

First Baptist Church of Fitchburg

1400 John Fitch Highway Fitchburg, MA 01420 Phone# 978-345-5622

August 16th, 2020, 11th Sunday after Pentecost

Pastor: Marquis Lockhart Song Leader: May Goff



Welcome and Announcements:

Good morning Congregation. I pray that each of you remain in good physical, mental and spiritual health. The ministry is going well. It is always a blessing to share the love of Christ in this supportive, inspiring, and encouraging environment, among an amazingly talented staff here at Oceanwood Camp and Conference Center in Maine.

I pray for you often and look forward to returning, yet I am confident in the hands to which you have been left in my absence. May the Lord will that I see you soon.

You are also most welcome to share your concerns and celebrations with me or your deacons, who will forward them to myself directly if desired. My email is meredithchristian@gmail.com and phone is (774) 276-0505.

Call to Worship:

Leader: Welcome today to a celebration of God's love!

People: We are grateful for this welcome.

Leader: Feel the loving power of God flow into your lives.

People: We open our hearts and lives to receive God's blessings.

Leader: Come, let us worship God who is always with us.

People: Lord, be with us today as we listen for your words of hope. Amen.

Invocation:

Lord, today we recall Your faithfulness. Thank You that You walk with us every day, that You are with us in each moment. Thank You that Your promises are true and Your goodness never fails us. In this moment we come to You and we lay our lives before You. May we worship and adore You with every fiber of our being. May everything within us cry "Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come." And so today we join with all those who worship and confess You as Lord, from generations past and present, and with all the angels that sing in heaven of Your greatness and beauty. Lord, we adore You. Lord, we love You. Lord, we praise Your name. Amen.

Gloria Patri:

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen, Amen.

Hymn: “We Bring a Sacrifice of Praise” (Click on link-> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTJE-JnAl6M>)

First Reading: Psalm 19

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

Celebrations and Concerns: Prayers for those who have been affected by strong earthquakes this past week.

Silent Prayer: Let us take our silent petitions before the Lord.

Pastoral Prayer:

Lord, we know you are God and that you hear us. As we come before You with our many joys and concerns, we first bless You because You are good and worthy of praise! How beautiful is the diversity present here today! Lord, you have blessed us with such variety in this gathering. You have not demanded that everyone be the same; have the same degree of faith, offer the same service. You have given freely of Your healing love to each one of us.

Today, we have offered multiple names in prayer for healing, restoration, hope, and peace. Some of these names have been spoken aloud in this gathering, while others remain in our hearts and our minds. Yet You have heard each cry for healing. You have heard all the prayers we have offered. Now let us place our trust in Your compassion. Let us remember that Your blessings extend to all people. Strengthen us in this time to be witnesses to Your love and servants in ministry to all Your people even now as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Children's Message: (Offered by Debi Cross)

THE PARABLE OF THE SPOON

One day a man said to God, “God, I would like to know what Heaven and Hell are like. God showed the man two doors. Inside the first one, in the middle of the room, was a large round table with a large pot of stew. It smelled delicious and made the man’s mouth water, but the people sitting around the table were thin and sickly. They appeared to be famished. They were holding spoons with very long handles and each found it possible to

reach into the pot of stew and take a spoonful, but because the handle was longer than their arms, they could not get the spoons back into their mouths.

The man shuddered at the sight of their misery and suffering. God said, "You have seen Hell."

Behind the second door, the room appeared exactly the same. There was the large round table with the large pot of wonderful stew that made the man's mouth water. The people had the same long-handled spoons, but they were well nourished and plump, laughing and talking.

The man said, "I don't understand."

God smiled. "It is simple," He said, "Love only requires one skill. These people learned early to feed one another. Those who are hungry are greedy people, and they think only of themselves.

Prayer: Dear God, Please help us to think of safe ways to help others before we think about our own needs, so that we may learn what it means to love and support each other, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Blessing of the Tithes, Offerings and Gifts:

Heavenly Father, we are only able to tithe and give because You are our good Provider. We pray that the little we are able to give today accomplishes great works for the cause of the kingdom. We believe every dollar will be used by You to do glorious things so that the name of Your Son, Jesus, would be made famous throughout this city and all the earth. Amen.

(Tithes, offerings, and gifts are greatly appreciated as a means to continue to care for our facilities, the needs of each other, and our local and worldwide community. We thank you for your pledges at this time and ask that you **Please Pray over your gifts** and mail them to the church at **1400 John Fitch Hwy, Fitchburg MA 01420**).

Doxology:

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise Him all creatures here below
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost.*

Sermon Text: *Matthew 19:16-30*

"Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments." "Which ones?" he inquired. Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."

“It’s Worth It”

The unnamed man in this passage, who is apparently very wealthy, sees Jesus and knows that He, at the very least, is wise about the things of God, so he walks up to Him because he has a question he believes Jesus can answer. He says to Jesus: “What good thing must I do to get eternal life?” So, Jesus immediately analyzes his question and understands that this guy is asking for a quick type of answer. If you think about his question, you understand. He said, “What good THING must I do to get eternal life?” Not, “What THINGS what must I do,” not, “What lifestyles changes do I need to make,” not “What negative influences and friends do I need to walk away from?” But “What one — single, simple, cure-all, shortcut — thing?”

A lot of us treat our life just like this man. Instead of thinking about what we can do to have the best life, we try to figure out the bare minimum we have to do while still getting by. Our actions show that we believe that we often just want to do just enough Christianity to get to heaven, but not enough to thrive in this life here on earth. I want to tell you that is the saddest way to live. So, Jesus, realizing the easy-fix this man is after, gives him a simple answer for his shallow question. He says to the man, “Just keep the commandments.”

