

## Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

**Sermon Title:** “In Jesus Oppression Becomes Opportunity”

**Sermon Text:** Mark 10: 20-22 (Series B)

*<sup>20</sup>And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." <sup>21</sup>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." <sup>22</sup>Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

**Sermon Hymn:** (N/A)

**Prayer:** May God’s Law continue to provide His children opportunity to serve Him who first served us.

**Sermon Outline:**

- I. God’s Law Reveals the Enslaving Chains of Trust in Self.
- II. Psalm 51:17- *“a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”*
- III. Mark 10:21- *“And Jesus, looking at him, loved him,…”*
- IV. Psalm 90:12-17- From Oppression to Opportunity.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our loving and patient Lord and Savior. Amen.

If only I had lived back when Jesus walked the face of the earth, to walk along with Him on the dusty paths and trails of Palestine. How exciting. What miracle would He do next? What insightful, dynamic teaching would He deliver next? What memorable and meaningful Words would come from the lips of our Lord? There would be so much about Jesus to admire! He had such wisdom! You could learn so much from Him.

In the Gospel account we just heard, taken from Mark, chapter 10, we hear of a young man who himself had incredible admiration for Jesus. As Jesus was walking along, this young man came up to Jesus and dropped to his knees before the Lord. The Gospel of Matthew tells us he was young. The Gospel of Luke tells us he was a man of great wealth.

What the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us we can draw a pretty good conclusion of this young, rich man’s profile. We could say he was enthusiastic, energetic, polite, and deeply religious. We could possibly even say he was loved by many others, and that he thought himself that he was loved by God because he was rich. He had obviously had a good life. He definitely was a Hebrew of Hebrews, someone deeply religious and faultless in the eyes of others around him. Quite possibly he was the kind of young man every Jewish mother would have loved to have had as a son or son-in-law.

And, who better for a young rich man like this to admire than Jesus? Again, he came to Jesus and dropped to his knees. And, he calls Jesus, “good teacher.” Now, Jesus was the very guy this man had been waiting for, the very guy who could teach him all he wanted to know. Jesus had the wisdom and the insight. Jesus was the way to go for this young rich man who was so enthusiastic and energetic.

Just hear again the question he asked Jesus because it tells us what he wanted from Jesus. It also tells us what was most important to this young man! "*Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*"

Oh, who could blame this young man for wanting to make sure he was going to have eternal life? Who doesn't want to live eternally? I'm sure you do. I know I do. When everything around us eventually comes to an end, including our time on earth with our loved ones, and all the other wonderful and good things in life, we want to know. We want to be sure we are going to live eternally.

And, who better to ask than Jesus? Oh, if I could have walked with Jesus on the dusty paths of Palestine and had just one chance to ask him this question. This young man had that very opportunity, and he took it. He went to Jesus and asked. When it comes to the most important things in life, namely our eternal life, we want to ask the One who has the answer. That would be Jesus. And, I would think, it is those who can answer our most burning questions in life we admire the most. Do you admire Jesus? He has all the answers, you know? Just one chance, one opportunity to speak directly with Jesus and ask Him about the most important thing in our lives.

He got to ask Jesus his question. He had his opportunity and he took it. He asked the question. But as we know, as was read to us earlier, this young man, after hearing Jesus' answer, was disheartened and he went away sorrowful. But, he got to ask Jesus, the man he admired, such an important question in his life, probably the most important question in his life. And, when he gets his answer, he goes away sorrowful?

How let down this young man had to have been that he just got up and left with nothing else to say and nothing else to ask. What happened that he came to Jesus so enthusiastic and energetic only to leave Jesus beat down and emptied?

Well, it's the answer Jesus gave this young man, obviously. Hear again this young man's question and then how Jesus answered. "*Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" Jesus responded, "*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.'*" The young man says, "*Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.*" Jesus goes on further, "*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.*"

Oh, but this young man had riches, and these riches were part of who he was. This wealth is probably how others knew this young man. And, obviously, this young man worked so hard all his life to keep God's Commandments. And, here is another commandment Jesus just throws on him, and it's one he simply can't keep? Everything this young man had worked for, everything he thought made him a great man, a great Hebrew man, down the drain, gone, because of this last minute commandment Jesus throws on him. Talk about throwing this young, enthusiastic, energetic, and polite young man a curve ball. And, it came from Jesus, this "*good teacher*" this young man admired so much.

Was this very considerate of Jesus- to break down this young man's confidence and enthusiasm? Before we answer this question let's here again something our Gospel reading states clearly. After Jesus observed this young man's admiration and heard his question, Jesus, looked at him and loved him.

But, this young man went away broken down and sorrowful. Well, what Jesus did for this young man was the best thing for him. Jesus revealed to him where this young man was wrong all along in his life. Jesus revealed the oppression this young man had denied he was under.

