Sermon- 20th Sunday after Pentecost

Oct. 9th & 10th- 2021

Mark 10:17-22, Ps. 90

Title: “The Rich”

Prayer

Salutation

**Bridge**

 **Our trip back West this summer brought to mind something I said the first time I visited Tennessee in 1990. We had come to visit Pastor Doug, the founding pastor of Faith, and his wife Desiree, my wife’s sister, and their kids that summer. When we drove through the town of Franklin, I was amazed, not at the historical sights, nor the pretty scenery, or anything that you’d normally think of. I was amazed at the *houses*. I literally said to Shirreen, “They live in tract mansions here.” We had lived in Montana for twenty years, where most people, even in the big towns, don’t make a great deal of money and live in very modest homes. Why this came to mind this past summer is that it is still much that way there and still much that way here, and I’d say, even more so. I surmised that the only way this could be, is that the people here were very blessed by God. So much so, that many don’t even see that or have forgotten just how much that is the case. How is that?**

**Law**

**Like I told the children, life can get really messy sometimes and it is easy to try to wade through the muck and the mire without boots, and especially without God. People, especially those who are rich and think they have done it all by themselves, get mired down in that muddy mess, even with the best of boots on and just forget about what is truly important, because they are stuck. Really stuck. Sometimes, however, some manage to get out by themselves, doing everything one needs to do to be a success and they pat themselves on the back and go forward as if they are something special. IF, they get that far without God, because that’s a huge task.**

 **So, let’s take a look at the beginning of the Gospel text for today, and that is exactly what has happened. A young rich man comes up to the Lord and asks Him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus sees right through him and without him knowing scolds him by saying to keep the Law. Why do I say that? Because Jesus knows that this young man had tried to do just that in his whole life. He had tried in his fine “rich man’s boots” to mush through life doing all he could to succeed in pleasing God by his works, even though he didn’t know that no one is good but God alone and only God can succeed in that. And then, Jesus, in hearing the young man say, “I’ve done all that, I’m good.” Doesn’t commend him, but lays it all out for him, “Well, then, go and sell what you have, give it to people that need it and come, follow me.”**

 **This hit the rich young man like a 2x4 between the eyes. That’s what happens when someone tells you the truth about yourself. First of all, in his self-righteous unbelief, he thought he’d conquered life and all the mud. He kept the Law, perfectly, didn’t he? (Not really, Jesus knew that, but he didn’t.) Secondly, he didn’t see that God had given him everything he owned, and it was not his to keep IF, and this is the key, if he was to fully trust the One who had given it to him.**

 **Wow! Now, take a look in the mirror. Do you see it? Do you see the mud on your boots? How far does it go? Is it on your pants? Your shirt? Your hands? How did it get there? Have you tried to get unstuck? Are you trying to work your way out of the mess just fine on your own? Are you frustrated because everything you do won’t work, no matter how you try to please God by your works? And you’re failing at everything, your job, your marriage, your relationships, but most importantly, holding onto, even grasping to hold onto that which He has given you as if that is more important than anything else. Those nice boots you’re wading in are just- boots! They get dirty just like everything else. Take them off and throw them away! How can I say that? Because they aren’t yours anyway and in the long run, not as important as the one thing that will save you from it all!**

 **What did Jesus tell the rich young guy to do? His words were what I said before, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven; and come, follow me.”**

 **What was Jesus really saying here? And who’s he saying it to? To paraphrase He was saying, “Everything you do is trash. Everything you hold dear is trash. The only thing you need is- trust. Trust in –Me. Follow- Me.” And what did the young rich man do? He made the biggest mistake of his life. Being despondent, he left, because what he owned was more important than what he didn’t have- faith and trust. Unfortunately, he lived in a tract mansion by his friends, maybe, just like people here. He loved money and all his things. Jesus knew that. He knew his heart. It is why he told him to do what he should.**

 **And today, the world, and we, are no different and we should take note of what Jesus said to him and by extension, to us, because He knows our hearts as well. WE are the rich. We don’t even have to work, and the government sends us checks! And we live in a time of unrest of all types, just like they did at Jesus’ time. And we can easily become despondent. We worry about everything when we don’t have to, money, sickness and disease, jobs, governments, social interaction, retirement, death, demons and on and on. True, it is not a sin to have money and to work an honest day for honest pay. God blesses us so we can work to feed our families, have a roof over our heads and meet our needs. But it is a sin when you place money and work and any other thing above God. It gets that way when we buy for the sake of buying, save for the sake of saving and think of ourselves more than God and our neighbor. Like the young rich man, we think about all these other things first. And they become our gods. They are *our* trash. Therefore, we forget about who to give our cares to. We forget who to thank for all our blessings. And we die with a giant pile of junk for our kids to haul away. We squander so much, and most of all, the opportunity to put forward the Gospel. Life is not about money.**

 **Most certainly, this man knew Ps. 49:5-9, “Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of those who cheat me surrounds me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches? Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, that he should live on forever and never see the pit.” Brothers and sisters, if you love money more than God, you will find out that you can’t take it with you on your last day. What should have the young rich man done?**

**Good News**

 **He should have remembered this Psalm, too. Psalm 90, our Psalm of the day, that *he* would become truly- rich. Yes! OUR Psalm. For it reflects just where we are in these last days and gives us hope. Listen once again: “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Return O Lord! How long? Have pity on us your servants! Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil. Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands.” This gave me the chills when I read it. How long O Lord will you tarry?**

 **What is the Psalmist saying to us here? That those who have kept faith in Christ and followed, who look in the mirror and see our days going by as fast as the spring comes and goes each year, and the flowers die in the fall, that they will have favor. We will not be held by the grave. We will see and pass the glory of God onto our children and showing them the purpose of life found in the Gospels. By God’s blessings we reach out to the world in all manner of ways, to serve Him and our fellow man. And at the beginning of each day, we will sing “Morning by morning new mercies I see, Great is thy faithfulness.” In all things God is faithful. Alleluia! It is the path that Jesus was trying to show this young rich man. That path, that through the victory of Christ on the cross, we will not see eternal death, for we have followed- Him. We see Him there, on the cross and there off the cross- for us. Because He paid the price. We need no money. We would never have enough. We are redeemed by His sacrifice. On this path we experience** **love, peace, truth, and eternal life. My friends, do not allow the devil to steal this from you in these times! For as sure as hell is real, he is trying to bring you down. But, with God, all things are possible and even rich men can be saved. And by God’s generosity to all, the poor are saved as well.**

 **Therefore, there is no need to worry about money or things, or governments, or death. Those are cares of this world and of the body, which He provides for every day. But in Christ, we are “the rich”, richer than any man can imagine. That blood-bought richness is what is more important than anything. Stay in His path, dear ones, and lay up your treasures in heaven. Seek first the Kingdom of God and follow Him in the Spirit. He will lift you up for He has conquered the world. His justice will reign. He is faithful to His Word and will come again. The heavens and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall not! Until then, don’t worry about your boots along the way, they’ll not get muddy.**

 **May the peace of the Lord that surpasses all our understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**