



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

October 13, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

21st Sunday after 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](#)

The Need for Followership **Followers of Christ Maintain Proper Priorities** **UNDERSTAND WHAT IS GOOD**

1. Ask the _____ questions to the _____ people
2. _____ to listen to the _____ answers
3. Don't just seek _____, but the _____
4. Jesus: Your _____ and _____

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:

Maybe you've heard this song before. It's a pretty famous one. It's a man singing, "If I were a rich man... dee bah dee bah dee bah dee..." It's one of the more popular musicals still today that high schools put on. It's from Fiddler on the Roof. It's one of the more famous songs because I think what he talks about a lot of people can relate to—"If I were a rich man." He starts out the song and says, "You are God. You made many, many poor people. I realize of course, that it's no shame to be poor, but it's no great honor either. So what would have been so terrible if I had a small fortune?" Is that a similar thought for us? "Oh, if I just had a little bit more. If I had a little treasure; if I were a rich man, what would that hurt?"

I think what is fascinating is how he ends the song. He says, "Would it spoil some vast eternal plan if I were a wealthy man?" What a fascinating question to ask, especially when it comes to our text where this rich man comes to Jesus and what Jesus answers is that it seems that's true, because it's hard for the wealthy to enter. But that's not the only issue. Those aren't the only people for whom it is hard to enter. So we are going to look at wealth but also at our priorities. We'll look at what is really good, to understand the good in our life, because there are so many things that we can put as

the good. We can struggle. So we first want to look at what this man struggled with and how Jesus answers and how that really relates to us in our day today about **understanding what is good** and understanding our good God as well.

When we find Jesus, we see that this man comes up to Him and he calls Him ***“Good teacher.”*** He asks, ***“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** There are a lot of fascinating things about this text, but it starts out really good. It starts out with this man who says ***“Good teacher.”*** He has been following Jesus or knows that He is someone who has answers. He’s a teacher and He’s a good person to go to because He’s a good teacher. And actually, he is asking a good question. ***“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** This is one of those profound questions that everyone thinks about. “What about the afterlife? How do I get to heaven?” There are these questions that exist out in the world that many people are always seeking to get answers about who we are, if there is a God, what about heaven, and this man does everything right to begin with. He asks the right questions to the right person.

It’s important for us to think about that, too, to *ask the right questions to the right people*. When you think about it, we say there is no dumb question and it’s really good to ask questions. People who leave Christianity usually say this, “I wasn’t able to ask any questions.” Do you believe that’s true in Christianity, that you can’t ask questions? I don’t know how it is in every church or with every pastor but I think we create an environment where you are able to ask your questions. You can come with doubts. Doubts aren’t a bad thing. Doubts are something that, as sinful people, we are going to have and we want to answer those questions. So it’s important to bring those questions to the right people.

Part of that is thinking about the right people. Where do people bring their questions today? The easiest thing is to Google it. You don’t even have to type all of it. The commercials say “Remember the days where you had to type things? Now you can just talk to your phone and it gives you all the answers.” Who is actually answering? It’s AI or Wikipedia. And who puts the answers in there? Or if you’re not in a loving Christian environment and you’re asking some of these questions, where are they getting their answers from? I think it’s good to encourage questions and to ask the right people and to understand that the questions are also meaningful. I often say that there are no dumb questions, but if you’ve been a teacher, you understand when there are simple questions, and those are good questions, but when questions get more complex and more difficult, those are great! That means that they understand a lot and they want to seek more difficult answers. So your questions actually show a lot about what you already understand or what you believe.

Sometimes it’s important to say “Are you asking the right question or in the right way?” That’s exactly what Jesus does. The first part, though, is interesting because he asks, ***“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** We understand that he is going to have a

little bit of an issue. But even before he gets to the question, Jesus helps correct him a little bit, or gets him thinking. When he calls him **"Good teacher,"** Jesus does this so often when people ask Jesus a question. Does He just answer the question right away? He rarely does. Instead he says, **"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone."** What is ironic about that? The rich man was right. He called him **"Good teacher,"** and there is God and he is calling Him "good," but he didn't understand that because then we see that he actually changes it when he doesn't call Him **"Good teacher,"** but instead he says **"teacher."**

But Jesus gives the direction of what he must do, by following the Commandments. He is especially talking about the Second Table of the Law—about how we treat other people. It's almost like this young man didn't listen to Jesus at all, or at least he only listened to the answer to his question and then listened to what Jesus first said because He says, "What shall you do? **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.** Keep all the Commandments." And it says, **"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."** But what did Jesus just say? Jesus said "No one is good except God," and the man was like, "Oh, hey, I'm good." Isn't that ironic? Jesus said "No one is good" and I don't know if it's that His words are betraying what he actually feels or if that's what he actually feels, that he is a good person and he has done this since he was a boy.

So Jesus gets to the heart of the issue. Maybe he has done pretty well. Maybe he hasn't been so bad. Maybe he thinks he's pretty good, but He knows what is going to really trip him up—where his priorities are really messed up. So this is fascinating, though, when it says what Jesus did. It says, **Jesus looked at him and loved him.** We'll get to that later in the sermon, but first it says, **"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."** Notice He tells him exactly where his priorities are wrong and yet He says "Go do this a follow me." He invites him to come and be one of His disciples. But, **At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.**

I think one of the encouragements that we need to hear here is that sometimes we ask questions, sometimes we have problems in our life or struggle with God's Word, and what happens? We don't like the answer. When people say "Well, I asked questions and they didn't answer them," I think it's more often that people didn't like the answers. They thought "They should answer this way" or "That's not an answer that I like." So what does this man do as he receives an answer of what to do? It says he went away sad. The encouragement is to stay to listen to the hard answers. If we hear this and it convicts us and it's saying "This is something you struggle with," you can go away sad or angry, or you can stay and listen.

