

## SEEK THE LORD AND LIVE!

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Steven D. Spencer – Pastor Messiah Lutheran Church

Mark 10:17-22

And as Jesus 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?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 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.'" And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." 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." Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Grace, peace and mercy from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!

### I. THE LAW AND THE LIST

People love list. We have all sorts of them but especially check list. We have list for everything. Like baking, eggs – check, milk – check, flour – check. Or for travel, tickets – check, reservations – check, luggage – check, kids – check and double check. Of all the list we seem to have, the list we have in common, is a check list for God's law. We love to see how we're doing with God. We also like to use the checklist for examining others. He's a good man, a moral man, a good father, a faithful member of the church. And it's no wonder we have such a list. St. Paul said that the Gentiles do instinctively the things of the Law, although they were not given the Law for it is written on their hearts (Romans 2:14-15). Even before the 10 Commandments were put on stone tablets the people had them written on the tablets of their hearts. Everyone has the list of the Law written upon their hearts by God and we love to turn it into a checklist.

Even Adam and Eve had the Law of God written upon their hearts. When I teach a Catechism class I love to ask the kids what Commandment is being broken when we talk about sin. They almost always respond with, "The 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment". And they're right. If you break any of the commandments you break the first. The First Commandment is: ***You shall have no other Gods before me!*** If you disobey any of the Commandments you deny God's Lordship and disobey the first. So when it comes to Adam and Eve what Commandment did they break? This one is easy to get, the first! The serpent said eat of this fruit and you shall become as gods (little g). But we should realize that in reality they violated all of the Commandments. The Second Commandments says, ***You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God!*** But they did. They lowered the holiness of God's name to that of the level of common man. They broke the Third Commandment by not keeping the Sabbath Holy. They destroyed pure worship, by violating the very presence of God which is necessary for proper worship. They didn't honor their Heavenly Father, therefore violating the Fourth Commandment. They murdered that day, they murdered themselves and you and me. That's why we die. I could go through all the commandments and show how they violated each and every one of them. But it's not necessary, you already know that reality.

Adam and Eve knew the Law perfectly for they were created perfectly. They knew the letter and the intent of the Law because they lived before the fall. And that brings us to our text today and the rich young man.

### II. THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

This man was a good man, a pious man who believed that he had lived according to God's will for his life. He obeyed the commandments and tried to do what was right in the eyes of God and his neighbor. But even so, something wasn't right. He wasn't certain he was saved. So he comes to

Jesus and says: **"Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"** I love Jesus response. **"And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone"** (Mark 10:18). Note here, Jesus doesn't say that He is not good nor does He deny that He is God. Jesus pulls out the list of the Law and starts checking them off one by one. **"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.'"** (Mark 10:19). The young man being pious and God fearing answered. **"Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth"** (Mark 10:20). **"And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him"**. Notice Jesus didn't speak out of anger or frustration but out of love. He loved him and wanted him to know the truth and be saved. The man was busy living the letter of the Law as he saw it written. He thought he was living it perfectly but he was only living the letter of the Law and not the spirit of the law.

The purpose of the Law is show our sin (SOS) show our sin. So that we might see our Savior (SOS) see our savior. The Law's job is to drive us to our knees, to show us inability to please God by our works. In turn lead us to repentance and to turn to the one who can save us. The young rich man was in the presence of that one, but until he was crushed by the Law he would only be looking inward (curvatus en se) rather than outward looking to the cross, to Christ. **"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"** (Mark 10:21). Generosity and charity are the highest held values by all of society. It was especially prized as a virtue among the Jewish people. But you know what happened next. **"Disheartened by what was said, he went away filled with sorrow, for he had great wealth"** (Mark 10:22).

What Commandment did he break? The First Commandment of course! **"You shall have no other Gods before me"** (Exodus 20:3). Because of the fall the spirit of the Law has become minimized. Luther brought back some of the spirit of the Law in the Small Catechism. Listen carefully; (I'm sure you'll remember this.) The First Commandment, **"You shall have no other Gods"** What does this mean, **"We should fear, love and trust in God above all things."**

### III. WHAT OR WHO IS GOD?

What is a god? Anything you fear, love and trust above all things. Why did the rich young man leave in despair? Because his wealth had become his god, it's what he put his trust in! But it's worse than that. Listen again to the verse. **"Disheartened by what was said, he went away filled with sorrow, for he had great wealth"** (Mark 10:22). God is creator. God owns all things. We are not owners, but stewards of God's things. He gives us, health and home and food and family. The rich young man had trouble with what was said because wealth had become what he feared, loved and trusted above all things. **"He had great wealth!"** By claiming them as his own, he also claimed lordship over them. He was claiming God's property as his own and thus elevating himself to godhood over God. When something other than God becomes your god, then you become the god over that thing. Let me repeat that for you again. If something becomes your god, something you fear, love and trust above all things then you become the god over that thing and violate the First Commandment.

Are we really any better than that young rich man? If Jesus came to you and asked you to do the same thing as this rich young man, could you do it? What has become the false god (little g) in your life? What is your security blanket? Where do you put your fear, love and trust? Is it in having a freezer full of food or a stockpile of supplies, maybe having a padded savings account or just being able the trust in your own ability to dig yourself out of any situation?

Have you fallen into the trap of the rich man? Do you claim ownership? Do you put your hope, your security, and your trust in things rather than in the Creator and owner of all things? Let's be

honest about it, We All DO! And in doing so, we violate the First Commandment and bolster ourselves to the position of being a god (little g). We are guilty of sin, we turn God's gifts into an opportunity to covet and hoard and gather for our own gluttony and personal satisfaction rather than to serve Him and His kingdom.

Perhaps you've been feeling like that young ruler. You've tried to do all according to God's will but still have some uncertainty about what God wants from you. Maybe you've been feeling like you're missing that peace that passes all understanding. Maybe your life is filled with frustration and anxiety.

When Jesus told the rich young man to go and sell all that he had and give to the poor he desired the man to see the errors of his way and to repent and be saved. He desires the same thing for us. What are we to do? We need to repent, and to lay all we have at the foot of the cross. We need to put our lives, our complete lives in subjection to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We need to realize that we are not the owners of goods, but stewards of the Good Teacher. We need to seek the Lord and live. We need to trust Him and His goodness for you cannot out give God. Matthew 6:33 says: ***“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”***.

Will you please join me in prayer! **Heavenly Father, we know that we have so often forgotten that you are the creator of all things. Everything belongs to You and You support the wants and needs of our bodies. You provide meat, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, field, cattle, money, goods and the like. Forgive us for taking Your gifts for granted and for trying to take possession of them, as our own. We realized that we have sinned against you and violated Your Holy Law. We have tried to make possessions into a god and elevated ourselves to being god by doing so. We place all things at the foot of the cross. Our hearts, our homes and all things you have provided. We repent and return to you the ownership of our lives and all things. Forgive our wretchedness and grant us forgiveness for the sake of your beloved Son Jesus. Take our lives Lord and let them be, consecrated unto to thee. We thank you for the forgiveness and peace you have now given to us in Jesus Christ. Fill us with your love Lord This we pray in Jesus name, Amen.**

God has had mercy on you, and for Jesus sake grants you full forgiveness of all your sins in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, in Jesus name Amen and amen.

*The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*  
**AMEN**