

What Will God's Love Cost You?

Mark 10:17-31

October 15, 2006

Gospel Lesson

¹⁷ As he was starting out on a trip, a man came running up to Jesus, knelt down, and asked, “Good Teacher, what should I do to get eternal life?”

¹⁸ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked. “Only God is truly good. ¹⁹ But as for your question, you know the commandments: ‘Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely. Do not cheat. Honor your father and mother.’ ”

²⁰ “Teacher,” the man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was a child.”

²¹ Jesus felt genuine love for this man as he looked at him. “You lack only one thing,” he told him. “Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”²² At this, the man’s face fell, and he went sadly away because he had many possessions.

²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for rich people to get into the Kingdom of God!”²⁴ This amazed them. But Jesus said again, “Dear children, it is very hard to get into the Kingdom of God. ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!”

²⁶ The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked.

²⁷ Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God.”

²⁸ Then Peter began to mention all that he and the other disciples had left behind. “We’ve given up everything to follow you,” he said.

²⁹ And Jesus replied, “I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, ³⁰ will receive now in return, a hundred times over, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property—with persecutions. And in the world to come they will have eternal life. ³¹ But many who seem to be important now will be the least important then, and those who are considered least here will be the greatest then.”(1)

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

In today’s story we meet a young man. He has come to Jesus and asks, “Good Teacher, what should I do to get eternal life?” This story in today’s Gospel is one of a choice of vocation. At first Jesus asks the man about how he has lived his life so far. The man tells Him he has followed the Ten Commandments since he was young.

1Holy Bible, *New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

This is something we all are called to do. It is also difficult to do, because we can break a commandment just by thinking of doing something. For example, Thou Shalt Not Steal; all we have to do is think about taking something that doesn't belong to us and in God's eye's it has been done. This is part of the problem of our humanness, but this is also where God's grace comes in. If we come to Him and ask for forgiveness and really mean it, He will forgive us because Jesus paid the price for us on the cross.

At the beginning of verse 21 it says: "Jesus felt genuine love for this man as he looked at him." This phrase shows us the compassion Jesus had for this man. Jesus then goes on to say: "You lack only one thing," he told him. "Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." He hasn't made this demand on other people, that they give up all they own to follow Him. But out of love He knows that this is the demand that is needed in this case. The man is wealthy, and Jesus knows that this can be a stumbling block for him. When Jesus tells him this, he turns and sadly goes away.

Maybe the reason the man walks away is because his love for Jesus isn't as strong as his desire for the earthly things he has accumulated. He worked hard to accumulate all that he had and the friends he made along the way. He just didn't think he could give it all up to be a disciple. I don't think Jesus asks all of us to give up everything we own along with our family and friends to follow Him. I think He asks this of those who put everything else before our love for Him. I believe what He is asking is that we put Him and His love for us first, and then everything else can fall in place.

I believe that our family and friends are very important in our lives. Also, that we can work hard and have money and the earthly pleasures. We just have to make sure they stay in their place behind our love and actions for God. If we share the message of the Good News and use our earthly wealth to His glory, we really can have it all.

People at work have often asked Jim why he doesn't volunteer for overtime, why he only takes the mandatory overtime. His reply has always been that he is rich and doesn't need it. He has a Lord that loves him, family, friends, good health, and enough money to put a roof over our head, food on the table, and pay the bills.

It is possible to have a lot of money and things in your life and still be a disciple of God. I read a story recently in a Guidepost magazine about a man who did just that. He is a millionaire many times over and is in his 80's. He said his only regret was that he didn't have more money to give away. He has provided well for his family, but has also donated millions to many worthy causes throughout his life. Two of the things he has done are to help build hospitals and provide medicine to the poor. So it is possible to be rich and still be a disciple. You just have to keep your priorities straight.

If Jesus came up to you today, what would He ask you to give up in order to follow Him? Would you be able to give it up for Him?

After the man left, Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for rich people to get into the Kingdom of God!"²⁴ This amazed them. But Jesus said again, "Dear children, it is very hard to get into the Kingdom of God.²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!"

The road to discipleship is a very narrow road. It is difficult to follow. We have to continually look at what is in our path. This is why life can be very difficult. But when we follow Jesus and strive to be His disciple, we are assured that with God “all things are possible.” We can have it all. We can have worldly riches, family and lots of friends as long as we keep God first.

The disciples were stunned by the way Jesus handled the conversation with the rich young man. They had given up everything, but this was their choice not a demand from Jesus; he just asked them to follow Him. Our lesson puts it this way: “Then Peter began to mention all that he and the other disciples had left behind. ‘We’ve given up everything to follow you,’ he said.” I wonder if they were beginning to feel hurt and confused? They had given up everything for Jesus, so they could follow Him. Our answer is found in Jesus reply: **“I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News,³⁰ will receive now in return, a hundred times over, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property - with persecutions. And in the world to come they will have eternal life.³¹ But many who seem to be important now will be the least important then, and those who are considered least here will be the greatest then.”**

Because the disciples felt so strongly about following Jesus and helping to spread the Good News, they did leave a lot behind, but their reward in heaven will be much greater than what they lost on earth. We can leave our loved ones and wealth behind to go out and spread the Good News in many places in the world. But we can also stay right here with what we have and share that Good News. We just have to remember that in our hearts, we put God first and let God take care of everything else.

One Saturday night not too long ago, Jim went to sleep and then awoke early in the morning. He began thinking about problems at work. When he realized what he was doing, and that it was Sunday morning, he turned his thoughts to God and the upcoming worship service. He was soon relaxed and asleep in God’s loving arms. If we put God first and turn everything else over to Him, we can rest easy.

A friend sent me this in an email:

Dancing With God

When I meditated on the word Guidance, I kept seeing "dance" at the end of the word. I remember reading that doing God's will is a lot like dancing. When two people try to lead, nothing feels right. The movement doesn't flow with the music, and everything is quite uncomfortable and jerky. When one person realizes that, and lets the other lead, both bodies begin to flow with the music. One gives gentle cues, perhaps with a nudge to the back or by pressing lightly in one direction or another. It's as if two become one body, moving beautifully. The dance takes surrender, willingness, and attentiveness from one person and gentle guidance and skill from the other. My eyes drew back to the word Guidance. When I saw "G": I thought of God, followed by the letter "u" and the letter "I". "God, the letter "u" and the letter "I" dance." God, you and I dance. As I lowered my head, I became willing to trust that I would get guidance about my life. Once again, I became willing to let God lead. My prayer for you today is that God's blessing and

mercies be upon you on this day and everyday. May you abide in God as God abides in you. Dance together with God, trusting God to lead and to guide you through each season of your life. I HOPE YOU DANCE.

Has God asked you to give up something to follow Him? Has he asked you to think more about the words you use, the people you hang out with, or the entertainment you choose? When we make our choices, we need to remember to filter them through God's eyes. What Will God's Love Cost You?

Amen.