

## *Enoughness 2*

First Congregational Church, Branford

Mark 10:17-31; 10/14/18

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In the Gospel of Mark,

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’<sup>18</sup> Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.’<sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’<sup>20</sup> He said to him, ‘Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.’<sup>21</sup> Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’<sup>22</sup> When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!’<sup>24</sup> And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!<sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’<sup>26</sup> They were greatly astounded and said to one another, ‘Then who can be saved?’<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, ‘For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.’

28 Peter began to say to him, ‘Look, we have left everything and followed you.’<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news,<sup>30</sup> who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.’<sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.’

The Word of God for the people of God.

2 volunteers with a reading called *You are Mine*.

*I'm a little frightened, but I will open my heart to God, fully and freely..*

Let us pray. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be acceptable and pleasing in *your* sight, O God, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Our Enough. Amen.

The first thing I'm going to say about today's scripture is there are many rich people who follow Jesus who do great things with their money. Money isn't bad! As that scripture goes, it's *the LOVE of money* that causes the problem.

The rich man in today's story comes and kneels before Jesus. That's good stuff. He *sincerely* asks what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus imparts some commandments, and the man is like, yes, Lord, I have kept them. Then, Mark includes a beautiful thing - the scripture says, *Jesus, looking at him, loved him*. Jesus knew this man, and he loved him through and through. He knew what was going to happen, and he knew it was going to break the man. Jesus goes in - tells him he must sell everything he has, give to the poor, and follow him.

Now, the reason why Jesus was so severe with *this man* had to do with how people got great wealth in Roman Palestine! They either acquired or inherited it through taking property that had belonged to peasants, or by tax collecting, or through some questionable business - precisely the kind of defrauding Jesus referred to. Jesus says, my dear man, if you really want eternal life, you must do what you can to give back what you've taken from others - you must go and make right. *You have been your brother's taker, now it's time to be your brother's keeper*. The rich man goes away sadly. For he had many possessions, and had stolen from many - and didn't feel like he could make right with them. But, you know what??, maybe not forever. Jesus planted a seed. Maybe the words of Jesus are going to go to work on him. And, he'll come back. Sometimes I think about how people visit the church, seem to like it, *but don't come back*. What we do here is sow seeds - how they take root is up to God. Maybe folks come back at a way later date. You just never know. All we can do here is sow seeds. But, that's another scripture!

Okay, here's my favorite part of the text! The eye of the needle appears to have been a gate in Jerusalem, which opened after the main gate was closed at night. A camel could only pass through this smaller gate... if it stooped, *and* had its baggage removed...

It had to kneel to have all of its stuff that was weighing it down, removed...and then it could pass through the narrowed gate.

The disciples patiently listened to all of this, then Peter goes, lookey here, unlike the rich man, we've given up everything and followed you. We're kneeling before you. So, what's in it for us?! Jesus smiles and says, no worries, you've been given the keys to the kingdom. Here and now, as well as in heaven. You've

made it clear who and what you're going to be loyal to. *Just keep following me, and I'll show you your treasure.*

I hope you here today feel a little rewarded here and now in this hour - because you have chosen to be loyal to God. You could've chosen something else, but you have chosen the better part. God bless you, beloved. I hope you feel that.

Last week we talked about *enoughness*, how we try to get a feeling of enoughness from our money, our job, our talent, our looks, our popularity, our race, our politics, but how none of those things adequately fill us up. If that's all we're putting inside, there's never enough - so, we're always grasping for more - more money, more status, more toys. Which then causes us to say in the quietness of our being, in the middle of the night, or we say it to our therapist... *is this all there is?* Is this.... all... there is?

You're here today because you *know* that only God can give you your enough. I'm only here to remind us to go to the well every morning to ask God to fill us up so that we don't have to run after things, or people, to give us *our enough*.

I loved today's reading - *I know my happiness has got to be in these catalogues!* What are we kneeling before? Are we kneeling at the altar of WalMart, Target and Nordstrom's?

In Thursday's eSpire I'd thought about asking us to do an exercise I'd seen for congregations - to bring 2 or 3 excess household goods to church and to bring them forward at the start of worship, or during the sermon! - While I was talking we would've just kept bringing more and more forward - in an effort to make a statement about all the stuff we've acquired that we don't need - stuff we think is going to make us happy. *Then*, maybe we would've taken our stuff and had a tag sale or donated it to a community organization. To help people. *Helping* is where we find our treasure. If we had excess clothes, maybe we would've set up a clothing drive, especially with business clothes for those who are unemployed to dress for interviews.

Why do we have so much stuff?!! To make us feel better? More secure? To say those with the most toys win? For instance, Ken asked for these things at different times, this Precision Cooker, \$153, and this Food Saver, \$160. They've not been opened and they remain on the top shelf of our pantry. I climbed up there yesterday, dusted them off, and placed them in this *large* Marshall's bag where I'd bought a whole lotta other stuff!

Ask yourself, if you had to put *all* of your possessions in one shopping cart, what would you keep... What is it that you need?

I have a note on my desk at home that fills me up. Sometimes it gets hidden under the clutter, or gets turned over, and I have to go rooting for it. I need to keep

it central. This beloved note says, *Only this I want - to know you, Lord.... Only this I need - to know you, Lord.*

That quote confronts me today. If that's all I want, why do I fill up with so many things?... What must I do to inherit eternal life? I'm a little frightened, but maybe its about kneeling and having some of this stuff that is weighing me down, removed. To give it away. I don't know if I'm strong or generous enough to do that on my own. Jesus goes, '*For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.*' Maybe he's going to help me; God is, after all, *where* I get my enoughness.

After the 8:00 service, Phil, our organist, and I were talking about how great it feels to unburden yourself from so much stuff. Some stuff is easier to unburden, but I think today's text asks us to go deeper. To *really* give more away. In an effort to help others. To make right. We'd lead happier, more meaningful lives.

God says to you and me, you are mine, you belong to me. Come to *me* and I'll fill you up with security, and peace. Reach for *me*.

My sister, Amy, and her husband, Johnny, visited Ken, Abe and me this past week. Amy never gets to see movies and she wanted us to see the re-make of *A Star is Born*. We did, and I made note of the words in the movie's breakout song, called *Shallow*:

Tell me somethin',  
Are you happy in this modern world?  
Or do you need more?  
Is there somethin' else you're searchin' for?  
I find myself  
Longin' for change  
Tell me something,  
Aren't you tired tryin' to fill that void?  
Or do you need more?  
In the shallow, in the shallow.

Here and now, in our covenanted hour, we're far from the shallow now.

May we carry God with us when it gets shallow out there, or *in here*.

If we're a little frightened, let's open our heart to the Lord - and he will lead us where we need to go. Amen.