**Sunday October 10th, 2021**

**Thanksgiving Sunday**

**Mark 10: 17-31**

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” No doubt this rich young man was sincere in his search. He had obviously been thinking long and hard about his future. He was asking the right questions, and he was certainly asking the right person. When asked, he was able to say with certainty that he had followed all the laws…he had done everything that was expected of him. That young man was as close to achieving eternal life as anyone of the day, yet he couldn’t have been farther away. There was one step he was unwilling to take…and that was to divest himself of all that he had worked so hard to amass…the things that defined him… and give the proceeds to the poor.

It would be simple for you and I to pass judgement on this young man who is like us, searching for the path. It would also be hypocritical to do that, because we, too, hang on to so many things, unwilling to give up what we have worked so hard to acquire… the things we think define us and prove our worth.

One of the Anglican Fellowship of prayer workshops last weekend used the ten commandments to encourage us to examine our lives and prayer practices. We don’t often stop to consider how things in our lives can interfere with loving God and one another. What things do we treasure or idolize? What things interfere with fully living our Christian lives? What are we reluctant to give up? Wealth has many forms, different for each one of us. Do I put my comfortable home, possessions or the quest to accumulate things at the top of my priority list? Perhaps memberships in prestigious groups, a profession or a reputation? Am I overly proud of who I am, what I have or what I’ve done? Do we put the institutional church ahead of faith and following Jesus? Do we ‘keep track’ of what we or others ‘get’…possessions, relationships, opportunities…to make sure we get what every one else gets? When we put what we have or what we feel we deserve at the top of the priority list, we lose sight of the Kingdom of God, and what is required of us, as followers of Jesus.

Thanksgiving is traditionally a time to give communal thanks, but it is just a single day in the year. What about every other day when we are each blessed to wake up in our privileged lives? The very fact that we are safe, warm, and well fed is more than what much of the world enjoys. Most days we don’t appreciate we can see and hear, or move around with a minimum of difficulty or discomfort. We are blessed and rich beyond imagination. The wealth we have increases exponentially when we share it with those who have a need. That is our treasure, and it’s here in this life. Personal wealth can be a barrier, if we do not use it to further the Kingdom of God. When we look beyond our own concerns to those of others, the barriers begin to come down…between the other and us, between us and God…allowing us to see the Reign of God all around us.

On this Thanksgiving Day and every day, be generous with what you have…the gift of God’s grace. Be generous with your experience of a living faith that makes a difference in your life today. Be generous with the joy being a follower of Jesus brings to you every day. Be thankful for family, friends, health and life. Be thankful for what has been and is still to come. Smile…so everyone can see. The smile you share can change someone’s day and perhaps their life, and can make an amazing difference, even if you never know the impact you have had. Happy Thanksgiving! AMEN