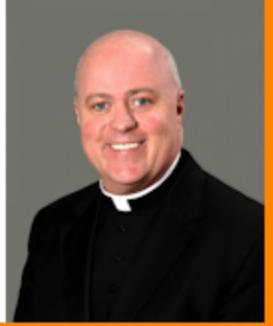


Father Chapin's Homily



October 14, 2018 – RICH YOUNG RULER

Today we are talking about the Rich Young Ruler.

A CONFUSING Gospel.

A TROUBLESOME Gospel.

One my own father struggled with throughout the years.

So, let see if we can find the DEEPER meaning of today's Gospel.

As Jesus is setting out for a journey, a man RUNS up to him, falls to his knees and asks,

What must I DO to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus answers by saying, **WHY do you call me GOOD?**

No one is good but God alone.

So, let's talk about this.

As Jesus was setting out on a journey ...

That word journey in Greek is HODUS.

Literal meaning is ROAD or PATH.

But it can also be taken as the **PROCESS** of **USING** a road.

Such as to travel or journey we often find Mark will use this word it figuratively.

Preparing a **WAY** for the Lord.

So here we are.

Two lives intersecting.

Jesus, after having just finished his Judean ministry, is heading towards Jerusalem.

He is on his way to THE CROSS and all that the cross means.

And the Rich Young Ruler looking for the Meaning of life.

As Jesus set out on a journey, a man ran up.

Now as we have said more than a few times in the past Mark is a bit short of detail.

But Luke has him as a **RICH YOUNG RULER.**

And that gives us a little more to work with.

He RUNS up.

So there definitely a sense of DESPERATION about this man.

As Jesus set out on a journey, a man ran up

We learned from the Prodigal Son, that running was considered undignified in the ancient world.

As the Father runs to his son.

But such is the reckless love of the father for you.

So this guy KNEELS before Jesus.

This Itinerant travelling preacher.

SOMETHING is going on with this guy.

He is mentally, emotionally, and spiritually anxious.

He had NO peace.

Have you ever been there?

I guess he must have heard about Jesus.

Maybe the miracles in Galilee or Judea?

Or maybe he heard him teach at a synagogue.

I'm thinking that was it.

He heard Jesus teach and it had **KINDLED A FLAME** in his heart.

And I've been there.

I mean we don't have time to get into the whole thing but my priesthood was a born in a Pentecostal church service in Charlotte, North Carolina when through the preaching a man God spoke directly to my heart.

They call it a Rhema.

And that voice led me here to you today.

From time to time people will write me and tell me that something I said on this program kindled a flame in **THEIR HEART** so the circle continues.

So, this guy runs up, we know from Luke he is a rich young ruler.

And given the fact he is running and now **KNEELING** in front of Jesus tells us

He is anxious.

He is hallow.

Something is missing.

He is searching.

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked,

Good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus responds,

Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.

Now there are religious denominations who do **NOT** believe that Jesus is the Manifestation of God on this Earth.

They ignore an awful lot of scripture to get there.

But the **FOUNDATION** of their theology is, “Well Jesus HIMSELF said it! Why do you call me good? Only God alone is good.”

Now I imagine if I was to ask “Well do you think that Jesus was good?”

They would say “Yes for sure. Jesus was good.”

And if I was to ask, “Well do you think he was SINLESS?”

They would say ABSOLUTELY.

And if that is true, it sure SOUNDS a whole lot like God to me.

WHY DO YOU CALL ME GOOD?

Which leads to the question WHAT IS GOOD?

You know the commandments.

You shall not KILL.

You shall not commit ADULTERY.

You shall not STEAL.

You shall not BEAR FALSE WITNESS.

You shall not DEFRAUD.

Honor your Father and Mother.

And the man replies,

Teacher all of these I have observed from my youth.

So first of all, notice he calls him Teacher dropping the GOOD TEACHER.

Which means he either actually listened to him or he is he is raising himself up to goodness with this reply.

He does not see Jesus as the Manifestation of God on Earth.

But that’s OK, neither did his disciples. YET.

Phillip said, “Lord show us the father and that will be good enough for us.”

Don't you know me? Phillip even after I have been with you so long. Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

WHY DO YOU CALL ME GOOD?

NO ONE IS GOOD BUT GOD ALONE.

Jesus mentions 5 of the 10 commandments.

All of them have to do with how we treat each other.

From the second tablet.

But he adds one which is a bit curious.

It is not part of the Ten.

You shall not defraud.

Both Matthew and Luke leave this one out.

Which is kind of weird because they are always ADDING to Mark.

But let's get back to that word DEFRAUD,

In Greek APOSTREO.

