

Sermon
October 14, 2018
Mark 10:17-31 (Baptism)

We have three baptisms today from three awesome kids, I am biased of course but speaking for Harriet we can't wait. I just want to say I love them. Baptisms. I love them because they are so surprising you have no idea what's going to happen or how the Holy Spirit might just interject herself into the whole situation.

Sometimes we can see it in the godparents, parents and grandparents and sponsors, everyone gathering around the baby, and the children sitting on the floor. We all wait to see the spark of something. There *is* something that happens.

It's so incredible to see a child looking up at you and maybe grab hold of your sleeve. They might cry or laugh. They might squirm a little. It's part of it. They might even look you dead in the eyes as you put water on their heads. So thanks for the privilege and thank you Harriet for allowing me to be a proud dad today.

James Richardson wrote a poem years ago about Baptisms and I would like to begin with this. It's called Known: The Blessing

First we will need grace
then we will need courage

Also we will need some strength
We will need to die a little
to what we have always thought
what we have allowed ourselves
to see of ourselves
what we have built our beliefs
we will need this and more
we will all need to let it all go
to leave room enough
for the astonishment
that will come
We will be given a glimpse of the Holy One
What the Holy One sees in us
Knows in knowing us
Intricate and not hidden
No part of us foreign
No piece of us fashioned from the other
That loved, desired, discerned
Beheld entirely all our days

In other words, Baptism is the beginning. It's the start of this journey, of everything that is to come. And we are here to say we're with you. No matter

what happens. We are all here to say we will do whatever we can to walk with you; to be your spiritual family today and always.

The Holy Spirit always shows up in Baptism. I don't care how it goes. We have all heard the stories and I've heard some. Coaches having bathtubs in the back of their pickup trucks after practice. So many people being baptized at once they have to be sprayed with a firehose. Really... In the early days, and still in some orthodox traditions, babies were baptized nude although we have way too many advancements in baptismal gowns to give that a try here. And I certainly don't want to scare the children; or the parents. But however, it looks, if Spirit shows up, it's real. And in my experience the Spirit undoubtedly shows up. It's love in its purest form. Bishop Michael Curry says "If it has love, it comes from God."

And in this way, "we will be given a glimpse of the Holy One. What the Holy One sees in us is loved, desired beheld entirely all our days" ... the poet says. When we will make ripples in that water, these children will like us; given an inheritance... as Christ's own. They are treasured now and always.

On the surface, I was wondering this week how in the world I might make a connection with the Gospel with Baptism, wealth and riches but it's certainly there. Someone comes to Jesus with seemingly every possession. They know all

there is to know about what it means to be successful in this world. They even follow the law; the commandments.

“You lack one thing.”

What could this man possibly be without? With wealth, the rich man doesn't lack anything. What wouldn't he be able to purchase, to acquire, to make happen in his life given what he clearly has? Wealth provides you with everything you could possibly imagine, right?

“You lack one thing.”

It's so difficult to hear for any of us, to be reminded of what we lack. When we feel we have done everything we know there is to do to be happy and something still is lacking. At some point it gets exasperating. Really God what does it take? What more do you want from me. Look, I have followed you. I have left everything behind and I have come all this way. What must I do to obtain eternal life?

Better translated, however, Jesus says to the rich man, “you are lacking in one thing” that is, it's not some... *thing*; a possession he can obtain for himself. What the man lacks is a way of being; a way living outside of himself; a way of seeing

everything and everyone. Everything we can achieve or be in this life... in the end... the ultimate wealth is in relationship.

The danger of wealth, or anything else for that matter, is when what we accumulate keeps us from compassion. So much of what we have seen and heard over the past few weeks in the news has made me wonder quite simply, where is the love? Where have we lost the ability to come to the table with different ways of doing things knowing we all have in common the human desire to be loved?

And so, it is, well, impossible. It is impossible for us to live for ourselves and expect obtain the kingdom of heaven. It's impossible to know the peace of God when we spend our time and talents for our own benefit.

This man with all the human riches can't help but live for himself. He let go or give it up those things that give him temporary security and comfort. And so, as it turns out, what the rich man lacks is everything. He has revered riches over relationships. He has rejected community for the sake of acquiring more. Jesus offers the man an invitation to imagine life's worth that can never be met by the self alone.

And so, whether it's our finances, our faith, our works, and even our salvation... if any of it is for ourselves alone we have missed the point. We need one another.

It's why when we are asked the question "will you do all in your power to raise these persons up in a life of faith" we respond, "We will."

But what is impossible for humans alone, is possible with the love that comes from God. We are given what we need to live for one another instead of ourselves. It's given to us in the way Jesus responds to the rich man in four verbs. Jesus "looked" at this man and "loved" him. Jesus asks the man to "come" and finally for him to "follow."

A life of salvation takes looking and loving, coming and following- all actions involving us being attentive towards the other. It takes really seeing the story and pain of another in order for us to truly love them. It takes an invitation to love radically for people to take notice and follow.

We will celebrate with those who are baptized this day. Together we will show them how to *look* outside of themselves at the other. We will show them how to *love* even those most difficult to love. We will show them how to *come* to the table to meet our God in the bread and the wine. We will show them how to follow Christ out into the world. We will remind them of the one who *looked* at each of us, *loved*, *came* to us who asked us to follow. We tell them of the one who has inherited each us forever. It's the greatest and most valuable treasure that it can never be taken away.