Friends, admiration for Jesus, well, okay. Or is what Jesus really wanted is not admiration but adoration? Yes, this young man came to Jesus and called Him "good teacher", but could it be that Jesus would have preferred to hear from this young man, "My Lord and my God!" Is there a difference? In this young man's case, there certainly was.

Jesus recognized and knew full well the condition of this man's heart. Jesus recognized this man was oppressed and that he didn't even know it, or at least that he denied it to himself. Yes, Jesus loved this man, and that is why Jesus responded to this young man's question the way He did. Jesus revealed to this enthusiastic, energetic, disciplined, wealthy young man that he was not as secure as he believed he was. This young man thought he had it made when it came to the security of his eternal life. He was a thorough young man, and that is why he came to Jesus, the "*good teacher.*" Jesus, he thought, could help him with any points in his good life that he could have overlooked.

But, what Jesus wanted him to be sure of was that he was missing the key to everlasting life. This key, this way, to everlasting life, had nothing to do with this young man, anything he accomplished in life, or his discipline. What this young man needed for his eternal life to be secure was something outside of him, something external, and Jesus, oh Jesus, wanted this him to have it. Jesus wanted him to deny himself, to forget all he had done and thought he had accomplished and to adore the One and Only true way to everlasting life. Jesus wanted this man to fall on his knees before Him in adoration of his true Savior from his own sin and death instead of falling on his knees in admiration of someone who could teach him what else he had to do to secure his own way to everlasting life.

Friends, God's Law reveals the enslaving chains of trust in self. This young man was enslaved, and maybe he knew it, maybe he did not. He was oppressed. What he wanted was eternal life, but he wasn't going to get the way he was going about getting it. No matter how disciplined or thorough this young man could have been, he was never going to be able to shake the oppression, the enslavement, of his own sin. Jesus was the only way for him to be free of this and for him to inherit what he wanted more than anything in life, the security and guarantee of everlasting life.

Oh, yes, Jesus wanted him to live eternally. Jesus wants no one to perish. And, yes, this young man went from a confident, energetic, enthusiastic young man to a broken and saddened young man, but... as Psalmist confessed to the LORD, "*a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*"

It is the broken and contrite in heart who finds himself on his knees before the Lord in adoration of his One and Only Savior. It is the broken and contrite in heart who finds himself in complete dependence upon Jesus Christ for eternal life. With no where to look but to the Cross of Jesus Christ, that it is the condition of the heart for one who is secure in his eternal life.

Yes, friends, Jesus looking at this young man, loved him, and gave him what he really needed, and that is to be stripped of every possible way to Heaven except the Only One True way and that is through Jesus Christ who suffered and died as we all deserve.

This is the effect of God's Law. This is exactly what God intends for His Law to do to each of us, to bring us to our knees with no where to look but to our Savior in adoration. And, with the same love He had for the young man we hear about in our Gospel reading, He looks upon us- a love of complete concern that we will be well eternally.

And, friends, we our eternal life is secure. This security has nothing to do with any of us, but everything to do with Christ Jesus. We were all born into this world looking in all the wrong places for a security we did not even understand. In our baptisms we were all reborn into a new life looking only in One direction, up- on our knees looking up at the Cross of Jesus, with hearts overwhelmed with joy and gladness, in peace and understanding of who the Son of God really is- a Lord to be adored for what He has accomplished.

Here we are on our knees before our Lord and Savior with hearts ready and willing to serve Him who first served us. And, where do we look to learn how to serve Him. How about His Commandments? Well, yes, Jesus did say, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets"* (Matthew 22:37-40).

So, with our salvation and eternal life secure in someone as perfect as Jesus Christ, how does His commandments look to us now? As a wonderful opportunity friends. An opportunity to serve the One who first served us in the most magnificent way! Yes, completely by His grace and mercy, out of perfect love for each of us, our Lord brought us from oppression under the Law to a life filled full with opportunity to serve Him.

And, as we serve Him friends, may we serve Him with our eyes, minds, and hearts focused upon Him because that is where He has placed our focus. As the Psalmist stated in the Ninetieth Psalm, verse 17- *"Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work our hands!"*

Yes, *"let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us."* That is, may the redeeming work and Promise of our true Savior from sin and death be continually upon our hearts and minds. In our baptisms that is exactly where the Holy Spirit set our hearts and minds. Now we are in peace, in true peace, that can come only from the suffering and death of Jesus, and that, even as Jesus proclaimed to the world, is finished!

What opportunity we have been given friends- freedom to serve the King of kings, the Lord of Lords, with no fear, with no regrets. Yes, so often we do fail, and we just won't get it right, but remember who it is who first served us, the Lord Jesus Christ who paid in full the penalty for our failure purely out of perfect love for us sinners. Amen.