



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

October 17, 2021

Pastor James Enderle

21st Sunday of Pentecost

First Lesson: [2 Kings 5:14-27](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 90

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 13:1-6](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Mark 10:17-27](#)

God's Grace Leads Us to Honor Him in Our Relationship to Money

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

Did you have a favorite teacher when you were growing up? Maybe you had different ones at different times. Maybe a favorite teacher in grade school, maybe one in high school, or a favorite professor. I remember specifically a high school teacher of mine, an English teacher. He was also a football coach. He gave us challenging books to read. I had him for homeroom and it was fun to have him in study hall. I remember him as this great teacher. But I think it's important for being a good teacher, someone that you maybe remember well, is a teacher who doesn't just let you slide. Some teachers will let you get away with everything or they don't really push you that hard. Some of the best teachers are the ones who challenge you, who help you to grow and to learn and to really get better than you were than when you first started their class.

I always like to look at Jesus and His teaching style. We are going to see here that this rich young man comes to Jesus and calls Him **"Good teacher."** He is famous for being a good teacher, but what is kind of interesting about Jesus is that Jesus gets a lot of questions, but how often does Jesus just answer the question with a straight answer? Very rarely; more often Jesus answers a question by first asking another question. A lot of times He is trying to get to the heart of the question or trying to help the people see that they might not be asking the right question or they aren't asking the question in the right way. Their premise is flawed. You have to get to the right issue; otherwise you're kind of lost.

I think this is what happens with the rich young man. Did you notice what he begins with? The young man comes up and falls on his knees before him and says, **"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"** We're going to see him questioned a little bit about that, but then look what Jesus says. It says, **"Why do you call me**

good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.' *"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."* In this first part of the story, we see that the rich young man had a few things right. He comes up to Jesus and calls Him **"Good teacher,"** but what is interesting is that's the thing that Jesus questions. He says, **"Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone."** What is ironic about that? This good teacher, Jesus, IS God. So when Jesus says, **"Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone."** the young man was right. He is good. He is God.

But then Jesus follows up His question and says "Okay, if you want to earn eternal life, these are the commandments. You know them." How does the young man respond? **"...all these I have kept since I was a boy."** "I got this, Jesus. You listed those things off; no problem." I think the first thing that Jesus wants us to consider when we're thinking about our relationship with money and our relationship with God is to first consider what is good. This rich young man had some ideas of what is good. He thought that Jesus was good, and Jesus helps him say only God is good, but what is ironic is right after this, when He lists all the commandments, what does the rich young man do? He says, "Yes. I'm good. I've done these things." Jesus had just said only God is good. And the rich man follows up by saying "No, I'm good also."

We have to first look and see we think we follow, we think we can do enough, or we think that whatever ailments there are out in the world, my problems aren't that bad. I'm good enough. I might not be perfect. I'm not like God. But I'm good enough. Like the rich young man said, "Yes, I've got that covered." But Jesus knew how to get to the heart of things. He knew what this man really struggled with. It says, **Jesus looked at him and loved him.** Let's look at that at first because when we think about love today, often the idea of love is to love someone how they are. Don't expect someone to change. Celebrate how someone is, that's the concept of love, right? God has made each person unique and we love who that person is regardless of whatever and embrace whatever thing that person is struggling with. Jesus shows us that things are a little bit different though because when Jesus looks at him and loves him, he is going to challenge him. We are going to see, after the words that Jesus says, what the rich young man does. He walks away sad.

This is completely different than the idea of love in today's world. This is the love that really cares for someone and knows what that person is really struggling with and what is keeping them from knowing God. It says, **Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"**

So what is the issue for this man? He thought he had all the commandments down, but there was something that was keeping him apart from God—his wealth. He thought he had the commands, but there was certainly one command that he didn't have down—the First Commandment, to have no other gods. What was his God? Money; he had put wealth above God and he couldn't let go of it. He thought he had done such good things and maybe he was leaning on his wealth to do the rest.

I want us to think about it. It's often easy for us to say, "I'm not like the wealthy. I don't have this problem." But I want us to consider a few things. First, when we look at the church and what we are struggling with or afraid of, I think the first thing that pops into our minds is that the church is facing more persecution and that's the biggest issue. The culture is changing and we're being persecuted more and more and we wonder how the church is going to survive the persecution we're going to face in the future. But you know what is interesting with persecution? What often happens to the church when it is persecuted? They say that the blood of the martyr is the seed of the church. When the church is persecuted, then it actually grows.

