

August 13, 2017

Mark 10:17-31

On the Mend: Healing What Ails Us “Healing Hold-Outs”

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Let’s give the guy some credit! He may have not succeeded at the end, but at least initially he was a seeker. Yes, the rich young man came to Jesus to ask him the question – “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” He could have been solely stuck on his money and cared about nothing more than that! Rather, he was moving out of that into a deeper, more spiritual level when he sincerely asked his question to Jesus.

My guess is, he was no stranger to the idea of an inheritance. Now, I don’t know for sure, but my best guess is that he inherited his money. Not saying, he could not have earned it himself, but given his age, he probably got it handed down to him.

Now, the only problem with inheritance; is that you can be confused about what effort something takes. Jesus knew that he was a bit confused when he came asking. Somehow, he thought “eternal life” would be easily handed over to him.

Yet, Jesus seems to be conveying something else. He brushed aside the idea of inheritance, and talks to him about effort. By saying, “How are you doing with the big 10 – the 10 commandments.” To which he responds, “Check. All done.”

Then, Jesus goes on to say, “How about your possessions? Have you given all to the poor?” That’s where the man’s seeking stopped, and his holding on just continued, and thus was not able to grasp or get a hold of or hold onto that which he so desperately sought.

What Jesus has to offer is true living in the reign of God. And in this exchange he hopes this man, as well as us, will reflect on “whatever we hold dear, holds us.”

The rich young man held his money most dear, and thus it was holding him – back, he was holding on, which left him no where else to go and nothing else to do, but to have his hands full, and thus room for nothing or no one else.

It is human nature to want to hold on – that’s part of the reason we have hands, and the capacity to grasp and grip. Yet, holding on becomes a problem when what you are holding on to (other than God) hold onto you.

What are the obstacles that get in the way of true living in the reign of God -where unconditional love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, peace and justice rule and prevail.

It can come to be that we cannot get to the place of love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, peace and justice because we are holding onto and thus being held by: resentment, retribution, revenge, hatred, apathy, anger and the list can go on.

(? To the Congregation)

So, for now, let’s pool our communal wisdom about what keeps us from experiencing the true living reign of God? What do we hold onto that keeps us from the full, deep and meaningful life God desires to give us? What are your observations and guesses about that?

(Congregation answers the question)

It is important to note, in this passage, Jesus response to the rich young man. He looked at him carefully and loved him. Then, he said, "This is what you need to do." Yet, the man chose not to do it, and went away grieving. He could not hold onto God as that which was most dear to him. Instead, he held onto something other than God, and in so doing, what he held dear, in the end, held him.

When we let go of who we are, we become what we can be. When we let go of what we have, we receive what we need. Was his entire identity wrapped up in being "a rich young man". What do you hold dear about who you are, and what happens when you are asked to or have to let go - when comes along an empty nest, retirement, bankruptcy, illness.. Do we lose how we see ourselves, our identity?

Yet, if our identity is in God, as God's son and daughter, then that cannot be lost. Because we have held God dear, we will be held by God, always and forever. A healing wholeness can come from knowing whatever we hold dear, holds us.

The clue here, given by Jesus is that letting go means coming to the realization that some people and things are a part of your history, but not a part of your destiny.

Jesus was asking the rich young man to demolish his bridge, so that he had no choice other than to move forward. We can't follow Jesus, as we need to, if we have a way to go back to what was and is! Is this not the reason, Jesus said, "Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor." In other words, disassemble that bridge and start giving it away, and keep giving it away, till it is completely gone. Then, and only then will you be able to inherit eternal life.

“if you want to fly on the sky, you need to leave the earth. If you want to move forward, you need to let go of the past that drags you down.” (Amit Ray)

The rich young man wanted something beyond what he had to date, something beyond what this earth could provide. Yet, he failed to receive what he wanted, because he couldn't let go of what he had. He remained earth stuck even though he wanted to be heaven bound, even though he wanted the sky to be the limit. Jesus wanted him to have nothing less than heaven, yet, he remained left in the dust, cause he could not let go of that which kept his feet locked to the ground. He could not soar, because he was weighed and held down by the things of this earth.

Jesus looking at his disciples said, “It's going to be hard, but not impossible. All things are possible with God. Come follow me, Peter said, “We've left everything and followed you.” To which Jesus said to him and us, “Rest assured that you will receive one hundred times as much, now in this life – and in the coming age, eternal life.” Amen and Amen.