

10/18/2009

**THE PRAYER OF THE DAY** O God, we pray that you would act in power and wisdom in our lives so that, by your guidance, we put away from us all things hurtful but receive from you that which is good for us in body and spirit, so that we may live our lives for you; we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

**THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON** Ecclesiastes 5:10–20

*(Pursuing wealth can disappoint, but it is a gift from God when we enjoy our possessions.)*

10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. 11 As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them? 12 The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep.

13 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, 14 or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him.

15 Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. 16 This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind? 17 All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.

18 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him-- for this is his lot. 19 Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work-- this is a gift of God. 20 He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

**THE EPISTLE LESSON** Hebrews 4:1–3, 9–16

*(The Word of God is living and active.)*

1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. 2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. 3 Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

*"So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" . . .*

9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

**THE GOSPEL LESSON** Mark 10:23–31

*(The disciples learn about living for God in all of life.)*

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

28 Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" 29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-- and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

**THE SERMON**

**“Discipleship – Serving God with I am and Have” Mark 10**

INTRO - Over 20 years ago I knew a lady whose daughter had struggles. Actually, everyone in the church knew it. The daughter was brought to doctors, brought to treatment centers, brought to counselors. But the self destructive behavior continued. At one point the mother was at the end of her rope. She had tried all she knew. She had spent lots of money. Nothing she did was working. Why even try any more?

But, there are times that people look at what they do, and the results, and wonder, why even try?

The wife who prays for her husband's healing, but it doesn't seem to happen? Why try?

The leader and politician who tries to lead a state or a country in what seems a healthy way, but the country or state goes it's own, seemingly unhealthy way. Why try?

The teacher who works to mold lives, but wonders where the support is from parents, or the community. Why try?

I. That is where the disciples were, rather surprisingly, in today's lesson.

A. The rich young man had come to Jesus seeking a way to heaven.

1. He was serious about living correctly, but, as we saw last week, his heart was also distracted by wealth.

2. So Jesus tells his disciples. **"How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"** We're told of the disciples, they **were amazed at his words.**

3. The disciples thought of this rich young fervent Jewish man first of all that his possessions were a blessing from God, and secondly, those possessions would help him to serve God. If this man can't make it no one can, why try?

4. **Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"**  
Why even try?

B. Jesus then told them the reality of the situation, **"With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."** Pleasing God, getting to heaven. This is impossible for people, because of their failure to serve God perfectly, their selfishness, their sin against God and others. Pleasing God and heaven are only possible with God.

C. Peter couldn't believe what he was hearing, so he asked the question another way.

1. **28 Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"** We've done all that and we have no chance to get to heaven by what we have done?

2. The answer was yes. But Jesus, as he is throughout this section, is kind and gentle with Peter, **29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-- and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.** In other

words, God does not forget what you have done, and in the midst of life's troubles there are blessings. But

3. Did you see the 'but' in verse 31. **31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."**

4. Ultimately, it is not what you do that pleases God, gets you to heaven, or even accomplishes the really important things in life. Pleasing God, getting to heaven, are blessings and gifts from God through Jesus, ultimately through Jesus' death and rising. So, if we can't accomplish it, why try?

II. Did you see the confession of faith today. It is the LWML pledge. This pledge our women is their intent to serve God with all their lives **In fervent gratitude for the Savior's dying love and His blood-bought gift of redemption, we dedicate ourselves to Him with all that we are and have; and in obedience to His call for workers in the harvest fields, we pledge Him our willing service wherever and whenever He has need of us. We consecrate to our Savior,**

**our hands to work for Him,  
our feet to go on His errands,  
our voice to sing His praises,  
our lips to proclaim His redeeming love,  
our silver and our gold to extend His kingdom, our will to do His will,  
and every power of our life to the great task of bringing the lost and the erring into eternal fellowship with Him. Amen.**

A. That actually is what God wants all people to do, not just the Lutheran Women's Missionary League members.

1. We have been talking about being disciples, people who live for God with all that they are and have, people who make a difference in the world.

2. But, if all our efforts fall short, if our sin is so powerful that we can't overcome it on our own, if even when we try to love, we end up hurting another, if we don't earn God's love, why try?

III. The woman I told you about earlier didn't know what to do for her daughter any more. All her efforts had not accomplished what she wanted. But, this was still her daughter, and she could not help but love her, so she kept loving her, as a Christian mother, as best she could. The young self destructive girl actually grew up, became a mature lady, married with children. It wasn't the counseling, the treatment centers, the doctors. By the mysterious grace of God and the persistence of a mother's love, the young girl matured and grew healthy. What the mother couldn't accomplish by her actions, was a gift as God worked in her daughter's life. Where she was frustrated and maybe angry at God, she was now amazed at His grace. Her anger turned to joy and thankfulness. I've seen the pictures.

A. You and I cannot please God, or earn eternal life, so why try? God by grace has sent His Son, and loved us, and blessed us. His son died and rose for us so that we might have eternal life as a gift, through believing in *His* love, not in our work.

B. So, if God gives us what we want, what we need . . . and CAN'T EARN . . . shouldn't we serve him with all we are and have in THANKS AND JOY?!

1. When we try to earn God's love, like the rich man in the lesson, there is a limit to our ability, even if we did our best.

2. When as we seek to live for God we accept God's love, and His blessings, and His grace, and His forgiveness, then God is working, not us.

3. There is no limit to what God can do. He can use the little things. He can use our big efforts. So, because God works, we keep praying, we keep seeking to make the world a better place, we keep seeking to change lives, and serve God.

CONCLUSION - Look around you today at these quilts. This is always a beautiful sight. There are about 150 quilts here. They will help around the world, and help in Alaska where people are in need. But, there are more than 150 people in need. Why try? Because God takes our big efforts, and our little efforts, and uses what we do in thanks and praise to Him, to accomplish His work. Why try? Because **with God, all things are possible**. So we serve in *thanks and joy!*