Jesus doesn't end here. He talks about how hard it is for the rich to enter into heaven. But very important is that He told him to follow Him. This wasn't something that was excluded from him. The disciples struggled with this idea of how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven—that it's harder than a camel to go through the eye of a needle? That's impossible! But Jesus says ***"With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."*** The man didn't want to stick around to hear the answer but he would have heard what was hard for him was not impossible with God—that he could be saved. But he clung too much to his earthly goods. There was some other thing that was keeping him from the Eternal God. He was seeking something good, but not the Eternal God. So the encouragement for us is to think about what are the good things you seek? *Don't just seek good, but the Eternal God.*

It's often easy to think about money, and this is the core of the text—that money can often be an issue. I heard this as I was watching coverage of Hurricane Milton in Florida. A newscaster made this kind of fascinating comment. He said, "It's in times like this that you are reminded that money is kind of an imaginary thing." He said this right as the hurricane was approaching. He said "You could be very wealthy, but if you didn't leave a few days ago, can you change that money into gas that's not there? Can you change that money into a plane ticket when there are no planes?" Sometimes we put all our hope and trust in money, but in a lot of ways, it's not always useful or it can just be gone. It's a good—it can help us, it can help us help other people—but it's not an eternal good.

What are some of the other things that people might put as a priority? I found this pretty interesting; this quote that there is a new/semi-new philosopher whose name is David Foster Wallace. He passed away a few years ago. But in a commencement speech he talked about what we prioritize and what we worship. He said this: ***"If you worship money and things — if they are where you tap real meaning in life — then you will never have enough. Never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly, and when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally plant you. On one level, we all know this stuff already — it's been codified as myths, proverbs, clichés, bromides, epigrams, parables: the skeleton of every great story."*** But this is when he really gets to the heart of things when he says, ***"In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship."*** He lists some of those examples of money or beauty, but there are all sorts of things that we tend to worship; the things that we find our identity in, our hope in, our purpose in, and that can be all sorts of things. It could be your job. It could be family. It could be money or reputation. It could be your health. All these things where if you find all your purpose and meaning in them, it's not that they are bad things, they are actually good things and they are blessings, but if I prioritize them over God, am I worshipping them? As he says, in real life, we don't get to choose IF we

worship something. We are going to worship something. Yes, you can say “Those people outside these doors don’t worship God. Of course they are worshipping something else.” But what do we say about us?

What are things that we struggle to prioritize and we know that God has given us this great blessing; it’s kids, it’s a great job, a great hobby, all sorts of blessings but think about it. What if that thing was taken away? What would happen if that was taken away? Would I get so angry at God? Is this something that I have put above God and His plan? This is tremendously hard because God asks us to love these things and He has given us so many blessings, but to understand that there will be a time, sometime, (as [Psalm 90](#) talks about) where all of these things are gone—where your loved one is gone, your money is gone—and what will you be left with? You will be left with God.

Is that a joyful thought, to be left with God, to say “Hey, I’m going to have God!”? Or is it sad to say “All these other things are going to be gone!” Can we understand in our day-to-day life that “I can worship God and put Him first and I can still love all those other things” but also understand that God is good? He is our eternal good that has loved us, created us and has such a good plan for us, but we struggle because it’s not the way we want. It’s not in the way that we want and how we would plan. I’m not saying any of that is easy, especially through disaster or tragedy. If you’re in Florida and things have just gone like that, with any devastating loss, it’s not easy. But understand, you still have God—a God who loves you, and especially Jesus.

In this short little text that has some challenging parts, we see Jesus for who He is. We see *Jesus: Your Perfect and Loving Savior*. It’s important for us to see this as He talks about what is good. Again, it reminds us that we are not going to do this perfectly. Are you going to struggle with this in your day-to-day life? Are you going to struggle when hardship comes and a tragedy strikes—yes! But our God loves you and Jesus was perfect. He is not just good. He is perfect in your place. When we struggle with God’s will and His ways, Jesus did not. He followed God’s will all the time. He went to the cross knowing it was going to be hard. He had you and the whole world in mind. When He struggled, even when He knew that it was going to hurt Him, He still followed God’s will knowing it was what was best for you and for all mankind. We see His love. We see Him as He reaches out to this man and speaks what is hard. Love, not in a way that just says “Do whatever you want” or “Yes, whatever you say is good,” but a love that challenges us; a love that speaks Law to us and says we don’t always have it right. This is what God does. This is what Jesus does through His Word. He continues to challenge our sinful hearts and this sinful world that thinks it has it all figured out. Jesus comes to us with love and says “You don’t have it.” Look to Him and look to His Word to be truly refreshed; to find what doesn’t perish, what doesn’t fade away, because He is the Savior. This is what is essential.

It ends by talking about how hard it is for the rich to enter. The disciples were saying "This is impossible!" I think what is fascinating is when the disciples say, ***"Who then can be saved?"*** Jesus says, ***"With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."*** You and I can be saved. Jesus is our Savior, because He loved us so much. He is willing to give you everything, not the things that we think we need or want in this life. As you might say, "If I were a rich man" or "If I just had this," we think all of these things are so good, but God really has your eternal good in mind. Jesus, your loving and perfect Savior, holds you tight. He holds you tight in this difficult, broken world to remind you to set your priorities right, to focus on Him and to know that He has you in His loving care so that you don't focus just on what is good but on that true eternal good. Amen.

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