The man replies, “Which ones?” This is interesting because when this man asks Jesus which commandments he should follow, you would expect Jesus to say, “Well...all of them. Obviously. God gave all the commandments to you for a reason. What kind of a question is that?!” But Jesus doesn’t say any of that. He quotes the man six commandments — five of which are from what we know as the 10 Commandments and the other is a command that was given to the Israelites at a different time. “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.” So, why did Jesus quote him these specific commandments?

All the commandments he mentioned are commandments that have to do with being good to other people. In other words, they’re all about being a good person. You see, because Jesus understands that this young man is really only focused on being good enough to get into heaven, Jesus essentially says, “Just be a good person, that oughta do it.” I’ve met so many people who think that just being a good person means they’re on the express line to Heaven. Even us as Christians have that same attitude a lot of the time: “I just have to be a good person, keep my head down, not cause any problems, and when I die, I get to be with Jesus.” But that can be a very one-sided, self-absorbed perspective. There has to be more to this life.

So, the wealthy man essentially says, “Well, yeah, I’ve kept all those. But, what else?! Help me out here cuz’ I still feel like I’m missing something!” It’s at this point that Jesus has this man right where He wanted him to be from the very start of this conversation. You see, this wealthy man started by asking a shallow question, but now, after Jesus prodded him a little and summoned him in the Spirit, he asks the right question: “What am I missing?”

You and I have to dig deeper and begin to ask the real question. We need to say, “I wanna move past all the sur-facy stuff and get to the heart of this issue: What do I really need to do to not just get to heaven, but to bring heaven while I’m still here on earth?” Jesus says to the wealthy man, “If you want to be perfect, go sell your possessions, give to the poor, you’ll have treasure in heaven, and then come follow Me.” What was Jesus saying? “You’re a pretty good guy, but do you want to be complete? You want to start experiencing all the great things God has in store for you? Give up that which has held you back on this time — your earthly wealth — and follow me.”

And what follows may very well be the saddest verse in the entire Bible. It says, “When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.” This is the very answer he came to Jesus in search of, but when he got it he left sad because he wasn’t sure that eternity with God was worth giving his wealth up for.

There's a story about a cheerful girl with bouncy golden curls who was almost five. Waiting with her mother at the checkout stand, she saw them: a circle of glistening white pearls in a pink foil box. "Oh please, Mommy. Can I have them? Please, Mommy, please?" Quickly the mother checked the back of the little foil box and then looked back into the pleading blue eyes of her little girl's upturned face. "A dollar ninety-five. That's almost \$2.00. If you really want them, I'll think of some extra chores for you and in no time you can save enough money to buy them for yourself. Your birthday's only a week away and you might get another crisp dollar bill from Grandma."

As soon as Jenny got home, she emptied her penny bank and counted out 17 pennies. After dinner, she did more than her share of chores and she went to the neighbor and asked Mrs. McJames if she could pick dandelions for ten cents. On her birthday, Grandma did give her another new dollar bill and at last she had enough money to buy the necklace. Jenny loved her pearls. They made her feel dressed up and grown up. She wore them everywhere - Sunday school, kindergarten, even to bed. The only time she took them off was when she went swimming or had a bubble bath. Mother said if they got wet, they might turn her neck green.

Jenny had a very loving daddy and every night when she was ready for bed, he would stop whatever he was doing and come upstairs to read her a story. One night when he finished the story, he asked Jenny, "Do you love me?" "Oh yes, Daddy. You know that I love you." "Then give me your pearls." "Oh, Daddy, not my pearls. But you can have Princess - the white horse from my collection. The one with the pink tail. Remember, Daddy? The one you gave me. She's my favorite." "That's okay, Honey. Daddy loves you. Good night." And he brushed her cheek with a kiss."

About a week later, after the story time, Jenny's daddy asked again, "Do you love me?" "Daddy, you know I love you." "Then give me your pearls." "Oh Daddy, not my pearls. But you can have my baby doll. The brand new one I got for my birthday. She is so beautiful and you can have the yellow blanket that matches her sleeper." "That's okay. Sleep well. God bless you, little one. Daddy loves you." And as always, he brushed her cheek with a gentle kiss.

A few nights later when her daddy came in, Jenny was sitting on her bed cross-legged. As he came close, he noticed her chin was trembling and one silent tear rolled down her cheek. "What is it, Jenny? What's the matter?" Jenny didn't say anything but lifted her little hand up to her daddy. And when she opened it, there was her little pearl necklace. With a little quiver, she finally said, "Here, Daddy. It's for you." With tears gathering in his own eyes, Jenny's kind daddy reached out with one hand to take the dime-store necklace, and with the other hand he reached into his pocket and pulled out a blue velvet case with a strand of genuine pearls and gave them to Jenny. He had them all the time. He was just waiting for her to give up the dime-store stuff so he could give her the genuine treasure.

You and I have to stop worrying about the things we might have to give up or stop doing because what we gain with Jesus is worth every single sacrifice! He's worth it, so the question we have to ask ourselves today is "What is God calling me to sacrifice so that I can follow Him more closely?"

Hymn: *"I Surrender All"* (Click on link) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x2IpLSfqp8>

Benediction:

Go forward with a heart and mind of surrender to Jesus, your Savior, as we seek to bring Heaven to earth.

May the Lord bless and keep you all.

Works Cited: Bible verses in citations *New International Version* unless otherwise listed.

Call to Worship and Pastoral Prayer (with edits) taken from Ministry Matters service elements: <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/1449/worship-connection-august-16-2020>