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“It’s good news! Remember?” **Sermon on Mark 10:17-31**

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Given a choice between good news and no news, good news and bad news, or good news and sad news, the choice should be easy. It’s not. Listen:

Mark 10:17-31

As he 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?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You 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.'"

He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 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." They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?"

Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus 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, who 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.

But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

“The man was shocked and went away grieving.”

It's supposed to be good news! We are told that from the very beginning in Mark 1:1: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Good news! “The kingdom of God is at hand!” Good news!

But this passage feels so heavy, so sad!

And the sadness came because of an encounter with Jesus. And the sadness came to a very faithful man. Faith is and always has been at the very center of his life. I suspect that if you went into his first grade Sunday school class, you'd find his name on the roster and a mile-long string of gold stars behind his name. He never missed a Sunday. That doesn't happen anymore.

I suspect that as a child, he was the first in his class to memorize the Ten Commandments, but more than memorize them, he sought to live by them. Loving God. Caring for his neighbor. Keeping the Sabbath. I suspect that when he went to college, he would quietly step over the remains of a Saturday night and find his way to early church.

You see, I just get the sense that he was dependable, kind, honorable, hard-working - a rare find in a world that's short on staff. So, his very being was in high demand. You couldn't pay him enough. By all accounts, in heaven and on earth, he's got it all. He's got the drive to succeed in life. Check. Getting the car. Check. Building the library. Check. Season tickets on the 50-yard line. Check. Seeing the world. Check. Life is short, and you have to get it all in before time runs out.

And I suspect that's when it hit him. That as far as life goes, he's cornered the market on all of it except time. I mean, the worst thing about having it all is that like sands in the hourglass, so are the days of our lives. It's got to come to an end sometime. He's heard word that there is such a thing as everlasting life, which if you've been a success all your life, it's the cherry on top.

He's heard that there is a such a thing as everlasting life. Good news! And he's driven to secure the good news! He knows where to go! Good news! He runs. He runs. He runs. I told you he was driven! He runs and kneels at the feet of Jesus.

“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.”

The man is driving at the thing he's missing. How do I get eternal life?

And Jesus is driving at the thing he's missing. That is, do you know who I am?

It's the question that is asked over and over again in Mark's Gospel. We are given the answer from the beginning, as I said. Mark 1:1: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone."

So please note that the man who is kneeling before the son of God never calls Jesus "good" again. A clear indication that he's missed the point. He is kneeling on the ground before the son of the almighty God and he thinks he's there to get an education, and he's failing miserably.

He listens to Jesus rattle off the Ten 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. And so on.

"Teacher, I have kept all the commandments since my youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him.

"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." And that's the good news!

But the man heard it as bad news, as sad news, because he had many possessions.

And it is here that this little history lesson becomes a parable for us. It begins to work on us. Suddenly we feel for this man. For we see ourselves in him. For we, too, have done well in life. We, too, have a limited time on earth. We, too, don't want life to end. But we, too, have lots of possessions, and we, too, have no desire to give them up for Jesus.

It's supposed to be good news!

The good news of Jesus Christ, the son of God, runs through a cross. That's how Jesus defines eternal life – through the cross. Jesus doesn't define "eternal life" in terms of time. If eternal life was to be defined solely by time, Jesus would have told parables that it involved being on the phone with Comcast. That's eternal, but it is not life.

How do you define eternal life? Eternal life is God.

How do you define God?

From all that I've read, God's top priority is to pursue us, all the days of our lives. It's good news, remember?

How do you define God? From what I've read, God is defined by drawing near to all who have fallen short. Drawing near to those who have sinned but keep sinning, drawing near to empty people, drawing near to those who have all the stuff, but are still scared to death. It's good news, remember?

How would you define God? From what I've read, before the storm, God is with us. During the storm, God is with us. After the storm, God is with us. The common denominator is "God is with us." It's good news, remember?

So, what must I do to inherit eternal life? From what I've read, it has little to do with us, and has everything to do with the faithfulness of this one. This Jesus Christ, the son of God, who takes his life and gives it, until it gets to a cross, and he has nothing to give but his life. And he gives that, too. He never gives up on us. From what I've read, God looked at the sacrifice of his son and said, "Hatred cannot win out. Failure does not have the last word. Love has to win. This can't be the end." And God raised Jesus, his son. And now, nothing can separate us from the love of God. Nothing is impossible with God. There is eternal life.

It is a story that changes all stories. It even changes the story of this one who went away sad, and all who go away from his teaching sad, thinking that we don't measure up, because the teaching is hard. But what the life death and resurrection of Jesus tells us is that Jesus believes in us. He never gives up on us. And he believes in us, always looking at us lovingly, knowing that we'll feel the love, we'll see the love. And when we do, a smile will come across our faces, and we'll see that eternal is with us now.

And you can give it away, and when you do, there's just more, and you can give it all away. The eternal is God, and what is God? God is peace, and we can give peace away. And the more you give peace away, the more there is. And what is God? God is patience, and the more you give away patience, the more there is. And what is God? God is grace, and the more grace you give, the more there is. It's good news, remember?

When you're in the presence of love, you can't just hold it to yourself. You have to give it away. God heavens! You filled my office with diapers! What possessed you to do that? Love. And there's more love – Habitat houses are being built because someone that, "I can take this money and give it away." And it changes the world, and that little house is a spark of light, and that light travels forever. And you have this time that you can give to help someone read, and one day you see the spark in a child's eye, and it lasts forever. One day, we'll see that when we give it all away, it looks like love, it looks like life, real life, which is eternal. And eternal looks every bit like God.

And it's good news, remember?

We can choose to serve the anger and division. Or we can choose to set our lives on the eternal, which lasts forever.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.