

**St. Paul Lutheran Church**  
**Grant Park, Illinois**  
**The Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost, October 14, 2018**  
**Mark 10:17-27**

*As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."*

*Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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."*

*The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."*

I want us to picture our gospel lesson for this morning taking place right in front of our eyes. You're in the crowd with Jesus and you're leaving the town you were staying in, but before you get out of town you see a younger man running and yelling. You quickly realize he is trying to get Jesus' attention. He keeps running and shouting until he catches up to Jesus. He is sweaty. Out of breath, but he caught Jesus and he has a question for him.

**“As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. ‘Good teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’”** The man catches up to Jesus asks him about the way to get eternal life. A bit surprising, but then you look at him a little closer and when you look in his eyes you see a man who is troubled. You see a man who is uncertain. You see a man who is struggling with a heavy burden which he wants Jesus to help with.

What will Jesus do to help this man with his burden? **“‘Why do you call me good?’ Jesus answered. ‘No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”** Jesus takes the man and reminds him about an important truth: God (and God alone) is good. A good reminder, yet Jesus takes things a little bit farther.

He starts sharing God's word with the man. He reminds the man about the commandments which the man knows so well. Don't murder. Don't commit adultery. Don't steal. Don't give false testimony. Be honest. Honor your father and mother. What is the man's response? **“‘Teacher,’ he declared, ‘all these I have kept since I was a boy.’”** The man knows exactly what Jesus is talking about and you can see it in his eyes and hear it in his voice he believes with all of his heart that he has kept these commandments.

You have heard what the man said. You can see it in his eyes he believes he is doing what God wants him to do. Your eyes swing back to Jesus and you notice something when you look at him. You just can't quite put your finger on it. His face is a mixture of sadness and concern. You recognize the emotion, but you just can't quite label it until it clicks where you have seen this kind of reaction before. **“Jesus looked at him and loved him.”** The look you see is love for the man.

The Greek word used for love in this verse gives us an insight into the emotion which you see on Jesus' face. Greek has several different words which it uses for our English word love. One word is philos. Philos is the love between companions, friends and equals. You probably have heard philos in the city name Philadelphia. Philadelphia literally means “brotherly love”. It is a love which you have experienced and no doubt share with many people, but isn't the word used here.

Another Greek word for love is eros. Eros is the love of opposites. It is the reason men and women are attracted to each other because they are attracted to the opposite sex. Eros is often connected to romance, but it isn't the Greek word used here. What Greek word does Mark use? He uses the Greek word agape. What does agape mean? Agape means a love which seeks the ultimate good of its object. Agape seeks what is best for that person.

Jesus is seeking what is best for this man who is standing before him. He can see the man is troubled. He can see his conflicted. He can see he is worried and this leads Jesus to speak with agape love to the man.

**“One thing you lack,’ he said. ‘Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”** In love, Jesus instructs the man to take everything he has, sell it and follow after him.

What was the reason Jesus instructed the man to take everything he has, sell it and follow after him? **“At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.”** Jesus loved the man who came to him because he knew what was troubling him. The man didn’t have peace because he loved his wealth and possessions more than he loved God. Jesus exposed a hidden idol in the man’s heart because he wanted the man to be saved. Money couldn’t save him. Only God could.

It is a lesson which you and I still need to experience today. What do I mean? Allow me to lay out some scenarios for you. Do you ever find yourself thinking how much better your life would be if you had something? Your life would be better if you had enough money and time to go to every single concert you wanted to in Chicago. Your life would be better if you made \$15 an hour because you could afford more things in life. Your life would be better if you could afford quality health care.

Your life would be better if you had a bigger house. Your life would be better if you had an easier job. Your life would be better if you could afford propane. Your life would be better if you had an iphone or Galaxy S9. Your life would be better if you had x or y or z. Are you starting to get the idea? You and I often look to the things of this world and think our life would be so much better if only we had them. Yet, would your life really be better if you got everything you claimed would make it better?

Say you had been able to go to any concert or sporting event you had wanted to, would going to any of these things offer you any comfort when you are standing next to the grave of the person you went to them with? Maybe you have access to the best health care money can buy, would your access do you any good when you’re sitting in a room at the University of Chicago medical center and a doctor walks in and says, “I’m sorry, but we’re out of options.”

It is with agape love that Jesus speaks to you this morning when he points out to you that money will fail you. It cannot save you. It cannot comfort you. It cannot spare you sorrow or suffering. **“Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!’ The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!’”**

**“‘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.’ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, ‘Who then can be saved?’”** The rich man came to Jesus seeking comfort because he sensed all was not right in his life. Jesus showed him his unease came from worshipping his wealth. This led Jesus’ disciples to wonder what could comfort them? What could offer them salvation? If money couldn’t do it, what could?

**“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.’”** The reason Jesus speaks to us with agape love is because he loves us with agape love. He wants us to understand it is impossible for us to do anything to save ourselves, but he has done the

impossible for us. He desires what is best for our souls and what is best for our souls is our salvation. Salvation with him in heaven is what comforts and reassures us when life goes bad.

Eternal life is based entirely on Jesus and the sacrifice he has made for us on the cross. It isn't dependent on the amount of money you have. It isn't dependent on the things you own. It isn't dependent on your health care or the concerts you go to. It is entirely dependent on Jesus and his love for you. Jesus' love agape love which gives you eternal life is what comforts you at your loved one's grave, gives you peace when you are out of options.

What does Jesus' agape love cost? It is free for you. Our Old Testament lesson illustrates salvation is a free gift. It is about a man named Naaman who came to the prophet Elisha. Elisha healed Naaman and Naaman freely confessed, **"Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel."** Naaman looked to and trusted in God to be his deliverer and savior. Naaman tried to offer Elisha money in return for salvation, but he refused to take it. Salvation was God's gift to him.

God wanted Naaman to understand God's salvation couldn't be bought by his money. It comes from God's love for Naaman. It is the lesson Jesus wants us to relearn. Salvation isn't possible because of our money. Our salvation is possible because God makes it possible through faith in Jesus and trusting his sacrifice on the cross pays for all of our sins. This unchangeable message gives comfort and strength to troubled and worried hearts.

It is the message which will bind up your broken heart when you lose someone you love. Your beloved Christian isn't dead. They are with Jesus. It will soothe your worry when you're out of options because Jesus is more powerful than doctors who are out of options. He will use a terrible evil to bring you out of a world filled with suffering to himself in heaven. Money can't buy you heaven, but Jesus' agape love does the impossible and blows heaven's doors wide open for you. Amen.