You don't see it a whole lot in the NT.

And it means TO DEPRIVE SOMEONE.

To take something from someone by means of DECEPTION and TRICKERY.

Now let's look at how the Rich Young Ruler responds.

All of these I have observed from my youth.

So, I GOT THIS. IM GOOD.

And it seems that in the eyes of his community he WAS good.

Now the fact that Luke would name his the Rich Young Ruler would mean almost certainly he was a Pharisee.

So he would have been wealthy and probably owned a lot of land.

So it seems the Tenant Farmers that worked his land regarded him as a GOOD person.

And one can only speculate but I imagine he inherited his wealth.

His father might have built the local synagogue.

Maybe he had a plaque in the cornerstone.

Rich Young Ruler.

What must I do to inherit eternal life?

And the question seems to suggest he is LESS interested in how he can serve God than how God can serve HIM.

What must I do?

Suggesting a Merit Based Theology.

And when Jesus challenges him with the law he doesn't not even blink.

Oh, I done all that! I GOT THIS. IM GOOD.

And look we are just talking here.

And I don't know for sure.

But MAYBE the reason Mark included that whole thing about the DEFRAUD is because SOMEWHERE along the way.

It might have involved his large land holdings.

Or his relationship with all those tenant farmers he was employing.

Or as he collected INTEREST on loans to ENRICH HIMSELF.

SOMEWHERE along the way he had, in fact, deprived people.

He might have been convinced along with his lawyers that he was right.

But over time he had been guilty of APOSTREO.

But he blows right by that one and says OH NO, IM GOOD.

I have EARNED my wealth and now I want to learn how I EARN grace.

I want to buy my Stairway to Heaven.

And here we are.

The first big nugget of deeper meaning.

We have been chipping away at the wall for some time now but here it comes.

And it has to do with the question of WHAT is good.

If I was to go out on the streets of Nitro, WV and ask the guy walking by “Hey are you good?”

I’m sure I would have a few exceptions but for the most part I think people would say YES.

Now if I was to press them and ask “Well do you think you are going to go to heaven?”

I again think that MOST people would say yes.

I am a good person.

I go to church.

I give to the poor.

I never cheated on my wife and I pay my taxes.

I’m good.

And what is that?

It is a laundry list of the good THEY have done.

Think of it as MERIT based theology.

And THAT has been with us forever.

That what you hear at funerals.

He was a good person so he is in a better place.

So the Rich Young Ruler says,

ALL of these I have observed from my youth. So I'm good.

Merit based theology.

The religion of the Pharisees.

I keep the law, I am blessed and I will go to heaven someday.

This merit based religion has always been with us.

But I'm glad because WITHOUT it there would have been no reason for Jesu to come and put a stop to it.

I see it on TV.

Preachers preaching a Santa Claus God.

And that is EXACTLY what it is.

You better watch out. You better not cry. You better not pout I'm telling you why.
Santa Claus is coming to town.

And he KNOWS if you've been bad or good.

So, be good for goodness sake.

And if you're good you get a bunch of presents under a tree.

And if you are bad, you get a lump of coal.

So, the WHOLE THEOLOGY of a Santa Claus God is that if you are GOOD ENOUGH God is watching you and you will get your reward.

And the Pharisees, as well as a whole lot of people sitting in pews today, are counting on that.

And WHAT does Jesus say.

NO ONE IS GOOD but your heavenly Father.

He later says NO man is righteous by the law not one.

Starting from Adam all the way to the last man standing, WE ALL FALL.

But let's get back to our man.

Something has driven him to his knees to ask this question.

So here he is.

A lost sheep.

And it is bad to be lost but particularly bad when you don't even know it.

And it says ...

Jesus looked him, LOVED him and said,

You are lacking in one thing go sell what you have and give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and then come follow me.

At that statement his face fell and he went away sad because he had many possessions.

Jesus looked at him, LOVED him, and said.

This is the ONLY place in the synoptic Gospel where Jesus love is directed to a singular parson.

The Gospel of John refers to the Disciple whom he loved.

But this is the only place in scripture where the love of Jesus is directed to a particular person.

And I take great comfort in this because Jesus is looking at man who, as I said is LOST and does not even know it.

Meaning he is full of sin and does not even recognize it.

He is need of a savior and does not even know it.

He is a TRUE LOST SHEEP in need of a shepherd.

And he LOVED him, because THAT IS WHY HE CAME.

And I believe that when he looks at ME or when he looks at US he feels the same way.

Jesus looks at him with LOVE and in his typical fashion puts his finger right on the heart of the matter.

If you REALLY want what you clearly think you already deserve.

