

“Priorities”
Mark 10:17-31
10/10/2021

How would you like to have a life described with the words
*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
gentleness, and self-control.*

If you’ve been around here long enough with me
you know the drill.

We talk about Jesus being our Lord and Savior.
Not just our Savior, mind you,
But our Lord and Savior

And then the question is,
*If Jesus is our Lord, that means that we do what Jesus commands us
to do.
So, what does Jesus command us to do?*

And by now you are already thinking in your head,
*Ough, Ough, I know!
Love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength
Love our neighbor as much as we love ourself*

Right?

I find it interesting that in the Gospels we have the same question,
Asked by two different people
And Jesus gives different answers

We have the legal expert, a scribe, or in some accounts, a Pharisee
Ask the question...
And in today’s reading, it is a man
who seems to have many possessions

First the religious authority version...

From the Gospel of Luke, we hear

²⁵ *A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what
must I do to gain eternal life?"*

²⁶ *Jesus replied, "What is written in the Law? How do you interpret
it?"*

²⁷ *He responded, "You must love the Lord your God with all your
heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your
mind, and love your neighbor as yourself."*

²⁸ *Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you
will live."*

– Luke 10:25-28

In other versions of this story, we also hear
That these two commandments
sum up all of the commandments

Love God
Love your neighbor

But there is a subtle difference in the answer we hear
In today’s lesson

Today in the Gospel of Mark
the person talking with Jesus
Is a man who seems to have many possessions

¹⁷ *As Jesus continued down the road, a man ran up, knelt before him,
and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to obtain eternal life?"*

¹⁸ *Jesus replied, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except
the one God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: Don't commit murder.
Don't commit adultery. Don't steal. Don't give false testimony. Don't
cheat. Honor your father and mother."*

²⁰ *"Teacher," he responded, "I've kept all of these things since I was
a boy."*

²¹ *Jesus looked at him carefully and loved him. He said, "You are
lacking one thing. Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the
poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me."*

²² *But the man was dismayed at this statement and went away saddened, because he had many possessions.*

– Mark 10:17-22

Did you catch it?

Jesus gives a different list of commandments to this man
If he is to obtain eternal life

Jesus' answer to this man is a *practical* answer
Compared to the *theological* answer
he gives to the religious authorities

Did you recognize the list of Commandments
that Jesus gives in today's lesson?

They are part of the Ten Commandments

But only the second half of them

5. *Honor your father and your mother.*
6. *You shall not murder.*
7. *You shall not commit adultery.*
8. *You shall not steal.*
9. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*
10. *You shall not covet your neighbor's house or his wife or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*

These six are the ones that are about
how we behave toward one another

Which of the Top Ten are missing?

The ones that relate to our relationship with God

1. *I am the LORD your God, you shall have no other gods before me.*
2. *You shall not make for yourself an idol. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.*
3. *You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.*
4. *Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.*

So, why did Jesus only focus on the second half
of the Ten Commandments?

Jesus knew,

In the way that only Jesus seems to know people's hearts
That this man was good and righteous man

He did what was right.

Remember?

²⁰ *"Teacher," he responded, "I've kept all of these things since I was a boy."*

He was doing all the right things
He was checking off the boxes

But he was missing something deep inside

²¹ *Jesus looked at him carefully and loved him. He said, "You are lacking one thing..."*

Something was getting in the way

Of him truly living an abundant, eternal life

Somehow, he had the wrong priorities

²¹ *Jesus looked at him carefully and loved him. He said, "You are lacking one thing. Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me."*

²² *But the man was dismayed at this statement and went away saddened, because he had many possessions.*

He had many possessions.

Or perhaps, many things *possessed* him

And I want us to notice what Jesus didn't say

Jesus didn't say

Go, sell all that you own, and give the money to the poor

Jesus said

Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor.

He didn't ask him to sell absolutely everything

Just sell enough to help him loosen his grip on the things
that he *thought* he owned.

Once he loosened his grip on those things

He would be freed to see from a different perspective

On what is truly important

Of what his priorities could be

And with a shift of priorities

He would have a better chance of having a life

That could be described by the terms of

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Self-Control

— from Galatians 5:22-23

Doesn't that sound like a life that has God-given abundance?

I don't always live such a God-given, good life

As this list from Galatians 5 describes

Sometimes I allow my priorities to get scrambled

But I might have gotten close for a few minutes last week

The call came in from Ben and Hannah up in Morris

It was not going well with baby Jack

And they asked if there was any way

Joleen could drive up to Morris and help out for a couple days
(*Remember that Joleen is the real hero here*)

I just happened to be walking through the parsonage

On my way back to church from making a couple visits

And there was a lot on my list of priorities right then

One of our newer guests in church was asking a favor

A church member had just been rushed to Rochester by ambulance

There was a message that needed be returned

about our financial crisis in our church

I needed to get ready for a meeting that evening

In addition to the usual list of things that needed to be done

As important as all of these things of church were,

Something was more important and a greater priority

My Family

In the middle of all that

other important stuff that was flying around

I took time to be with our granddaughter Clara

And be with her as Joleen prepared and packed her suitcase

For an unexpected, multi-day trip

And, this case, Joleen was an even better example

Of showing what was most important

And changing a week of things planned

Priorities

²¹ *Jesus looked at him carefully and loved him. He said, "You are lacking one thing.*

Imagine Jesus looking into your eyes carefully and loving you...

What would Jesus tell you?

What are your priorities?

What might be getting in your way of loving God more fully?

And living an abundant life which is eternal?

Think back on what you have spent your money on
this last month or so

Think back and consider what you have spent your time on
this last month or so

Consider the thoughts that you have harbored in your heart

Is there anything in your life that has had a higher priority
Than loving God and loving your neighbor?

These two things are tied together in a divinely mysterious way

In the 25th Chapter of Matthew

When the Son of Man comes in majesty

And separates people as easily

as one separates sheep from goats

and we hear who gets inherit the kingdom prepared for them

The list we hear is

I was hungry and you gave me food

I was thirsty and you gave me a drink

I was a stranger and you welcomed me

I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear

I was sick and you took care of me

I was in prison and you visited me

What are your priorities?

What might be getting in your way of loving God more fully?

And living an abundant life which is eternal?

Can your life be described with the words

*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
gentleness, and self-control.*

*²¹ Jesus looked at him carefully and loved him. He said, "You are
lacking one thing..."*

What would Jesus tell you today?

(Response Hymn "Whatever You Do" # 3128)