**Luke 18:18-30** October 28, 2018

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Pentecost 23

*Luke 18:18A certain ruler asked [Jesus], “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 19“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. 20You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” 21“All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said. 22When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 23When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. 24Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”*

*26Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?” 27Jesus replied, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.”*

*28Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!” 29“I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God 30will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”*

**The Giver’s Outlook: Trusting**

Dear Friends in Christ,

A conversation:

“So, dad, what do I have to do to get part of the inheritance? I mean, not now, but later when you, you know…”

“Just be our son.”

“But I didn’t do anything to be your son.”

“Just be a son.”

“But I want to do something, to prove myself, to show myself worthy?”

“No. You are my son. You get the inheritance. That’s the way inheritances work.”

“But if that’s the way it is, I don’t want your inheritance. I want to earn your inheritance.”

“Son, the inheritance is yours. Accept that. Be glad for it. In the meanwhile, act like a son who appreciates that he is going to get a lot of stuff he didn’t have to work for. Listen, you know our neighbor, Roger, right? And you know Roger’s son.”

“Yes. He drives me up a wall. Just cuz he is going to inherit his parent’s millions in a few months he throws his money around and acts like he is the best thing to happen since perforated toilet paper. I can’t stand it. He thinks he is so great—and you should hear the way he talks about his dad!”

“Take it easy, son. When you talk like that you are starting down the same road. You are my son. The inheritance is yours. You may not have earned it, but you will get it. Appreciate it. That’s all I ask.”

**I. A Man with a Lack of Trust**

Our reading begins with a question asked by a young man as he looked out at all the opportunities life presented him. He had money and a great future, but he knew there was more, so he asked Jesus, ***“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”***

Did you hear the contradiction? ***“What must I do”*** and ***“inherit”***. An inheritance is given, not earned. This rich young ruler has a huge misunderstanding of God. He uses the right word, “inherit,” but he doesn’t understand it. This young man uses a beautiful word in the completely wrong way. To use an Old Testament proverb, he puts a gold ring in a pig’s snout. He wants to inherit, but he forgets what “inherit” means. It means that God gives. ***“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** proves his ignorance.

What is this young man’s problem? There are a couple ways of looking at it. One way is to look at it as a basic lack of trust. Basically, he doesn’t trust God to be a truly gracious God. We can judge that from his question alone. The rest of what happened between him and Jesus only proves it.

To this young searcher for truth, Jesus says, “If you want to earn it, then you have to…” and Jesus lists off a bunch of commandments. The young ruler says, ***“All these I have kept since I was a boy.”*** Oh, more ignorance. Jesus had taught and made it clear that no one had kept God’s commandments. Jesus had preached, “It isn’t enough to not murder, you can’t even be angry.” People say, “Impossible! No one can never be angry!” which was Jesus’ point. Jesus is pointing out that inheritances aren’t worked for, they are given. God’s grace is in spite of who we are, not because of who we are. That means we need to trust God. But this man was so full of himself that he just couldn’t hear Jesus.

So Jesus does shock therapy, ***“Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*** The man became very sad because to him it really hadn’t been about God, it was about him. Him being able to pump his fist and say, “I have conquered. I have achieved!” He wasn’t about following and trusting. He wanted to brag. His faith was in himself, and so he couldn’t give up the thing that defined his life.

Do you ever begrudge God? When the pastor talks about money, when the collection plate goes round, do you make mental excuses? Not all needed to give themselves into poverty in order to follow Jesus. This man had to, because that is where his heart was. We need to ask if there is anything we begrudge Jesus. What is most valuable to you? What is the one thing in your life, that if God asked it, you would shout out, “No! Mine!”

It is curious that often our dearest treasure, the one that can get in the way of God is the thing we possess the most of. For this rich young man, his financial success is what got in the way of God. And so it is that people used to good health make the worst patients. And so it is that good-looking people obsess about every hair being in the right place. (Of all people, they don’t need to.) Of all people, the people most afraid of being wrong are not the ignorant but the smart. Usually, what we possess in abundance is where we put our trust.

What is that thing in your life that you might even begrudge Jesus if he told you God wanted you to part with it? What if God wanted more of your time? Would you walk away sad? Or what if God takes your health, a loved one, or your ability to take walks in the forest, or your freedom to pursue your dreams. How often we begrudge what God asks and requires of us! We are Christians, so perhaps more often than walking away we just stand in front of Jesus pleading, “Anything but that!”

