

# "You Lack one thing...."

Mark 10:17-31

October 15, 2006

**I am glad that we have this time together today. There are times when I get the feeling that we live in a somewhat crazy world and we really need to come together as the body of Christ so that we can listen carefully to what God's word might say about how we are to live in the world around us.**

**I can tell you honestly that I am a little troubled this week. We have before us a powerful Gospel text in which we see a young man come to Jesus. This is a young man who has been deeply involved in the church - a young man who has been steeped in the laws of God and has faithfully kept those laws all of his life. - But he is troubled. Is it enough? Has all of his faithfulness to the word of God, as he has understood it, been enough? What more is needed? How is he supposed to attain his goal?**

**These are not unusual questions. We might not be as quick to come before Jesus and ask for an evaluation on how we are doing in terms of our faithfulness but I suspect that every faithful Christian wonders from time to time how they are doing {unless, of course, we have gotten so comfortable with cheap grace and don't even worry about if we are doing what God wants us to do with our lives.} How are you doing? Are you faithful to God? ..... faithful enough?**

**Can you imagine how radically faithful this one young man must have been to be able to say that he has kept all of the commandments from his youth. I believe that this man came in all sincerity to ask the question. And he was sincere in believing that he had done everything that he could possibly have done. - - - Still it was not enough - still there was something lacking. Jesus laid it on the line - told him exactly what he had to do - but it was too much.**

**Have you heard about "Jesus Camp". I have to say that I was surprised when I heard about all of the press that a little 'Bible Camp' {if we dare call it that}, is getting. Apparently there is a documentary that has been produced concerning the "Jesus Camp" that has been in operation near Devils Lake, ND. The leader, who is a pastor, talks about being committed to make 'radical followers of Jesus Christ to be ready to serve in the Lord's army.' Personally, I do not know enough about the camp to pass judgement. Some suggest that it is so radical that it is 'brainwashing' our youth in Christianity and is no better than the brainwashing that goes on in radical terrorist organization. Video clips I watched showed happy, excited kids involved in singing and praising God. I do wonder what might be being taught when it seems as though a young girl rolls her eyes at a girl that is part of the group and tells the camera that Jesus is the only thing that she will ever talk about.**

**What is it that God wants of us as we live our lives for Christ? Perfect obedience to the laws? Do nothing beyond trying to win the unchurch to Christ - speak of nothing else? It seems as though we often come up with some really strange understandings of what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.**

**Along with reading about the "Jesus Camp" this week, I also ran across an article that talked about a church in Arizona that is struggling. It seems that the leaders of the small congregation were arrested for having 172 pounds of marijuana in their car - before you shake your heads thinking that they had betrayed their church and fallen to the 'dark side' you should be aware that the marijuana was for religious purposes. The founders of this church teach that marijuana is a sacrament. It is there contention that they form a spiritual connection with God in their use of marijuana and that the government has no right to stop them from worshiping in the way they believe they should worship - what about our religious freedom, after all?**

**What does it mean to you to be a follower of Christ? What does it mean for how you live your life? The young man in the Gospel text came running to Jesus. He was so excited about his faith in God. He wanted to do it right and was trying hard. He kept all of the commandments . . . . Or at least he kept them according to the understanding of the Pharisees of the day. But Jesus tells him . . . "You lack one thing .....**

**It is amazing to me to think about the diversity in the people claimed to try to follow the will of God - both then and now. The question that the young man came with in today's Gospel text was a common question. When a person came to Jesus with the question concerning what they must do to gain eternal life - what must they do in their relationship with God - it seems as though there was always one thing lacking. Elsewhere, when the question has been asked the answers differ. One person is simply told that he must be born again - another to believe and be baptized - yet another was told to 'Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself'. Only here does Jesus tell someone that they must sell everything and give to the poor. It seems as though it is always something different - unique to the individual. Always there is something - even if it is only one thing.**

**This young man kept all of the laws, young kids in Devils lake are pushed in their fervor for the faith, some try to make the connection through drugs. We try - but fail to move into the kind of relationship that we would desire to have with our God. Always it seems as though something - perhaps even just one thing, gets in the way of our living out our faith. What is it that we must do? What is it that stands in the way of your relationship with God and with God's kingdom? Money is a tough one - earthly possessions are enticing. I always think of the funny comedy sketch in which Jack Benny is being robbed and finds himself face to face with the robber. The demand being made at gun point is, "Your money or your life." There is a long**

pause before the robber finally says, "Well? What's it going to be?" To which Jack Benny simply says, "I'm thinking - I'm thinking!"

It can be almost anything, I suspect. Almost anything can stand in the way. Jesus loved the young man for trying but acknowledged that for human beings 'salvation', that connection with God is impossible. We would be left separated from God if not for the love of a God that makes the impossible possible. Try as we might, our sin will get in the way. In love, God reaches beyond the barrier and welcomes us home. *"Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need."* AMEN