

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Love or Money or...?

Gospel Lesson

Mark 10:17-22 (CEB)

¹⁷As Jesus continued down the road, a man ran up, knelt before him, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to obtain eternal life?"

¹⁸Jesus replied, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except the one God. ¹⁹You know the commandments: *Don't commit murder. Don't commit adultery. Don't steal. Don't give false testimony. Don't cheat. Honor your father and mother.*"

²⁰"Teacher," he responded, "I've kept all of these things since I was a boy."

²¹Jesus looked at him carefully and loved him. He said, "You are lacking one thing. Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me." ²²But the man was dismayed at this statement and went away saddened, because he had many possessions.

Bible/Sermon Focus

Our scripture reading for today is a conversation between Jesus and another Jewish man. This man asks Jesus what he needs to do to "obtain eternal life." Not surprisingly Jesus begins to recite parts of Jewish Law (Torah), and specifically parts of the ten commandments (the decalogue). Jesus' response makes sense. For Jewish people, orienting ones life around God's law leads to righteous living and proper relationship with God, the community, and creation.

So, when the man responds that he is keeping all of these laws, we may be a bit shocked by Jesus' answer, telling the man to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. But, if we understand the origin of the "Law" (Torah), Jesus' response makes perfect sense.

The Law of God was created to form boundaries and expectations between God and a people who had just been freed from slavery. Over and over, a law will be stated and then it will say, REMEMBER that you were once slaves in Egypt.

- Exo. 22:21 *"You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."*
- Lev. 19:36 *"You shall have honest balances, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt."*
- Deut. 15:13-15 *"And when you send a male slave out from you a free person, you shall not send him out empty-handed. Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the Lord your God has blessed you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today."*

Deut. 16:1 *“Observe the month of Abib by keeping the passover to the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night.”*

Deut. 24:17-18 *“You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow’s garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.”*

What’s really interesting about this Law of God is that it had rules for how property owners are supposed to act. It had rules about being on land that you own...but this Law was given to God’s people at a time when they were wandering in the wilderness, when they were just steps away from slavery.

Public theologian Rob Bell says, “It’s like Moses is essentially saying to these poor, wandering former slaves in the wilderness it’s not always going to be like this. Someday you’re going to arrive in your new life, and you’re going to build houses, and you’re going to settle down, and you’re going to have crops, and you’re going to harvest them. You’re going to be successful. And the danger is that you’re going to forget. You’re going to forget what it was like to be set free. The danger is you’re going to forget what it was like to experience liberation.”

Jesus’ response to the rich man makes sense. If you want eternal life, the kind of freedom that Jesus offers, then you must be free. And Jesus could tell that this man’s possessions, possessed him.

This week Pastor Stephanie shared a wonderful story about being young and broke. For many of us, the years of barely getting by are times of creativity and love and freedom. And then things get busier, and we work more, and we get caught up in the money and the stuff and the things. It’s so very easy for each and every one of us to lose track, to lose sight of what’s really important. That’s probably why the Law constantly reminded God’s people not to forget where they came from. That’s why our relationship with money matters. We always run the risk of wanting more stuff, and losing what really matters.

Discussion Questions

1. When have you had the healthiest relationship with the amount of “stuff” that you have?
2. When do you find yourself getting greedy?
3. What are some of the best things you’ve done with money you’ve spent?
4. Does your financial discipleship matter to you? Why or why not?

Prayer

Holy God, all that we are, all that we have, belongs to you. Use all of us, all parts of us, for your Kingdom. Help us be free, Lord. Remind us that our liberation comes from you, that our worth is defined by you, and that our value has been decided by you; never by our money or our possessions. Amen.