

This morning I will be reading a Scripture from the gospel of Mark. There is a misprint in the bulletin. It is from Mark. I will share a short reflection on the passage. Then I am going to invite us to share with one another how we have been challenged by the study with Eric and Letarshia and how we put that into whatever action we need to in our lives.

Just prior to this text that we are about to read, the gospel writer Mark records people bringing their children to Jesus in order that he might bless them. But the disciples tell the parents to stop bringing the children. Jesus then responds with words about how important it is for children to come to him.

This passage is certainly a challenging Scripture for us. So, allow these words to sink into our soul as we read them.

Read Mark 10:17-31

This passage begins by telling us that Jesus is on a journey. I like hearing that. Because knowing that Jesus is on a journey allows me to be on my journey as well. On this journey a man runs up to Jesus, kneels before him, asks him what he must do to inherit eternal life.

The man is respectful, and his question is honest. This is not one of those stories in the gospels where someone is trying to trick Jesus into an answer. And Jesus gives him a respectful answer by reminding him of some of the Commandments.

Jesus doesn't mention the Commandments directed at God like loving God and not having idols. Instead, Jesus lifts up the Commandments about our interactions with one another like not committing adultery, stealing, or bearing false witness.

The man says he has led a good moral life and done these things. But the man wonders if there is more. And Jesus tells him there is more. Jesus recognizes that he is a man of great wealth. Jesus then challenges him to sell all that he has, give to the poor, and to follow Jesus along the journey.

What is it that we value that would be hard for us to give up? Let's reflect on the challenges that we have heard this weekend. Challenges about how we treat one another. Challenges about our assumptions about others.

If we allow what we studied this weekend to challenge our assumptions, then we may have to give up some thoughts and ideas to grow in our faith in Jesus. What is it that is holding us back?

Are we being held back from trusting Jesus more fully by our need to protect our financial resources? So much so that we are fearful to share what we have and experience God through the act of sacrifice?

Are we being held back by our attitudes that we have about others? We are resisting challenging some of our assumptions which leads us to not really know the person in front of us?

Are we being held back by a lack of trust in God and take the risk that maybe we are being invited to take? We want to play it safe rather than trust God to lead us forward?

If we refuse to give up what is holding us back, we may find ourselves in the shoes of the man who refuses to sell his possessions and he turns away from following Jesus. The man turns away from Jesus and he is sad.

Based on this weekend's study, what is it that we may need to give up in order to be a better follower of Jesus?

Feeling miserable because we have difficulty giving something up is not the final part of this story. Instead, Jesus tells the story about how hard it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. That as we all know is impossible.

But Jesus then says this, “with God all things are possible.”

May we be honest with ourselves about what it is that is hard to give up. But then may we also hear the words from Jesus that with God all things are possible. AMEN.

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-Given: October 14, 2018 in Montreat, NC at Allison Creek’s church retreat.