

“Everything” Sermon for October 14, 2018

Hebrews 4:12-16. Mark 10:17-31

Hebrews 4:15-16) NIV

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:15-16).

+++++

Jesus told the affluent and well-behaved young man—

Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

Mark tells us that at the very instant on hearing Jesus’ words, the young man’s face fell. “He walked away, for he had great wealth.” Surely the disciples were perplexed. Had not the young man kept all of the commandments? Was he not ethically, culturally and politically in the “in crowd,” an orthodox Jew, and one who recognized the virtue of God’s law?

So Jesus commented pointedly by saying,

“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

“Whoa!” exclaimed Peter and the other disciples.

“Wait a minute Jesus. But you asked him to give up EVERYTHING? We have already left everything to follow you. What do we have to look forward to?”

In the Gospel lesson, Jesus teaches his disciples emphatically that to follow him is to die to this life if we would obtain the life that is eternal, the life that fulfills our God-designed purpose. That makes this passage Jesus’ “last word” on discipleship: ***the obstacle of possessions***. Where many in Jesus’ day, as in our own, think of wealth and power as a “signs of grace,” a mark of divine approval, Jesus refutes that notion utterly.

In his well-documented study, “The Color of Law: The Forgotten History of How Our Government

Segregated America,” Richard Rothstein, outlines the societal engineering through federal, state and municipal laws and codes that were used fifty years ago to protect the interests of the Western-European American homebuyers and residents of Santa Clara County. The county leaders rejected the possibility of having Black and Brown homebuyers and renters. Even church groups joined in demanding that the Federal Housing Authority continue to restrict its mortgage guarantees to areas that were racially homogenous rather than integrated. This persisted because of the county’s demands, even after a 1967 Supreme Court decision outlawed such practices. Because people of color buying homes there could not get Federally guaranteed mortgages, the rates and monthly payments were much higher than than those of similarly priced units elsewhere. This resulted in monthly payments that they could afford. Multiple-family use of single-family residences

created overcrowding, blight, and crime. The choice was made to preserve racial and class homogeneity in the new developments such as those of Palo Alto, Los Altos and Milpitas against the alternative of racially inclusive communities. The kingdom principle of God's embrace of all people was ignored and the constitutional guarantees of the 13th and 14th and Amendments to the US Constitution as well.

How hard it is for those who embrace status and wealth in this world to enter in and receive the kingdom of God. Even today, our excessive consumption deprives others of resources they need just to survive. It is a hidden form of structural greed that wastes the world's resources and creates suffering for others we may never meet." Try to imagine how even our consumer practices concentrate wealth in one place.

God in Christ calls us to bear witness to in a "kingdom lifestyle" rather than a consumer-oriented,

me first, my creature comforts and social status over others mentality. We are called to live lifestyles and make and support decisions that demonstrate God's kingdom priorities as individuals, families, communities and churches.

We who claim allegiance to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the establishment of God's realm in human affairs are daily facing "the Judgment Seat of Christ" regarding whether or not we fully embrace Christ's values and standards.

The young man walked away crestfallen. Many of Jesus disciples also walked away, unable to even think of life beyond their temporary and transient social status, wealth and creature comforts. For Jesus it's not some things. We are to be disciples of Christ and agents of God's coming realm in everything? Will we stand or walk away in sorrow.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.