If you consider the church today and maybe what we'll face soon (or who knows), how persecuted are we compared to churches in history, way back in time, years ago? And even today—we look around the world and look at churches that are being persecuted. In China, churches can't meet. You have to be registered. If you're doing things wrong, you can be imprisoned. There are other places in the Middle East where you can be killed for your faith. So how persecuted are we in relationship to people who have been persecuted in the past?

Now I want you to think about this—consider our prosperity. How prosperous are we compared to others? Maybe some of you that are a little bit older can even think about when you were younger. How prosperous are you or this area of the world, the United States, compared to several years ago? We are very prosperous, aren't we? You can see it with the cathedrals that we build today, billion dollar stadiums and contracts that are hundreds of millions of dollars. There is money EVERYWHERE. Then again, compare it with history or compare it to other people around the world and you see how blessed we are, how prosperous we are.

Why is that important? Why talk about how prosperous we are? Because it's very easy to point and say "I'm not that wealthy." But are we? As Jesus says, ***"How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"*** How prosperous are we and could the devil actually be using prosperity to bring people away from Jesus?

We are so worried about persecution and other things that might be affecting the church, but prosperity, all these things that we don't think about, what is the problem? Prosperity and money, it's not just a money problem. It's all the things we can do with money. We have to take note of the distractions in our lives. Maybe your relationship

with money is fine. Maybe you're very generous, you give to God, you give to the poor, you don't feel greedy. There are some people that have no problem with money. But what has prosperity enabled us to do as a society? As Christians, it fills our lives with distractions. We can do so much. We can have the boat and the RV and the cabin and vacation time and all the different sports that are so available to us that it is so easy to fill our schedule with so many distractions. I do think prosperity has enabled us to do that, to fill our calendar. It's easy then to see how we are like that rich young man. We follow a lot of the commands but maybe sometimes that first command of putting God first we struggle with.

The point is the rich young man was asked by Jesus to come follow Him. Consider that. Here Jesus says, "Hey, come be a disciple." And what does he do? He is distracted. He is saddened because he has too much wealth. The things of his life have distracted him from being able to follow Jesus.

So the disciples look and are amazed and saddened and they say, **"Who then can be saved?"** because Jesus uses this picture as the man walks away and says, "It's hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. It's just as hard as a camel going through the eye of a needle." The disciples were so used to seeing camels go through gates very easily but through the eye of a needle? That's impossible. So the disciples are saddened and amazed and they say, **"Who then can be saved?"** Jesus then says some words that often are abused but are very important. **Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."** Some people use these verses to say, "That means I can do anything. I put my mind to it, I work hard and God will help me do anything." But in the context, what is Jesus talking about? Jesus is saying that He saves the "un-save-able." What we imagine to be impossible God can do. He says to the disciples, **"How hard it is for the rich to enter..."** but it means for all of us because the disciples respond by saying, **"Who then can be saved?"** They don't say "What rich man can be saved?" They say, **"Who then can be saved?"**

We have to look and say we ALL struggle with these problems. More than that, we often are like that rich man and we put up the things that we've done. We say, "Yes, I've got that down. I've got that down. No problem." and it's the natural instinct of man to think that we can do it; that we can save ourselves. But it is impossible to save ourselves. That's what Jesus is saying here. Those who think they can save themselves, it just doesn't work.

So ALL of us (ALL of us), need Jesus to save us. We need Jesus, who put God first always, who set out resolutely for Jerusalem. He did His Father's will always. Then when tempted by the devil, when tempted to take on the crown and rule this world in an earthly way, when the crowds chanted for Him to be king, not just a spiritual king but a bread king, He didn't fall for that temptation. He resisted and knew what was so

important for us; to go to the cross and to take upon the times that we have put other things first. When we've been so distracted and struggled, when we've had the wrong relationship with money, Jesus died for that and He rose again to give us a crown and treasure that is SO much greater than money.

But one important point is if you are sitting here and sometimes in sermons you think *that's a great message, but I'm here or I'm watching online and I'm not that distracted. This message is really good for those people who aren't here, who have so many distractions that they can't come to church.* You're right in some points but we have to take these words to heart and say "Where am I distracted. Where are these words true for me?" Yes, you are here. You are putting God first in ways. But each of us struggle with these things in different ways. More than that, as we notice them, as we see them, as we struggle with those failings, we see how God has saved us and redeemed us and washed us clean. When I notice those distractions, when I notice the difficulties that money or prosperity has put in my life, I can confess and repent and go to God and know that I'm forgiven. I can be renewed to go and share that message with others and share of the grace and help others see the blessings of putting Jesus first and of knowing His love and forgiveness every day; to see that we have this treasure that will not fade, that does not spoil, and that will last throughout all eternity. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ([Philippians 4:7.](#)) Amen.