SELL YOUR STUFF give it to the poor and follow me.

And his face falls, he walks away sad because he had a lot of stuff.

So right away the question becomes WHAT does this man worship the most?

What does he VALUE the most?

Is it the PROMISE of eternity?

Because if so Jesus is offering it to him right now.

Guaranteed.

Leave behind what you are presently worshipping and follow me.

And I will guide you in this life and bring you home.

Then he goes to say something that has haunted men, including my own father, throughout the centuries.

How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter into the kingdom of God.

The disciples were **exceedingly astonished.**

This is a mind blower.

Like “What did you just say?”

This runs complete counter to their theology of if a man is blessed in this life he must stand righteous in the eyes of God.

I mean it made sense I guess.

But this rich young ruler was clearly an example to the people of Israel.

He was the example of what was GOOD.

And Jesus has essentially said HE IS OUT!!! FOR NOW.

And then he does what he always does when he says something particularly shocking when he says,

Children how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of the needle than for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

And it says they were exceedingly astonished and said WHO can be saved?

It is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom than a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

Well ... I guess let's start with the question WHAT is rich.

Is it what we see on the lives of the rich and famous?

I would say particularly Americans and I love this country for sure but we have a pretty distorted view on what is rich.

Because if you look at the lives that so many of us live, in a GLOBAL third world context.

The fact that I got air conditioning, a hot shower, a grocery store nearby and a hospital if I get sick?

And if you put that in context of the ancient world high society did into have that.

So, when Jesus says, It is harder for a rich man ... this it scared the heck out of the disciples.

Well then who can be saved?

As it make many of us nervous today.

If a GOOD person can't be saved?

If a rich person can't be saved?

And the answer to “Are we GOOD ENOUGH” to ask a Santa Claus God to give us what we think we deserve is NO.

NO ONE IS GOOD.

NO ONE is righteous by the law. ANY LAW.

They ask “Well then who can be saved?” and Jesus responds,

For men it is impossible but not with God. For ALL things are possible with God.

You see Jesus is on his way Jerusalem and by THE CROSS make salvation possible.

The rich young ruler is returning to HIS WAY.

So why is it easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter into the Kingdom?

Well it begins with PRIDE.

The self-made man.

The self-reliant man.

Secure.

Not really in need of a thing.

I’m good.

Hear me when I say a SELF-RELIANT PRIDEFUL person does not need God.

He’s got this.

He’s all right.

He was chairman for the building committee and built the new parish hall.

But that does not translate into approaching God as a child which Jesus will bring up later.

But since I did let me say that a child cannot take care of itself.

It needs its parents to survive.

Jesus tells us that we are need to our Father in the same way.

We are sinners in need of a savior.

We cannot UNsin ourselves.

A broken computer cannot fix itself.

We are in need of saving.

A SELF RELIANT PROUD man does not see that.

I'm got this.

I'm good.

But he is hallow.

And it was precisely this hollowness that drove the rich young ruler to his knees to ask the question today.

He had NO relationship.

He had NO conscious contact.

He was EMPTY.

He was HALLOW despite the wealth that he worshipped.

Jesus taught us that YOU CANNOT WORSHIP BOTH GOD AND MAMMON.

You can't serve two masters.

You will love one and hate the other.

We have all heard that money is the root of all evil.

But that is not true.

It is the LOVE of money that is the root of all evil.

Money is neutral.

And I got to say that maybe a BETTER translation would be

The love of SELF-SUFFICENCY

Which goes back to the BIG LIE of the garden ... I don't need God, I want to be AS God.

This is the TAP ROOT of ALL SIN and it is the sin of the Rich Young Ruler.

He is the GOD of his own life.

The God of his own understanding.

And trusting his own thinking he has determined that he has GOT THIS.

He is GOOD ENOUGH.

And now he is face to face with the with the ONE person who IS, in fact good, and asking him for something he believes he DESERVES

And Jesus does NOT say "You fool get away from me."

NO.

It says ... HE LOVED HIM.

Pride goeth before the fall.

Often times a person will have to go through hell before they find their way to Jesus.

How many horror stories I have heard that ended up with ...

But you know it was a good thing because it brought me to Jesus.

Maybe the Rich Young Ruler had to LOSE everything before he could come to the realization that WHAT he in fact NEEDED was a SAVIOR.

To save him from himself.

I am not saying that we should not be good.

I am not saying it is not important.

What I AM saying is GOOD is a symptom of emulating gratitude for all we have been given.

Good aint going to get you there.

It is not a means to an end.

Are you good?

Are you good enough?

Or do YOU realize you are in need of a Savior?

You can't find your way home until you first realize you're lost.

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