

**Scripture and Message**  
**13 October 2024**

**Scripture: Mark 10:17-22 FET adapted**

<sup>17</sup> As [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, someone came running up and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to share in everlasting life?” <sup>18</sup> Jesus answered, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: No killing. No committing adultery. No stealing. No bearing false witness. No defrauding. Honor your mother and your father.”

<sup>20</sup> The other replied, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my childhood.”

<sup>21</sup> Then Jesus, looked at the person with love and said, “There is one thing more that you must do. Go and sell what you have and give it to those in need; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that, come and follow me.”

<sup>22</sup> At these words, the inquirer, who owned much property, became crestfallen and went away sadly.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Message: Jesus Loved Him**

This morning’s Scripture is fairly well-known although we did not read the verses about needles and camels. You know, how it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter heaven. (Mark 10:25) But we all can remember this person who approaches Jesus and asks what is needed to enter into eternal life. Unsurprisingly, I noticed a couple of things that I want to draw our attention to this morning.

First, did you notice the first part of the Scripture, “As [Jesus] was setting out on a journey” (v.17) And I thought, this sounds like the car is packed, the kids are buckled in, also known as the disciples. Jesus is just about to get in the driver’s seat when BAM! This person comes running up to Jesus to ask this deep theological question. Not noticing or even paying attention to the fact that everyone was ready to leave. When everyone is already in the car is not when you want to engage with a neighbor about how awful the trash pick-up has been lately, or to get into any kind of deep conversation. You probably don’t even want to get into a shallow conversation, you just want to get on the road already, and I can’t help but think that Jesus may have felt this way.

Why, because Jesus gets a little short – gives one of those cranky, curmudgeon answers before pulling it together and really answering the question. “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: No killing. No committing adultery. No stealing. No bearing false witness. No defrauding. Honor your mother and your father. You’ve read the Scriptures; you know what to do. Why are you bothering me with this now? Can’t you see I’m about to leave?”

Of course, Jesus doesn’t say that last part, but I wouldn’t be surprised to find out he was thinking it. Or maybe not – maybe just me and the disciples are thinking it. Anyway, this person we often call the rich young ruler was not going to be put off and they immediately asked a follow-up and here is the part of the Scriptures I want to pay attention to this morning, Mark writes, and I’m using a different translation here, “Jesus looked at him and loved him.” (v. 21 NIV)

I can see it in my head, can’t you. Jesus finally looks up, from tying that final knot in his sandals in preparation for getting on the road, and really looks at this person who has upended his plans for the morning. Jesus finally sees them, and knows them as a beloved child of God, and not as an unwelcome distraction. This is the point I think we need to hear this morning – this is what I think Jesus would want us to remember, that sometimes we need to take the time to really look and see a person in order to remember to love them. We need

to take the time to look at people and see them for who they are. Or maybe for whose they are – since we are all beloved children of God.

In the African American community this is important. Looking and seeing a person – as a person and a beloved sibling in Christ or child of God. It is considered a sign of respect to acknowledge people even if you do not personally know them – to let them know that you **see** them the way Jesus finally saw the person in today's story whom we often remember as the rich young ruler.

And when Jesus finally saw them, and loved them, Jesus was moved to call them into discipleship. “There is one thing more that you must do,” Jesus says, “Go and sell what you have and give it to those in need; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that, come and follow me.” (v. 21)

It was both an invitation and a challenge, one that the rich young ruler was not able to fulfill. In my life I have often found that God offers us invitations wrapped up in challenges that will stretch us and help us to grow in new ways; that help us to grow in our discipleship; that lead us further down our journey of faith. Many times, like the rich young ruler, the person in today's story, we do not want to pick up the challenge. We are comfortable in the way things are.

This morning, I want to tell you a story of a man, a father whose whole life changed because in a moment of challenge he said yes, and then against all logic, he said yes again. This story occurs in late nineties, at Horseheads UMC where I was the associate pastor and in charge of the youth group.

I was a baby pastor. I was an ordained deacon in our old style of double ordination and was in my twenties. I was still learning about how to be a pastor, but I did know how to do a youth mission trip. It was not my first rodeo, you might say, but I did have one problem, I had no male adult volunteers, and I needed at least one to be able to take our entire youth group with us. I was adamant that we were all going to go, or none of us were going to go, so the youth group decided to take action one Sunday to recruit a male volunteer. A man, let's call him Bob, was like many of the husbands in the Horseheads church, he was only a nominal member of the church. He worked long hours in the insurance business, often needed to be away from home on business trips and was only an occasional church goer with his wife and twin daughters. He happened to be between trips when his wife dragged him into church on the Sunday that the Youth Group stood me up in front of the entire congregation and said in sing-song voices that I needed a man. Yes, I'm sure I turned bright red – which made everyone laugh. Then they proceeded to tell everyone how we had this mission trip planned, the funds were raised, but we needed a male volunteer, or we couldn't go.

Unbeknownst to me, the Holy Spirit, in the form of Bob's wife, whispered in his ear that he had some vacation that he needed to take, or he was going to lose it. He could volunteer to be the male chaperone so the whole youth group could go on the mission trip. This ear worm, or Holy Spirit suggestion stayed with him throughout the service and after talking to his wife again, Bob called the church to ask what exactly he would need to do to be a volunteer for this trip, and what we would be doing.

It was a youth mission trip. I was hoping he would drive the large van we were renting down south to where we were going to work on houses in need of painting and repair. We would stay one night in a church on the way down and back and stay in a school while working. We would be meeting up with 500-700 other youths and their chaperones and would be put into mixed groups, showering in outdoor showers, with worship time every night before sleeping on the floor in the gym and other rooms in the school. He would need to be the one in charge of the boys in our youth group and I would oversee the girls. Anyway, Bob said yes to me, yes to the kids, yes to his wife, and yes to the Holy Spirit. He was actually a little excited when he found out we would be doing repair work – Bob liked woodworking and had a lot of tools. Which became the next source of anxiety.

Because the morning we were leaving, Bob found out that he couldn't bring his extra trailer with all his tools. The van we rented didn't have a hitch. He almost backed out. He asked if he could drive his car down with the tools. He didn't want to leave behind his tools. He didn't want to give them up.

I told him it would be ok and that God would provide. Bob decided to humor me in my naivete but told himself that that was not how the real world worked. But he bucked up, prepared himself for disappointment, and sorted out which tools would fit in the van with the kids and the luggage. Fast forward to the first day of going out to our projects. Bob's group is assigned to help a woman rebuild her porch with an access ramp. Bob is looking at all the wood that will need to be cut and dreaming about his power saw that was left back in Horseheads. Then the homeowner says, "My husband left some tools in the back shed when he died. You can use them if you want." Not expecting much, Bob went around to the back to look. And lo and behold, in the shed was a power saw – a better power saw than Bob owned. That was when Bob said yes again to God – that was when Bob said his life changed. That was when Bob said he felt like God was really looking at him and loving him and speaking to him in a way that he would never forget. He couldn't quite believe his eyes. God had provided – not just tools, but better tools. This was real world stuff and not pie in the sky heaven in the hereafter stuff. Bob was dumbfounded, amazed and awe struck. God had provided him with power tools. God had provided him – Jesus saw him and loved him.

Bob became a staunch member of the church after that first mission trip. He looked forward to all of them. Came to church every week he was in town, and even got involved in other parts of the church's mission and ministry. All because he was willing to leave the comfort of what he knew behind and at least to pretend to trust in the God's providence. Who knew, he often said, that a life could be changed by a youth group standing up in the front of the church and singing, "We need a man!"