

October 14, 2018

Trust God and Allow God to be Enough

Prayer

May the words of my mouth be meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Sermon

I was happy to see the gospel reading for this morning. I was happy because it's one of the most powerful gospel stories of Jesus' encounter with someone, I think in the scriptures. And it's one that I refer to or reference repeatedly in teaching and in times when I am speaking with people. Because I think it says some very, very important things about God. About us and about that very special relationship.

It all starts with a young man who is rich. Who sincerely wants to know from Jesus how to enter this kingdom of God that he's been teaching about, preaching about. What must I do to inherit eternal life? What must I do? And I love the way Mark puts this. I'm sure that it's exactly how it took place. Jesus looking at him, loved him. Looked at this young man who in all sincerity wants to know what he has to do to inherit eternal life. What must I do?

Jesus didn't look at him and was disappointed. Didn't look at him and say hey you've got a lot to do. A long way to go. He first references the commandments. The young man says I've done all those. Ever since I was young I tried to do and follow the commandments that you've just talked about. Jesus looked at him and he loved him. And he said okay if you want to do something to inherit eternal life, go and sell all your possessions and give it to the poor, then come and follow me. That's

what you must do to inherit eternal life, to earn eternal life. Go and take care of that.

The young man turns away grieving because he had a lot of possessions. He wasn't quite ready to do that. He didn't want to really hear the truth. That what he needed to do to inherit eternal life was something that he on his own didn't have the strength or the will to accomplish. He couldn't make himself give up the possessions because he had put those possessions in place of God. That's what he relied on. That's what he could trust. So, if he had his possessions. If he had his wealth. If he had his resources that he was going to be okay. Life was alright. And Jesus sees that this is the barrier that he has.

You see, he asked kind of the wrong question. What must I do? He wants to earn a righteousness before God. He wants to be able to stand up to God and say, "See I've done everything that you could possibly ask of me. You must let me enter your kingdom. You must allow me to have eternal life." It's not unlike Job as he is speaking to God. Speaking to God. He is angry at this point in the book of Job. He has defended God. He has also been defending himself. I don't deserve this. And it is at this point in the book of Job that he has finally gotten to the point where he says, "Listen. If there was a judge and I could present my case, then I would be found righteous. I've been looking for God and God is no where to be found. God has hidden himself from me. God has taken his presence from me for no reason. It's not I who have departed from God but God who has departed from me."

Which isn't true. It's how he felt. He knew that the things that he had come to rely on. The things that had become important to him had been taken away. His good friends have been telling him that he needs to just confess his sins. His wife told him to curse God and let God just take you out. Let you die. He didn't understand that it wasn't what he

was doing but what God would do. See that's the thing about Jesus looking at the man and loving him because he knows something that the rich young man doesn't know. And that is he is going to accomplish something in his sacrifice on the cross that is going to open the way to eternal life for us all.

Not because of what we do but because it is a gift that God wishes to give. What we need to do is not a bunch of the works. Is not something to earn our way into heaven. The only thing we must do is accept the gift. Make it a part of our lives. Understand that we are the beloved children of God. I believe that's what Mark was trying to say when Jesus said he looked at the rich young man and loved him. Loved him. Not because he was perfect but because he was what God intended him to be. God looks at you when you are lost. When you are questioning. When things are going well. When you are wondering.

And I've certainly heard this question many times in my time as an ordained priest. What do I have to do? Am I doing enough? Well the enough is what God has done for you. What does Jesus say to the disciples when they get him away from the rich young man. Because Jesus is now saying man it's hard for a wealthy person to enter the kingdom of God. And they were astonished.

What? That's not what we've been taught since we were young. We were taught that if God loves you, God will enrich you. It's part of the deal. Part of the plan. Now you're saying that wealth is not a sign of being in the right relationship with God. Then who can be saved. Who can enter this kingdom that you've been teaching about? Why are you getting our hopes up?

And Jesus tells us exactly how it is. With mortals, it's impossible. If you're looking to do it on your own, it's not possible. But you're in luck. With God, all things are possible. You're in luck, because Jesus is God.

God has come. God has joined with humanity. God is fulfilling a plan so that we can be recipients of a gift. And not be in a position of trying to earn our way into something that we cannot earn our way into. And so, when you are wondering have I done enough? Have I been a person good enough to make it into heaven. That is a question that we all begin to ask ourselves more intensely as we get older.

I remember Henry saying in a lecture I was attending, it was kind of a shock when he realized that the rest of his life was assuredly less than the live he had already lived. He was coming to an end. And the questions of have I done enough. Will God be pleased with me enough? Have I accomplished what God wants me to do so that I can enter God's kingdom when I pass from this world becomes a very serious question.

But the answer is no matter what you do. No matter how hard you try. What you do is not enough. What Christ has done is enough. And so, when we present ourselves before God. When we present ourselves before Christ. What must I do? Christ looks at us. God looks at us. He looks at you and he loves you. Yes, you have faults. You haven't done everything you could do. Yes, you are a broken individual. Yeah you haven't kept every relationship with other people as it should have been. You haven't kept your relationship with God as great as it might be. That doesn't turn God away from you. God looks at you. God loves you.

Trust me. Trust me. I love you enough that I gave my son for you. Trust that that's enough. Allow the Holy Spirit to be a part of you and guide you in the way that you are going. You won't do it perfectly, but you're going to do it better. You're going to see the world differently. You're going to see your relationship with God differently. You're going to see your relationship with other people differently. That's what I'm looking for. That's what I want for you.

As my beloved child I want you to have life and have it abundantly and joyfully. I want you to know that you can trust that I am your God. And I will provide what you need. And I will bring you to that place where I have prepared for you. Trust that. Live according to that. Know that you are my beloved son or daughter and I will bring you to myself. And then go out in the world and celebrate that. Live that way. Live without fear. Live with joy. Don't try to do. Try to be the son or daughter that God has called you to be. Created you to be. Sacrificed for you to be.

I love this story. I think it speaks a truth that every single person in the world needs to hear. That no matter where we are. No matter what's been going on in our lives. No matter how good we think we are or how bad we think we are. When we go before God, God looks at us and loves us. And his love is so overwhelming that he does something for us that we cannot as mortals do on our own. He has created a path to God's kingdom. And he watches over us and he leads us down that path. When we stray, he brings us back. When we are lost, he searches for us. To bring us to the home that he has created for us. It's not what you do. But that you trust God and allow God to be enough.

Gregory Hein – Rector

Renee' Evans – Transcriptionist