

PENTECOST 21 (2018)

Mark 10 Jesus Christ: Rich Man's Life without End!

Mark 10:17–22 *As [Jesus] was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

18And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 19You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” 20And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”

21 *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”*

22 *Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

In the Name of Jesus.

Jesus' LOVED the man! THEN, the man was disheartened, and went away sorrowful—all because he had great possessions?! The Gospel of the Lord!

OK—my dear ones! Pop quiz!

From today's Happy News lesson that wipes the smile from the face of the Old Possessor, the Old man inside us—Question: What will be one of the first and happiest SIGNS that you have entered eternal life, the kingdom of God, of heaven, peace with your Creator and Father?

Answer: you will not HAVE...ANY...POSSESSIONS!

Smile! THAT's what your Lover, your Savior, your King the Christ is DO-ING—when you have a financial setback, loss, theft, scam, flood, and worse! Rejoice and be glad when your God GIVES you your daily bread, all the good things He pours out for life HERE—what does the Small Catechism teach?

What is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

All these, the God of Pardon, the King of the 'fumlbers and bumlbers' of this world—He GIVES to us, to the good and evil alike!, the Catechism teaches!

But for His SPECIAL ONES, His disciples—for those He LOVES, He breaks for good the tie of 'possession' that works TWO WAYS, until the End. How much of the life of JOY we are to live as children of God—dear children of God, how much of that LIFE is WASTED, as we chase around and worry over and envy the lack of THOSE...THINGS...THAT...WE...POSSESS? Nah—those things that POSSESS US!

That Work, His Break, His RESCUING us from the Evil One's throat—we're halfway down it, my friends!—HIS steady march to make us HIS OWN, HIS CHERISHED POSSESSION, the text says at the beginning:

As [Jesus] was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Praise the Lord! He loved THAT man—He loves us too! He REBUKES us—His Spirit does!—at the gate of heaven!

JESUS...is...on...his...journey—TO THE CROSS! But, as with EVERYONE ELSE—Peter, James and John; Judas; His opponents; His so-called SUPPORTERS—as with everyone else, THAT DEED, the journey to the cross, cannot COMPETE with that which is more interesting to him, to us, in the highest degree! ‘What is still lacking HERE, with ME—I just KNOW there’s SOMETHING!—that I can work on, clean up, straighten out, and my entrance to eternal life turns smooth!’

He asked THAT QUESTION of the One Who pledged Heaven's attachment to sinners when He was baptized; Whose DAILY lesson to His own was His impending rejection and humiliating inauguration as King—

‘I’m a go-getter, a doer, not a talker—business or the Ten Commandments and decency! That’s how Mama raised me! I pause now, on my knees, to ask what little bits are left to shore up,

what valleys to raise, what mountains to cut down, to make straight the way between Life and a man like me who must die!’

Let’s make this clear: money is not evil; nor are possession! WE are evil, OUR love, attachment, to creation over the Creator!

And there is not a hint in the Bible that says that this man’s devotion to the Commandments was phony or lacking; NOR his gifts of maintaining all the great THINGS God had given him!

And so, if anything, texts like these CHEER US ON to the pursuit of a godly life AND the enjoyment of all the good gifts God gives us; including the rewards and even luxuries that hard work many times will produce!

Let’s not DEMOTE this text, my dear ones, into some cheap ‘dig’ at some so-called ‘rich people’—whom we can define as anyone who has ten dollars more than we do!

We’re all rich—compared to the people of Jesus’ day, who lived day to day, hand to mouth, except for the tiniest sliver of the powerful and influential. This text was given to the Church precisely for you and me, for our day and land of bounty unimagined by most of mankind for most of history!

And though the man left sad, the record of it is called ‘happy,’ the Good News! Our King, my friends, WILL bring us to eternal life! For He has come to us Himself, and comes to us still, with His Body and His Blood!

And One Day, HE will sell and give away ALL our so-called POSSESSIONS—those dangerous gifts! I have yet to see a hearse pass by with a U-Haul attached!

And, now—He is not going to WAIT to bring US into Eternal Life, into His Kingdom! That's what our BAPTISM at Christ's authority is FOR!

To teach us in the midst of treasures to LIVE—to RISE, DAILY!—as those who HAVE....ALREADY...PASSED...FROM...DEATH TO LIFE! (By the way, they are supposed to be baptizing that little heathen today, my grandson, Samuel Paul. He loves us still!)

And FORGET about the THINGS that possess us! There's something INFINITELY more dangerous than our things: OUR DEEDS! The BAD ONES, yes, of course. But far more dangerous are our GOOD ONES!

Again, thank God for our Baptism into Christ! The working of God, like the Flood of old, to DROWN what's WRONG with the world—THAT'S US!—and yet to bring out of the flood the same old sinners that went INTO the flood, into Holy Baptism—WE don't change at the font. The UNCHANGEABLE ONE changes! Already has—check the end of His journey!

So that we may live with things as though WE do not POSSESS THEM—(meaning, THINGS do not CONSUME OUR devotion and life of prayer!)

The man who taught your pastor the Gospel was—a wonder of the Holy Spirit!—the same man who gave me life here and now. And my father ran clothing stores for his career—with the old J.C.Penney that seems to be fading away.

And in the little town in which I grew up, that was a pretty nice store! And they sold somewhat expensive suits and dresses and coats and such. And my Gospel-teacher ignored the Lord's warning about casting pearls before swine; and he said within my hearing often, to other people, when asked what he did: 'I sell rags for a living.'

For he had heard the Lord's Word, that HE belonged to That King—and he knew well where all the nice clothing eventually ended up: in rags.

Though we keep the Ten Commandments happily and fully and with everything in us—THEY possess us—that goodness, that decency, that 'right living'—what WE bring to the table, thanks to our Baptism into Christ—what WE can offer to God or man has no more claim on us than our rags.

At HIS...DEATH-----

At the death of our Eternal King, He...had...nothing. A stranger lent Him a tomb, and wrapped Him in a sheet. And thus, He loved us all...the...way!

Your King WILL free you from the things that possess you, dear children of God! AND, He will, soon, free you and me from the self-congratulation we put on display every time the next poor man shows his weakness, his IDENTITY with us!

In fact the Gospel says that as far as the Kingdom of God is concerned, we are already free! For we have been baptized, flooded, killed and raised—to live HERE AND NOW, as if we are already THERE, THEN, in the Name of Jesus. Amen.