

Mark 10:17-31
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Michelle Cox

Depend on God

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As Jesus 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.”

Depend on God

Our possessions can become more precious to us than anything else. Possessions we cherish make it difficult to inherit eternal life, but Jesus gives us hope that only God can give when he says, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

The rich man in our story looks to the law of Moses for salvation, but Jesus tells him that he must depend on God. The rich man and every one of us needs Jesus to aid and support us as we move through this life and into the next.

We hear about this as the man asks Jesus, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” The way he asks the question reveals something important. He speaks of earning his way into Heaven when he tells Jesus that he has kept the commandments sent by God through Moses, but then wants to know how to inherit eternal life.

He asks about inheriting at the same time he seems to think he can earn eternal life. Earning and inheriting are two very different things. Inheriting something has little to do with us. It’s really about those who came before us, but this man asks what he must do.

The conversation between the rich man and Jesus dances around the very basic question Jesus asks us all, on what will we depend?

We are dependent creatures whether we admit it or not. When we were infants or when we are infirmed it’s easy to see, but dependence exists throughout our lives. Think about it in the context of a family. Some bring financial resources while others maintain the household. Families are healthier when there is one or more who listen and offer a sympathetic ear and wise counsel.

The true answer to Jesus’ question, “On what will you depend?” condemns the rich man and it can condemn us as well. Jesus’ question gets at and condemns the trust we develop in our own strength, our own intelligence, and our own abilities.

Jesus strikes down our tendency to think we are independent. He reminds us that in fact we are dependent on each other and ultimately we are all dependent on God. Our dependence on God takes many forms and quite often relying on God means depending on the good will of others.

The dependence the man on his knees before Jesus has on his earthly possessions causes him to turn away from Jesus and all that he offers.

We are called to have no other ‘gods’ before our Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Independence is most definitely one of those ‘other gods’ we can easily grow to worship and we are on the wrong path when we do so.

The man proudly proclaimed his adherence to the commandments Jesus listed, but the telling of the story certainly suggest that the man made idols of his possessions. Jesus looked at the man in our story and he loved him. Jesus loved him in his weakness.

Jesus loves us in our weakness. It is in our weakness and our most obvious need that we are closest to God. Jesus tells the man to depend on God, not on himself. Jesus tells us to depend on God, not on ourselves.

Many of us here today are feeling the effects of age and if any of us aren't, we most certainly will. When we give up driving because our reactions or eyesight are no longer safe we may feel the sting of being dependent on others. When we twist an ankle or have surgery we may feel the sting of needing to ask someone for help with everyday tasks. We might struggle with understanding our own financial matters or even our own phones.

Jesus tells to depend on each other. Jesus tells us to be his hands, and feet, his kindness, and his love on this side of Heaven. Dependence is a two way street. Some must depend if others are to give. We are to do both throughout the seasons of our life.

When we strive to be Jesus' care for others we are defeated when those around us are overcome by the sting of being dependent. We are defeated when those in need are too proud to ask for what they need. We are defeated when those in need are held captive by pride. We are robbed of the chance to reach out in love.

So often asking for help feels to us like we are burdening others, but there's another way to look at it. Giving and receiving help creates deeper connection. Deeper connection with each other and deeper connection with God.

There have been times in my life when I've felt alone, lost, and without purpose. There have been times when I've wondered what in the world I'm supposed to do. Those in need have saved me. Those in need of something I had to give have pulled me out of the darkness.

There are so many ways to reach out to others: cleaning something that needs it; planting flowers; preparing meals; and sometimes the very most important gift is to listen, to connect with someone who is isolated.

Over the years I've had the privilege to connect with several such souls and I have learned important lessons from each of them. Maybe the most important lesson is that we need each other and together we need God.

Opportunities to share the Love of Jesus abound and these opportunities are filled with promise, and divine moments. They are filled with the Holy Spirit. These

opportunities draw us out of ourselves and place us in God's hands to mold us and shape us into the souls he wants us to be.

Our story today is about dependence, dependence on each other and our dependence on God. It's about giving in to the simple fact that we cannot fully live without help. We can't earn eternal life, we can only inherit it as it is freely offered by our Lord and Savior.

On what will we depend? Paul tells us in Acts (17:28): 'In God we live and move and have our being'. We read Peter's answer in the book of John (6:68): "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life."

On what will we depend? Each of us must answer the question.

I depend on each of you. I depend on the body of Christ and above all I depend on The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.