

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Amos 5:6-7,10-15**

Seek the Lord and live,  
or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire,  
and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.

Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood,  
and bring righteousness to the ground!  
They hate the one who reproves in the gate,  
and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.

Therefore, because you trample on the poor  
and take from them levies of grain,  
you have built houses of hewn stone,  
but you shall not live in them;  
you have planted pleasant vineyards,  
but you shall not drink their wine.

For I know how many are your transgressions,  
and how great are your sins—  
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,  
and push aside the needy in the gate.

Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time;  
for it is an evil time.

Seek good and not evil,  
that you may live;  
and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you,  
just as you have said.

Hate evil and love good,  
and establish justice in the gate;  
it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts,  
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

**Psalms 90:12-17**

12 So teach us to number our days \*  
that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

13 Return, O Lord; how long will you tarry? \*  
be gracious to your servants.

14 Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning; \*  
so shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

15 Make us glad by the measure of the days that you afflicted us \*  
and the years in which we suffered adversity.

16 Show your servants your works \*  
and your splendor to their children.

17 May the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us; \*  
prosper the work of our hands;  
prosper our handiwork.

### **Hebrews 4:12-16**

The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

### **Mark 10:17-31**

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.”

Problem: “If an ethical, rich person cannot be saved, who on earth can?!” --Blomberg

Point: We rich need nothing, but only God can give it.

Power: “For the rich or poor, the materialist or the idealist, there is but one hope. They must drop that possession...that position...that passion...that person...and come to Christ.”--Hughes

*Most powerful Father, through your word read and spoken, may your incarnate Word cut us deeply and precisely to the thought and intentions of our hearts this morning; and as a result, may we, through the power of your Holy Spirit, become cheerful disciples of the same Jesus Christ, Amen.*

**Poor people have it. Rich people need it. If you eat it you die. What is it?**

What does the person who has it all need? Nothing.

We see three qualities in this young man that would lead us to believe that he would be a shoo-in for God’s kingdom:

1...He is earnest. In a very hot and dusty climate and in a culture where respectability was highly important, he *ran* and he *knelt*. No one ran. No one knelt.

2...He was ethically unimpeachable Jesus quizzes him on how he’s done with the second half of the ten commandments,

*You shall not murder; (#6) You shall not commit adultery; (#7) You shall not steal; (#8) You shall not bear false witness; (#9) You shall not defraud; (related to #10) Honor your father and mother (#5).”*

Check,

Check,

Check,

Check,

Check

“Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.”

Here in this congregation we have some who self-identify as “Cradle Episcopalians.” They are those in our midst who were born into our denomination and have managed to stay with it up to this point. Here in Mark’s gospel Jesus is interacting with a “cradle Jew” as it were. Perhaps this man could say with the Apostle Paul, “If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews...as to righteousness under the law, blameless.” Religiously, he has everything going for him.

3...He is rich! “In Judaism it was inconceivable that riches should be a barrier to the Kingdom, since a significant strand of [Old Testament] teaching regarded wealth and substance as marks of God’s favor.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Hughes

*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.*

"If this [man] were a respectable person in his community, one can understand why he (and others) might think his wealth [was] a reward for obedience [If you've never read the book of Job, this is the crux of the dilemma that Job and his friends face. Doesn't God look with favor on those who honor him? Doesn't God reward those who obey him, in particular with wealth?

The disciples' shock at Jesus' reply on how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom then follows naturally. If a[n earnest], godly, rich person cannot be saved, who on earth can?"<sup>2</sup>

This is *the* question that the disciples have after Jesus' encounter with the young rich man. What is it that this man lacks? What does he need?

**The rich need *nothing*.**

**The rich *need nothing*.**

Both were true of this young man, but he was unable to accept this reality. Instead of following Jesus, he went away from Jesus with the heavy heart. As J.C. Ryle puts it, "He loved his money more than his soul."

It is striking to me that Jesus questions this young man about whether he has kept commandments 5-10. These six commandments deal specifically with how we are to relate to others.

*Honor others*, especially your Father and Mother

Do not murder *others*

Do not commit adultery *with others*

Do not steal *from others*.

Do not lie *to others*.

Do not covet *what others own*.

Jesus doesn't ask him about commandments one through four. These are the commandments that deal with how we relate to God himself.

We are to have no gods, *except for God*.

We are not to make images *of God*.

We are not to take *God's name* in vain.

We are to honor *God's holy day*, the Sabbath.

---

<sup>2</sup> Blomberg

It seems that while the man could check off commandments 5-10, he would have more difficulty with 1-4. Perhaps this is what is implied by Jesus' question and the rich man's negative response. He was ethically sound, he treated others well, but walked away from eternal life because his hope and his trust was in his god, his wealth.

**The rich need *nothing*.**

**The rich *need nothing*.**

Where do we find ourselves in this story? We must not kid ourselves, despite our levels of wealth relative to others in this room, our friends, or our neighborhoods, *we are all very very wealthy.*

“According to the most recent estimates, in 2015, 10 percent of the world’s population [**1 Billion people!**] live on less than US\$1.90 a day.”<sup>3</sup>

**We need *nothing*.**

**We *need nothing*.**

What is Christ asking of us? Are we to “*sell what [we] own, and give the money to the poor?*” Maybe.

The man whom we have come to know as Santa Claus, St. Nicholas of Myra, is an example. *His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need,*

Maybe? Perhaps. It seems unlikely that Jesus made that challenge to only one person in the course of all history. Perhaps this morning Jesus is calling you to “*sell what you own, and give the money to the poor?*”

That being said though, Jesus encountered other rich folks of whom he didn't make a similar challenge. Take Zacchaeus as an example. He is described by Luke as a rich but as having gained his riches through unethical means. When he receives Jesus and is received by Jesus his first action involves his wealth, “*Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.*” Whether it means giving all or giving some, being a follower of Jesus will impact our relationship with our wealth. If you claim to be a follower of Christ and are not more generous with your wealth as a result, you need to carefully consider if you really are following Jesus. Have you really been cut the heart by the living Word of God? Do you truly know that God loves you, that he has compassion on you, and that he will care for you?

---

<sup>3</sup><http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/09/19/decline-of-global-extreme-poverty-continues-but-has-slowed-world-bank>

The 39 Articles, that is, the constitution of our Anglican tradition, touches on how we are to consider wealthy. Article 38 reads in part,

***The Riches and Goods of Christians are not common....***

(meaning that we do not practice communism within the church)

***Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.***

Liberally and according to one's ability. Not everyone can write a check for \$10,000, but almost everyone can give ten percent of what they earn.

Perhaps you are here this morning and want to echo Peter. I've done that! I've left everything and followed you! What about me?

*One old preacher said, "One house gone; but a hundred doors are open! One brother in the flesh lost; but a thousand brothers in the spirit, whose love is deeper and whose kinship is profounder" (G. Campbell Morgan).*

Maybe you came to church this morning for the first time, or maybe the first time in a long time. You've come looking for comfort and peace and find that stereotypically we are talking about money. Jesus point this morning goes beyond money. The question that needs to be asked is what is our god. What is that thing that we put our trust in to fulfill us, to give us security, that gives us a reason to live?

Jesus asks to be our all and for us to give up all. Note that when the rich man turns away, Jesus doesn't chase after him and offer him a better deal, "how about you just give away half and we'll call it even."

"For the rich or poor, the materialist or the idealist, there is but one hope. They must drop that possession...that position...that passion...that person...and come to Christ."

**We need *nothing*.**

**We need *nothing*.**

**And with God *all things* are possible.**