

Sermon 2009 Pentecost 19

10-11-09

Text: Mark 10:17-22

Theme: "You Lack One Thing...BUT IT'S A BIGGIE!"

"And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing..." but "disheartened...he went away sorrowful..."

If I took a math test and only lacked one thing; that would be great right? A 99% on a math test. I would be flying high! Except, what if that one thing was the numeral 5? That's kind of a big thing to be missing on a Math test. And so it was for the young man to whom Jesus spoke.

He had come to Jesus to be affirmed. He did not really want to be instructed. It is so for all who are happy with themselves and their ability to keep the law. Self righteous people look at their lives and think, you know, I'm a pretty good person and I've done a fine job here, don't you think so Jesus. Self righteous people do not need the Gospel so much because they believe that they are doing fine keeping the law. Then they freely judge everyone who is an obvious law breaker because they are living wicked lives. Self righteous people believe that choices in life are

simple and everything is black and white – at least most things are anyway.

If you are gay you are wrong. The Bible says so. Fix your life. If you are divorced, you are wrong. Fix your life. If you are living together without being married, you are wrong. Fix your life. Then when all you sinners have your lives fixed come back and see us and we will consider letting you into our club.

This is the kind of person who came to Jesus for affirmation. The problem is, Jesus was on a journey and that journey did not have on the itinerary to soothe the consciences and stroke the egos of self righteous, arrogant, hypocrites. He was on a journey to the cross where he would be whipped to within an inch of his death, nailed to a cross and hung by his hands and his feet and after all of that he would be damned. See why this petty hypocrite's whining might not impress Jesus?

Yet even then...even then...Jesus loved him and threw him a lifeline. The thing that was tripping him up was not his ability to keep the moral law of God, but his ability to believe that the moral law was not going to save him. The one thing he was

lacking was faith. And Jesus tried to give it to him, but he dropped it. When your hands are full of all kinds of worldly stuff, it's hard to hold on to faith. If I am trying to hold on to my golf clubs and my vacation and my satellite TV and my new car and the new stuff I need for my house, my hands are pretty full. How will I hold on to faith as well? If I am trying to hold on to my belief that I have kept all the rules and therefore deserve better, and my conviction that I am a good person and deserving of high praise, then my hands are pretty full and it is hard to hold faith as well.

If however, I am willing to empty my hands at the feet of Jesus. If I am willing to drop all the pretense and all the product and stand in front of my Lord empty handed, he has some amazing gifts to give once my hands are empty. He loves me. He gives me faith and with that faith I grasp the grace that he won for me on the cross when he completed his journey.

If we are so busy holding on to our possessions and our pride and our preconceived ideas of who and what is good, then we ignore faith and we will be disappointed; disheartened. We

will be disappointed at least temporally because our lives on this earth will be far more vain and hollow, filled with anxiety and worry. And if in fact we have no faith, we will be disappointed eternally. But if we drop all the garbage that causes us to worry and be anxious at Jesus feet; if drop all our pretense and pride; and fill ourselves with his Word and Sacrament, we will find new levels of joy in this life and certainly in the life to come.

Begin every day reading God's word? Be at this altar every week to receive his body and blood. Take every opportunity to study his word. Remember that the waters of your baptism flow over you constantly washing away every impurity. Do that and two things will happen. You will soon begin dropping the things that don't matter: the holier than thou image, the material possessions, the need to be always right, the need for power and control and you will find yourself embracing Jesus, casting all your worries on him, seeking to serve only him and rejoicing in the life he gives you on this earth. Don't go away disheartened. Drop your garbage and cling to Jesus. AMEN.