Dear God, help us to trust you!

**II. Assurance for Those Who Begin to Trust**

There were some in the crowd around Jesus who had trusted, and they are wondering. They had left so much for Jesus. What about them? One of them, Peter, exclaimed, ***“We have left all we had to follow you!”***

At first, we might think Peter was boasting as that rich young man walked away from Jesus, back to his life of wealth. Was Peter saying, “Look Jesus! Unlike that slacker, we gave up everything for you. Aren’t you proud of us?” Or is he demanding, “We’ve given up so much. Now you need to reward us.” *Or maybe* he watches that man walk back to his life of wealth, and Peter is appealing to Jesus, “We’ve given up so much, and I’m not really sure what we get out of it. Not that I’m doubting, but it just seems like we have lost so much.”

Jesus’ answer tells us that Peter’s point was closest to the last one. His point was not to brag, or to demand, but it was a concern. Peter could remember the fishing boat he abandoned up at the Sea of Galilee to follow Jesus. And it sometimes stung to think about someone else sailing that boat that he had worked through countless nights to pay for, the freedom of being your own boss on the lake, watching the sunrise over the mountains while out on the calm morning sea; the satisfaction of making a living by the work of your own hands. Peter had given that up for Jesus. ***“Jesus, we have left all to follow you*** and while I love it, it sometimes hurts.”

And it can happen that way with you too.

You have put money in the offering envelope wondering why you don’t eat out as often as other people, actually knowing why you don’t: because of the money you just sealed in the offering envelope, and you could unseal it and re-write the check for half as much and no one would ever know. And you, when you got your last car, had to go with the compact instead of the mid-sized car because of that $100 a month in the offering plate. That $100 was the difference between mid-size and compact.

And if you stood back to look at the big picture, you might *really* have that kind of lost feeling like Peter. Not to discourage you, quite the opposite, let’s just say that you have an income of $2,500 per month, and then like many Christians—not to say you have to, but many do—you decided to give 10%, so you give $250 a month. Do you know how much that is in a year? $3,000. And if you do that for the forty years of working life, do you know how much you have given to God? $120,000. That’s not a mid-sized car, that’s a luxury car! Sometimes when we look at life and think of some of the what-ifs and the might-have-beens and an extra $120,000 we stand there with Peter watching the rich ruler going back to enjoying his riches and we think (and we shouldn’t think this way, but we do), “Wouldn’t that be nice!”—because we don’t trust God.

To this slightly confused disciple, Jesus responds in a way he didn’t often respond to the disciples. A lot of times when the disciples had their questions and opinions, Jesus had words of correction, sometimes real zingers that left them stinging. But not this time. (And this is why I think Peter had the right motives when he asked his question, because if he had not, Jesus would have corrected him.) But this time Jesus looks into Peter’s heart and he looks into your hearts and he gently says, ***“No one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”***

Jesus does not apologize for asking so much of his disciples. How can he? He gives them eternal life! He gives them forgiveness of their sins! He is pleased to call them brothers. He cannot apologize for what they have lost because they have gained much more! So he tells Peter, “You have done well, my good and faithful servant. Now trust. God has promised an inheritance through grace, now and forever. Simply believe that. Live like you are going to inherit this!”

So whenever we are asked to give, whether to the church offering, or to our needy neighbor, or to our fellow Christians in their sorrows, do not worry. Trust Jesus’ words, ***“No one who has left [anything] for the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much… and eternal life.”***

Here I must mention one last point. When Jesus says, ***“No one… will fail to receive many times as much in this age…”*** Do you know what Jesus is talking about when he says, “will receive many times more”? Some of the people around you have given up a lot for the kingdom of God, and you are part of what God is supplying in place of what they have lost. When new people come into our congregation out of the world, they are giving up something, and you are part of what God is giving them to replace what they gave up. When we welcome new members, don’t fret that our worship service is going to take an extra 10 minutes. Realize that for these people who have taken the step to identify with Christ, that you are part of God’s answer to what they have given up. Even if you aren’t going to be BFF (Best Friends Forever), you are part of the family that is theirs in Christ Jesus.

Maybe it really comes down to this: When giving, how do you measure? Is it “Well, I guess I can afford it” or “God will take care of me.” To be honest, you don’t do one without the other. But do you first break out the tape measure of self-preservation, or is it joyful, generous giving through trusting faith that God provides? May you give with trusting faith in God who has already done so much for you. Amen.