

Proper 23 B
October 14th, 2018
Mark 10: 17-31
St. George's Episcopal Church
Fr. Chris

Poor Chris

“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.”

A lot of times I think of myself as poor. Poor Chris. I wish I made more money and had the sort of things that people have who have studied as long as I have and who have worked all their lives as hard as I have. I have worked two jobs most of my life. Poor Chris. He has nothing to show for all his work.

And then I remember how much I do have, and how blessed I am, and how much more I have than people who are really poor. I own my own home, as humble as it is, it is not so humble and most people can’t afford to own a home like mine any more, even though it is a one-bedroom condo in the city. It is a home I picked out, that I wanted, and that I thoroughly enjoy. I work with people who struggle to afford to live in a rooming house and pay \$675 a month for that privilege. Still others live in board and cares and several live homeless outdoors, yes outdoors.

I do not have to worry what I will be eating tonight. I can eat what I want. I can order in, or I can go out once or twice a week. The people I know live on \$190.00 of Foodstamps a month, and struggle to pull together their food budget by eating in soup kitchens, and availing themselves of food pantries. In some food pantries I have seen, they can have the cast offs from some of the donors pantry closets, or the food items that no one wanted in the super market as they were dented or otherwise unappealing. And they count themselves lucky to get what they are able to get. Many collect cans, soda and water bottles, which can add up to \$15.00 every time you are able to fill a shopping cart to overflowing with these. It is amazing what a nickel means to someone who hasn’t got one.

Then I remember how fortunate I am. Imagine, poor Chris is a rich man!

I drive a brand new pick-up truck. People I know either ride a bike if they can afford one and are physically able to do so, or they take the bus, which means it will likely take you 2 hours to get where you want to go, and you often have to ride to Hartford, transfer to a new bus after waiting outside, sometimes in rain or cold or snow, simply to get across town to a doctor appointment or go to the next town over from Manchester-to Rockville. Some take ADA or Dial a Ride, which can cause them to wait for hours or make them late for appointments that are important for their health. I can go where I want, when I want, in a new reliable vehicle I enjoy driving. I can drive in the snow, and I can drive off road. I am so lucky, so blessed to have such a vehicle. It is the nicest I have ever owned.

I can take vacations. I can get away when I am tired and stressed. I travel to Florida in the winter or early spring. I have a “Teardrop” camper that I can bring just about anywhere with my truck to get out and get away and explore the wonderful world God has given us. I use it every week and I hope to still use it for another month or so.

Now think about poor folks. They rarely take vacations, if ever. Time away from their sorrows for some might be a stay in the hospital to heal up, or the respite of a jail cell where they don’t have to worry about where they will stay, what they will wear, where they will sleep, when they get cleaned up or when and what they will eat. For some, a place to lie down where it is dry or a bed in one of the few shelters that are still open is such a place of respite. Dare I ever complain with the abundance with which God has truly blessed me? Poor Chris is a wealthy, rich man.

My complaints, my lists of wants and needs pale by comparison to those of some who live right around me. How dare I complain? I am a rich man, and I need to give thanks for my abundance of God’s gifts every day. That includes not only my material wealth, but also for my health, mobility, sight, hearing, and all my friends. I am a very wealthy man. Rich Chris! Gratitude should always be my attitude, not the plaintiff cries of a spoiled child wanting more, more. I have enough!

So then the question is, what am I doing with my wealth? Is it making me happy? Am I able to imagine sharing that wealth with others? I need not fear that I will not have enough, because I already have enough, and I have an abundance, more than a surplus of things and resources. How can I put all this to work, as God would have me do?

“One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.” This has become a mantra for me as I

survey the abundance of things I don't need that stuff my closets, fill my drawers, and overflow my storage area. And yes, it is hard to let go of things. "At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth." It takes time and bravery, and I am not courageous when it comes to this task, at least not as brave as I need to be. Those who know me well, know how long I have been working on this task.

Go sell what you have and give to the poor. That applies in the store too. Do I really need that shiny new widget I want? And at home: Use it or lose it. Use what you have in this life to do good for others, for surely, at the end of your life, you will lose it anyway. Why hoard your wealth where it does no one any good?

It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, if you allow your wealth to trap you and you become a slave to your possessions. Let Go and Let God. But there is hope for all of us, if you consider yourself rich as I do. The eye of the needle mentioned in the Gospel this morning is not a sewing needle, but rather a first century architectural opening in a wall with a narrow bottom and a much larger top opening, for the camel and rider to pass through and enter. It was hard, but far from impossible to do. The key is to open your eyes, realize how rich you are, lose the fear and trust your faith: Let Go and Let God! Amen.