

Worship for Oct. 10, 2021

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

\*Call to Worship

God says," I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts;

**And I will be their God, and they shall be my people."**

\*Hymn 2 Come, Thou Almighty King

Prayer of the Day

**Merciful God,**

**in Jesus Christ you do not call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.**

**Draw us away from the easy road that leads to destruction,**

**and guide us into paths that lead to life abundant,**

**that in seeking your truth, and obeying your will,**

**we may know the joy of being a disciple of Jesus Christ our Savior,**

**who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

First Reading Hebrews 4: 12-16

Time With Our Young Disciples

Second Reading Mark 10:17-31

Morning Message

You reach into your mailbox and pull out a stack of paper and envelopes. You find an ad for the local grocery store, a power bill, a magazine you will never read, and something different. In a stiff, thick envelope, with your name in an embellished script, is an invitation. How intriguing. What could it be?

When that happens at our house, I open everything else before I open the mysterious envelope. I let the suspense build. Maybe it's a wedding invitation...or a graduation announcement...or an invitation to a party for a famous person coming to town.

Imagine how you would feel to receive a personal invitation to join Jesus in his life and work, to be a disciple, walking alongside him daily. Sit with that a moment. How would you answer?

In our text, the man we have always called "the rich, young ruler" kneels in sincere deference before Jesus and asks the central question of the faith: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

This man is apparently a Jew and Jesus reminds him that he knows the Law, the Ten Commandments, he has been raised in the tradition of the Torah. And the young man says, “I get that, Jesus. I have kept them faithfully my whole life long.”

What the text says next is perhaps one of the most revealing moments in all the gospels: we get a glimpse into the heart of Jesus. Jesus, looking at him, *loved him*. The text doesn't say he looks at him with pity. It doesn't say Jesus looks at him with disapproval. No. Jesus looked at him the same way he looks at us: *Jesus loved him*.

Jesus extends an invitation to come and follow him. But not before he points out that the young man lacks one thing. Jesus says, “Go sell your stuff, and come back ready to travel, ready to bring people into the fold so they, too, can have eternal life.”

How would you respond? Run back to your house and put a for sale sign in the yard? Call Goodwill or Habitat and ask them to send a truck?

I'd like to think that's what I would do. I'll let you in on a secret. Ed and I have talked about moving for years. You know, find a house that's all on one floor. All it takes is one look into the garage and we're over that notion. Like the man in our story, we have much stuff.

What does this young man do? After hearing how much it costs to become a disciple, the man slumps his shoulders and sadly walks away.

Many others have been called to follow Jesus by this time. And, according to scripture, they have left kith and kin, their jobs, their comforts, their possessions, and have become disciples. This may be the only example of someone refusing the call to discipleship in all of scripture.

This man rejected Jesus. Because to follow Jesus meant he would pay too high a price. He would have to give up his wealth. And that is no small thing.

And I can really identify with the problem. Perhaps this man had a family. What would happen to them? We know he had a prominent position in the community. He would have to give that up. He probably enjoyed more creature comforts than the common folk. He always had tickets on the 50 yard line of the arena.

And Jesus tells him to unburden himself of all these distractions if he wants to find true treasure: life that never ends.

The gospel, the New Testament scriptures, is our witness to just how risky it can be to be met by Jesus. I think, instead of criticizing this poor fellow, we might give him credit for being honest.

I read a story recently, a first-hand account of a man who had converted to Catholicism from the Evangelical branch of the Christian faith. He spoke about how much it had changed him. He intended to live out his faith by applying those things he had been taught in his Confirmation classes. He said it was not easy. In fact, at times, he knew he was making different choices than he did before he converted. He lost some friends. He lost some business contacts. His faith did cost something. But, it was worth the cost for the peace he felt in his heart. Jesus gave his life for him. He would gratefully give up something for Jesus.

Clarence Jordan, the renowned preacher of the social gospel, is said to have once visited a large integrated church in the deep south in the 1960's. Well, you can imagine how unusual that would have been.

Jordan is said to have asked the old country preacher how he had accomplished this. "How did you get the church this way?"

"What way?" the preacher asked.

Jordan went on to explain his surprise at finding a church so thoroughly integrated, not only with blacks and whites, but rich folk and poor folk all in one warm, hospitable fellowship.

The preacher said, "Well, when our preacher left our small church, I went to the deacons and said, 'I'll be the preacher. The first Sunday as preacher, I opened the book and read, 'As many of you as has been baptized into Jesus has put on Jesus and there is no longer any Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, males or females, because all of you is one in Jesus.'

Then I closed the book and I said, 'If you are one with Jesus you are one with all kind of folks. And if you ain't, well, you ain't.'"

Jordan asked what happened next.

"Well," the preacher said, "the deacons took me into the back room and told me they didn't want to hear that kind of preaching no more."

Jordan asked what he did then, "I fired them deacons," the preacher roared.

"Then what happened?" asked Jordan.

"Well," said the old preacher, "I preached that church down to four. Not long after that, it started growing. And it grew. And I found out that revival sometimes don't mean bringin' people in, but getting' people out that don't dare to love Jesus."

Friends, I think that is the issue before us today, the question the text is asking of us:  
Do we dare to love Jesus with our whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength? Or do we need  
to let go of something, lose something, in order to deepen our relationship with Jesus?

Listen to the wisdom of Saint Francis of Assisi:

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand.

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

May it be so for all of us. Amen.

\*Hymn 468 In My Life

\*Affirmation of Faith The Apostles' Creed

\*Hymn 581 Gloria Patri

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Prayer of Dedication

**Generous God,**

**we thank you for your many gifts. We are all too aware of how we might fit through the  
needle's eye. And so, in gratitude, we return a portion of our wealth to you that our  
offerings may build and sustain the ministry of this congregation and bring hope to our  
neighbors in need. Amen.**

\*Hymn 442 Just As I Am

**\*Blessing**

Go now, and may God be glorified in your life, in your song,  
in Christ's church, and in God's world. Amen.

**\*Postlude**

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