

September 23, 2018
Sermon for the Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost
Mission Sunday – Warda, Texas
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Mark 10:17-22

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Mark 10:17–22 (ESV)

¹⁷ 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?” ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ 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 mother.’ ” ²⁰ And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” ²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Today question is placed before the Master, Jesus. It is a question that we are familiar with and one that troubles many of us today. A question that has to do with our ultimate concern for eternal life. We might look other places for an answer but we should be seeking the Master for our answer, because we know that He came to seek and to save us, the lost. And He has found us! Lost, but found—found in our Lord Jesus Christ. And so we are safe, secure—and His – forever. But still our sinful human nature, egged on by the devil continues to ask the question, “What must I do to be saved?”

So we have the Question: What Must I Do to Be Saved? It is a basic question for us all. Christian and non Christian alike. Believer or atheist, agnostic or any other false religion that the devil might create to snag human with. No one really wants to die without knowing God, whether they acknowledge Him or not.

This is why missions are so important. We talk about trips to foreign lands, and they are worthwhile, but our neighbor, and even sometimes our friends and relatives are in need of a missionary right here and right now.

Today we meet a focused young man, one of means. He is a local boy has done well, so well that he has the world at his beck and call. Yet he still has an interest in things that count, such as eternal life.

Even though he has well his earthly riches and treasures to count on, he still searches for that ultimate treasure. He's looking for the winning combination. But he hasn't found the answer, so he comes to Jesus with the question,

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

I would be surprised if this were the first time the young man has asked the question; questions like this do not come out of the blue. He is a man on a search!

One can imagine this young man searching out teachers of the faith, probably the mystics, fortune tellers and the like, asking questions about life's deepest realities.

We can guess that at least once, one of his teachers may have told him, "Son, if you want to have eternal life, if you want to be blessed in your life by God and live in his favor, then follow His teachings. Start doing His will and do your best to keep His commands. If you do this, you will have everything you desire—a happy life, a meaningful existence—and you will make a difference." Still, the young man knows something is missing so he searches farther.

Our sinful human nature also wants to know the answer to that question:

"What, indeed, must we do to inherit eternal life?" All the world's religions, major and minor, claim to have an answer to that question, though their view of "eternal life" can vary widely.

In recent years, great fortunes have been made by some who claim to have the answer. 40 days of this or that. Another tells us to live our best life now! Some say pray a certain prayer.

They have had great successes, at least from selling their books to the public who just seem to eat their philosophies up.

The reason for such “successes” is that the question is basic to human existence. If there were ever a question that demands the correct answer, it is this one about eternal life. We must know the right answer!

We all need a sure answer to the question. But is it found in manmade wisdom and books, or is the answer found in God’s true Word?

The young man in our Gospel this morning evidently strove to live according to the blessed OT Law as he followed the exhortation of his teachers. By his own not-altogether-modest admission, he did use his time to do good things. He helped others as he attempted to improve himself. He looked good on paper at least. He seemed to have worked really hard to check all of the boxes that he thought were required of him to have eternal life.

But there was something that caused him a bad case of discomfort. His guilty conscience was driving him crazy. It gnawed at him as he struggled with his own sinful nature. Somehow, he never felt like he had not done enough and it continued to pick at his sense of accomplishment towards his salvation. His conscience nagged at him “Nope, not enough yet! You’re missing something. You’re lacking!”

If he were satisfied, he wouldn’t have chased Jesus down to ask his question.

And there is the problem. The wrong answer to this question can leave a person empty, longing, and with an aching heart and an accusing conscience.

You can chase good works around the globe and still feel like you're missing something.

In a survey taken a few years ago, three out of four Lutherans said that they were trying to attain the ultimate gift of heaven and eternal life by "living good lives," "obeying the commandments," or being "good Christians." But if we

follow that approach, then we too will live sad lives, chasing the wind. There will be no peace and no rest, as our conscience continues to point out what is lacking if we make it our personal quest for eternal life. There will only be a struggle to find excuses within us why we feel lacking, empty, and far from our goal.

We look and search, but in all of the wrong places because Jesus alone has the answer.

The rich young man heard of a rabbi by the name of Jesus, who performed miracles and taught about God with astounding authority. So he probably thought, "well I'll go to Him," "Maybe He can give me insights to do what needs to be done in order to finally find inner peace and understanding!"

