

So, What's In Your Pocket?
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Mark 10:17-31

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before (Jesus), and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.' " He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "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." When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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." They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

If you watch any television you probably have seen commercials featuring Samuel L. Jackson and others promoting Capital One credit cards. These credit cards tout travel rewards, cash back, and low fees. Mr. Jackson encourages us to put one more credit card in our wallets and get further in debt. He ends the commercial with an intense stare into the camera and asks us, "what's in your wallet"?

While I am not particularly interested in what credit card you are using (we will talk more about that next week at the lunch after church when we have a conversation about personal financial planning and stewardship), I would like us to think about money and our possessions for a bit this morning. I will speak from the theme, ***So, What's In Your Pocket?***

This is the beginning of the Stewardship Campaign at SFBC and over the next month, we will be encouraged to think about our financial gifts for 2016.

I think stewardship gets a bad rap in church. No one wants to talk about it. Stewardship has become a bad word, and some of you have already tuned me out--say amen for your neighbor. Most church folks hate to see stewardship season come because we often see the glass as half empty. We think there is not enough to do the ministry we want to do. There is not enough money... people... energy... time... there is not enough. But, I believe there is always enough. The psalmist said the earth is the Lord's and the fullness there of. The world and those who dwell in it. During this stewardship season, I hope each of us will think seriously about what is my individual part in helping the vision for ministry at SFBC become reality.

For me giving financially to the church is not about giving up anything. No one is taking anything from me when I write a check to SFBC or Mount Zion. I am so grateful to give because God has blessed me so much. **All I have** is because of God's goodness and grace. Giving--is about attitude. Which leads us back to the rich young man.

It is interesting to read that as Jesus was about to move from one place to another, a young man runs up to him and the New International Version reads, he fell on his knees before Jesus. That's pretty dramatic. And while on his knees, he asked Jesus, "good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life." That is certainly not a bad question. We can feel the sincerity and urgency in his question. Yet, right away Jesus pivots the attention away from himself and onto God. Jesus doesn't want the title of good teacher. For Jesus, if we want to know what good really is, then look to God, the creator of heaven and earth and the giver of all good gifts. Jesus told the man, you know what to do...follow the commandments, do not kill anyone, do not sleep with another's husband or wife, don't lie or steal and honor your parents.

The young man said, I've done that all my life. I have followed the letter of the law as long as I can remember. But somehow the young man inherently knew something was missing in his life. We can follow the rules in life....dot the i's, cross the t's, sleep 8 hours, refrain from texting while driving, get an annual mammogram, stop smoking, give to the Red Cross, and work in the family business--we can do all the right things and still feel spiritually empty. There is no real joy in following the rules just to check a box. The young man said, I have followed the rules all my life now what? Jesus said, if you want to inherit eternal life, get rid of everything, give it to the poor, and follow me.

Now, that certainly wasn't the answer the young man expected to hear. He thought Jesus would create another box for him to check. He was good at checking boxes. He didn't really want to change his life!

Following Jesus, also known as discipleship, is not something we do in our spare time. Discipleship calls for a total change of priorities. Life is no longer about me, myself, and

I, mine and ours. God comes first--period. God has our highest loyalty and attention. God comes before family, career, new home, fantasy football, our children, and the Seahawks, (wait maybe not the Seahawks--OK even the Seahawks) everything!!!!.

The rich young man was shocked and heartbroken at Jesus' response, because there was no way he would sell everything and follow Jesus. His status, wealth, and things, meant too much to him. My friends, to be a follower of Jesus means being willing to give up status and power that the world values.

Even the disciples were shocked at Jesus' response to the rich young man. It was standard belief that the wealthy were favored by God. According to the theology of that day and time, salvation would first be conferred upon the wealthy. And, the wealthy were catered to by the religious leaders because they contributed to the upkeep and support of their houses of worship.

Jesus' new idea about wealth was so different that he said it twice. It is hard for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. But he ends saying, with God all things are possible. With God even a camel can get through the eye of a needle.

Now, here is a news flash my sisters and brothers--what we have materially means nothing to God. God owns cattle on a thousand hills. God is concerned with what we **do** with what we **have**.

So, what is in your pocket? The rich young man had a lot! Is there so much money in your pocket, in your checking account and investments that you feel beholden to the markets, and your stock holdings? If Jesus told you to give away all you have to the poor and follow him, how would you **feel** and what would you **do**?

Now probably for 90% of us in here the title of wealthy doesn't apply. It is easy to say what is in our pockets or pocketbooks... about \$2 in change, a debit card, an Orca pass, some lipstick, a fair amount of lint, and an old mint. Perhaps a better question for us is, What are we holding onto so tightly in our pockets that prevents us from following God's call on our lives?

Is it... Ego (who we think we are)? Power (being able to tell others what to do)? Tradition? (this is the way we have always done it), A bad relationship? Addiction? Out dated ideology? Fear of the past, fear of failing, or fear of what others might say?

Whatever is preventing us from hearing God's voice and following Jesus, needs to be discarded. The rich young ruler left Jesus heartbroken, because he wouldn't get rid of his money and his stuff. And, today is the day for us to examine what we are holding on to. Today is the day to examine those things in our pockets that separate us from God.

Jesus told Peter, don't fear letting go or giving up everything to follow me. Jesus said we will receive 100 fold the things we give up or give away to follow Jesus. Life won't be easy. Jesus said, there will be challenges, but you will be abundantly blessed.

So, what's in your pocket? We may not be called to radical sacrifice like a Mother Teresa, Adoniram Judson, or Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. but discipleship calls for sacrifice nonetheless. What does money, status, position of power, and possessions mean to you? Can you freely give it all away to follow Jesus or is your self image wrapped up in your things.

So I leave you with this question, what's in your pocket?

Our closing hymn is #173 Tu Has Venido a La Orilla. This is one of our heritage hymns. You may sing either in English or Spanish. Jesus comes not seeking the wise nor the wealthy, but just asks that we follow Him.

As we are singing, if you are moved to deepen your commitment to God within this community of faith, we invite you to come forward.