

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

It's an all too common story. Whether you're male or female, you might be the man in the story. Jesus is on a journey, a journey that ends in Jerusalem, when a man runs up and kneels before him. "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" A real question that conveys a sense of urgency. That man is everyone of us.

It's not a trick question designed by the Pharisees or other religious leaders to entrap Jesus, it's the kind of question that many who are in church every Sunday and active in between Sundays, might ask. "I'm successful, I participate, I tithe both of my time and my resources. Yes, I know we're saved by grace through faith, but what must I do to inherit eternal life?" There has to be something I must do to merit/inherit/receive eternal life. Isn't there?

We know only God is good, but we tell ourselves "we're pretty good," and we know the commandments and we've kept them since our youth. We even had them memorized once upon a time. And we do know them even if we can no longer recite them, we've taught them to our kids, maybe even our grandkids. As Sunday school teachers and confirmation instructors we've even taught them to other kids.

On his knees before Jesus, probably a type-A personality, in control, a perfectionist who's got it all planned out. In control and trying to take control of a relationship with God that exists only by the grace of God, and at God's initiative. But Jesus looks at him, sees past the surface, past the pride, he sees into the man's heart and he sees the man's soul. And Jesus, seeing the man's confusion, is compassionate and loves him.

"You lack one thing; go sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." Because truthfully, your treasure isn't your treasure until you give it away. When you are no longer owned, possessed by what you have, you will be possessed by God. The man goes away grieving, willing to pay any price, but not that price. To let go of pride, possessions, to stand with empty hands before God, it's impossible. For us. But not impossible for God.

For God all things are possible, God gave his Only Son away for the poor, us, we who have no claim and otherwise would have no hope. God gave everything, his body and blood, to show us the eternal loving heart of God. God gave everything and still does in the covenant of our Baptism. We who are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. Signed and sealed, not with a dollar sign, but with a cross, a sign of everything came nothing, and nothing came everything.

God hung with empty hands on a cross and because of that we are able to stand with empty hands before God, to accept being found, to accept God's grace, to live the truly abundant life of a believer's life in and through God.

Do you realize that Jesus loves us so much that he refuses to allow anything to come between us? He calls us to come and follow him, to accept the life he offers. He makes the impossible possible.

Soon, at our table, God will take the bread and the wine, what we have offered of the resources he has given us, and he will transform them as he gives them back to us to be instruments of God's purpose, presence and power in this place and time. Our God who gave everything for us will give us himself again and impossible possibilities become possible for us as we share the love and grace of God through our faith in action.

AMEN