It is entirely possible that this young man had heard the conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees about what is lawful (Mk 10:1–16). He may have heard Jesus say that people must become like little children to receive the kingdom of God! (10:13–16). But whatever he had heard, he was a man on a mission, searching honestly for the answer. Unlike the Pharisees, he is not trying to trick or trap Jesus. No, the man assumes that this rabbi actually has an honest answer, perhaps even the right one.

He is looking for THE answer without understanding that it is God's love that gives us the Answer

Mark writes, "*Jesus looked at him and loved him*" (Mk 10:21). Think of it. We would be careful making that statement today, but what a beautiful statement for us to hear. Mark shows us the wonder, the extent and depth of our Lord Jesus' love for all people—even for those who don't answer quite understand what it means to be a Christian! What a relief! What a relief for any and all Christians who may not have gotten it right yet either!

This might also prompt us to react with more compassion and care and concern for well-meaning people who have religious truths confused. It may encourage us to talk with them instead of condemning them. And it helps me to understand that the Lord Jesus will be patient with any of my misunderstandings! And with yours as well.

The loving Answer is the Gospel, which Jesus gives.

"You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

With these words, the Lord Jesus reduces this man (and us) to absolute zero in terms of attempting to apply our good life towards the purchase of eternal life. We just can't get it that way. We just won't. And we thought we had kept the Law from our youth!

We like to think of ourselves as good Lutherans, many of us from birth, surely all of our good works over the years stands for something...

but Jesus pokes holes in all of our good intentions, all of our good works that we like to give ourselves credit for. (Panama story, closing prayer)

Yes, the Law hurts—of necessity, so that we learn to let go of it for our salvation.

For sinful humans—and that describes us all—keeping the Law is no way to arrive at eternal life, because we do not and can not keep it. So the Law is no answer for us. The Law should serve to drive us to the true answer: the Gospel. All that the young man heard Jesus say was sell all that you have. He missed the part where Jesus said “...and follow Me.”

To follow is to understand that I am no longer in charge. I have given up control. There is Another who leads the way to eternal life. I will follow that One, and in following I am given a gift. The gift is being with Him forever in eternity. It is all caused by His grace, His love, His life, death, and resurrection. He invites us to follow Him, and then He gives us the gift of being enabled through the Spirit’s power to do that!

To the question “What must I do?” there only one answer: “Follow me.” The relationship of following is created by God’s grace through Jesus Christ.

We follow Jesus. All of the things we do to earn our salvation, don’t amount to a hill of beans. Our salvation is already secure in Jesus great sacrifice on the cross. In response to what we have already received, that is where your mission work comes in. Those things that we do in Jesus name, to the glory of God, the things that we do, not for our name to be noticed, but so that the name of Christ it proclaimed.

That is mission work. Whether it is helping teach school children who Jesus is.

Whether it is teaching your child or grandchild the words to “Jesus Loves Me”.

Whether it is inviting your neighbor or co-worker to church, telling them about Jesus or simply being a good Christian neighbor in any other way.

Once upon a time, your neighbors were Lutherans...or at least Christians. Once upon a time your children went to school with other Christians and your whole community called themselves Christians or at least knew who Jesus was.

That is not the case anymore. There are great mission fields overseas, and to the countries to our north and south. But in this day and age, our greatest mission outreach might be the family one pasture over. Our children are in school with kids who don't even know who Jesus is. There is a lot of work to be done. Right here and right now.

None of this work will earn your salvation. Jesus has already taken care of that.

Jesus has called us to be His own. In His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus kept the Law perfectly. He did for us what we could not do. His perfect righteousness is given to us as a gift. By His death on the cross, He died for our transgressions, and because of this, we are freed from its condemnation.

This is the Good News; this is the Gospel that saves. And by that Gospel we are called into the Great Commission of Christ.

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Mt 28:19–20

Jesus has called you into His mission field. For some it involves hundreds or thousands of miles of travel. For others, you just have to open your back door. Listen, for God is calling you. You all have a job in the mission field. Some using words, some using their arms or legs.

Your salvation is secure in Christ. Seize the opportunity, in whatever form to share that wonderful news with all of those around you.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.

S. D. G - Soli Deo Gloria

To God alone be glory