The inheritance is eternal life, that this rich young man knows for certain, which is why Jesus Christ hopes to show him the only way he can receive it. For the Law of Moses, the 10 Commandments, the very nature of salvation and how it is obtained in our lives, since we are sinful and fallen creatures of God our heavenly Father, is what Jesus points him to. “You know the commandments. “Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and your mother.” What must you do? There it is. Like joining a team, or a gym, or taking on a great task like learning a new instrument or even a new language, a price must be paid. And the startup price is high. This is the price, a sacrifice of personal satisfaction and happiness in the form of refraining from doing damage to others and yourself through the breaking of God’s Law. And the reality of the Law of Moses, the truth of the Holy Scriptures is what Jesus tells this young man, but the message was lost. For he says “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” In short he’s saying he’s already paid the price. His initial question now is revealed as a set up. He was hoping Jesus would point to the Law because he thinks that he has fulfilled all that is required to receive this amazing gift. But he is wrong.

And so is anyone who believes that based upon anything they have done they can receive the gift of eternal life. But we fall into this trap each and every day. Because when we refrain from sinning, when we choose to flee from temptation and sin, we place the spotlight on ourselves. In our actions we always are seeking our own exaltation, rather than a submission to God’s Will and the praise of God’s name. We look at these same commands and make a checklist in our own minds. “I haven’t killed anyone, I haven’t cheated on my spouse, or I’m not even married so that doesn’t apply to me. I don’t lie about other people, I just tell the truth as I heard it, I haven’t cheated anyone and I listen to my parents or at least do the best I can.” Again we believe we have kept this commandments because at the end of the day we do our best, we try our hardest, we are “good enough”. But that’s the ultimate lie of Satan, that good is good enough when it comes to God. Good is meaningless, it’s not enough. The price isn’t good for eternal life, the price is perfection. If you wish to *earn* eternal life, then the price is inflated, it’s different from being given this gift. If you want to *earn* it, you have to give everything of yourself, every day, in everything you do to be perfect, never slipping up, never sinning, never ceasing to do the good that God has called you to do, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. And that price is too high, no one could possibly hope to accomplish it, except for Jesus Christ.

Which is why when Jesus hears these words, Mark records, and he looks at him, and loves him. Despite the fact that this young man is misguided, that he is full of pride, that he believes he has it all figured out, Jesus doesn’t turn him away, he doesn’t look at him in hate or anger, but instead he looks at him in love, and tells him the truth. He has to give up the idol, he has to give away and sell all his possessions, he has to unchain himself from the false god that is fastened around his neck and come to the knowledge that salvation is found only through Jesus Christ. Jesus speaks the truth to him, in love, to turn him away from himself and his own actions, and instead to the foot of the cross, where he will go to earn for him this wonderful inheritance.

For he paid the price. He gave up more than just his physical happiness, or an earthly kingdom, or the joys of heaven itself by coming to earth. What did Jesus Christ give up for you? So you could have this amazing gift of eternal life with him for all eternity? He paid the price of sin, by dying on the cross. He paid the ultimate price. He made the ultimate sacrifice by being *the ultimate sacrifice*. And on account of his death, you are saved, not by your own works, or anything you have done. By his wounds you are healed, by His payment you are saved. And we receive this payment, this gift, and this amazing reward as a little children. As a gift, given not on account of the perfect life we have lived. Given not because we have power and riches and prestige in this world. But given because he looked at us, as he did throughout his ministry, as he looked at the crowds as sheep without a shepherd, as he looked at this young man and spoke the truth to him in love, as he finally did when he looked down from the cross and prayed for those who persecuted him saying “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” The amazing gift of life that he has earned for us, he gives as a gift, because he loves you. Because he has mercy on you, because his grace is the only reason that we have the inheritance that is promised and that can’t possibly be measured in money, time, or effort.

The truth is many start up stories don’t have the happiest of endings. Money, time and effort that has been invested into new things don’t always grow into a skill set or new lifestyle. I myself can tell you that I haven’t shot the pellet gun in quite some time and I’m not even sure where the targets are. You can think of how many gym memberships are paid for but never used, or how many guitars are purchased brand new, and sold after just a few lessons. This particular story doesn’t have the happiest of endings. We find the rich young man sorrowful at these words of Jesus and he goes away. Next week we will hear what Christ has to say as he flushes out and teaches his disciples more about the kingdom of God, and we too will return, to sit at the feet of the “Good Teacher.” To hear his words and his wisdom beyond our understanding. But for this morning may we bask together in the joy of Christ’s promise. That salvation is given as a gift. That we can’t possibly *pay* or *earn* eternal life because the price is too high. And that Christ has paid that price for us, not on account of our actions, but simply because he loves us. May that love carry us through our week, until we return again, to hear His Words, and be reminded of our inheritance.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.