

Sermon: *The Way to Really Live*
Text: *Mark 10:17 – 31*
Date: *October 11, 2009 AM*
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

One day, a man was driving down the road in his new BMW, thinking to himself: *“I’ve got everything I’ve ever wanted.”* And suddenly, he blew a tire and as he opened the door to step out, suddenly a semi came by and ripped the door off. Well, it just so happened that a policeman happened upon the accident and found the young man pacing back and forth and complaining about the missing door. He said: *“Officer, just look what they’ve done to my new Beemer!”* The Officer said: *“Son, I wouldn’t be worried about that car if I was you. Haven’t you noticed that your arm is missing too?”* Well, the young man looked down and sure enough, there was nothing there but a bloody stump. And he turned to the officer and said: *“Oh my Lord, I’ve lost my Rolex too.”*

I don’t know what it is, but there’s something about our fallen, sinful nature that really loves material possessions. We love our stuff. George Carlin described it this way: *“Stuff is important. You gotta take care of your stuff. You gotta have a place for your stuff. That’s what life is all about: trying to find a place for your stuff.”*

Methodist preachers can tell you a lot about stuff. We’re experts. Every time we move we’ve got to rent a bigger UHaul. When Lori and I moved from Kentucky to Albany, we had a nice, regular-sized truck and it just keeps getting bigger and bigger. That’s why we can’t leave Jesup: ‘cause they don’t make a truck big enough for all our stuff ... but ... we’re not the only ones. Have you noticed how much money we spend

organizing and storing our stuff. There's a whole row at Walmart with nothing but storage containers to help us organize our stuff. And everywhere we go, there are storage buildings for rent or sale so we can put them in our backyards to store our stuff.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not preaching against material possessions this morning. It might surprise you that there is nothing Biblically wrong with being rich or with owning a lot of things. The problem comes when our love for money and things turns into greed or when our love for things becomes greater than our love for God.

In our text this morning, Mark tells us about a man who came to Jesus and fell down at His feet, saying: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Well, Jesus said: "Keep the commandments." And the man said: "Oh, I've done that since I was a little boy." And Jesus said: "One thing is missing. Go, and sell everything you own and give it to the poor; then, come and follow me." And Mark tells us the man went away very sad because he was very rich. And the disciples were amazed, especially when Jesus said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."

This man reminds me of an announcement in a church's newsletter that said: "*Lost! A black, leather wallet containing precious family photos, personal identification, and \$875. Finder can keep the photos and the ID, but please return the money to which I am attached for sentimental reasons.*" Now, there is a lot that we can

learn from this man, but first there are several things we need to take notice of.

First, notice what this young man had. In just a few short verses, Mark tells us a lot about this man. ***First, he had a lot of enthusiasm.*** Verse 17 says: he “ran up to” Jesus. He was eager to meet the one that he had heard so much about. He was excited, for you see, there was a question that had been on his mind for a long time and if anybody knew the answer, it was Jesus.

Second, he had a sense of humility. Verse 17 says: he “fell on his knees” at Jesus’ feet. Now, the custom of Jesus’ day was for people to bow before those who were more important or more powerful than they were. And so, here was this rich, young man, possibly a member of the ruling class, and yet, he fell on his knees at Jesus’ feet.

Third, he was a religious man. When Jesus reminded him about the commandments, he said: “Teacher, all these I have kept since I was a boy.”ⁱ And notice: Jesus didn’t argue with him. Jesus accepted his confession. This wasn’t a pagan sinner who knew nothing about the things of God. By all outward appearances, he was a religious man, a keeper of the commandments.

And if you and I saw this man walking down the street in Jesus, we would have thought he had it all together. He had a great attitude; he was a church member; and he appears to be excited about life, but

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Just notice what the young man was missing! Jesus said: “One thing is still missing.” But

the rich, young man already knew that. He knew something was missing. That's why he came to Jesus. The problem is he didn't know what it was. You see, on the outside he appears to be a man who has it all, but there is still a nagging sense of dissatisfaction about his life. He had it all; he had everything going for him: money and power, but he didn't have what he wanted the most. He had a lot of resources, but he didn't have a relationship with God. Jesus said: "**Go and sell everything you have and give it to the poor; then, come and follow me.**"

So, what is God trying to say to use through this story? Two things:

First, I must put God first. Exodus 20:2 says: "**I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.**" The Bible says God is a jealous God and He will not allow us to have anything in our lives that takes His place. So, if I can buy football tickets but I can't tithe, I haven't put God first. And if I can go anywhere and everywhere, but I can't go to church on Sunday, I haven't put God first. And if I can afford a nicer car or a nicer home, but I can't afford to tithe, I haven't put God first.

You see, it may seem like we need things, but what we really need is a person, Jesus Christ. Jesus said: "**For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?**"

Put God first, because that's the pathway to life.

Second, I must manage my finances. You know, we've been through some really difficult days in

the last few years. A lot of people, even some in our own church family, have lost their jobs or they've seen their hours cut and so their income has fallen. But most of us, the problem is not that we make too little; it's that we spend too much. And we spend our money on things that really don't matter.

We're like the man who was trying to teach his daughter how to manage her money. So he started giving her an allowance and told her to keep a detailed account of how she spent her money. And at the end of the month, he asked to see the books and he noticed that there were several places in there where she had written, "TLOK". In fact, 20% of her money had been spent on "TLOK". So he asked her, "*Suzie, what in the world does TLOK mean?*" And she smiled and said: "*The Lord only knows.*"

Do you ever feel that way? The Lord only knows where the money goes. Listen friends, if you don't manage your finances, your finances will manage you.

John Wesley had a way of talking about money that challenges me every time I read it. He said: "*Gain all you can; save all you can; give all you can.*" You see, you only get to keep what you give away. That's what Jesus was saying when he said: "***I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or family or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age and in the age to come.***"

In the 1920s, a rich man gave \$100,000 to build a Christian college in Africa and after he had given all that money, he lost everything he had in the stock market crash of 1929. Well, years went by and the

college started looking for the people who helped them get started and they found this man living on the streets on the south side of Chicago. And they flew him all the way to Africa to see the school that he helped to start. And as he stood there, looking out over the campus and the student body, he began to weep and this is what he said: *“the only thing I have left is what I gave away.”*

Manage your money, because that’s the pathway to life.

There was once an old miser who made good money his whole life, but just wouldn’t spend any of it. He gave his wife what he had to so she could pay the bill and buy the groceries, but he kept most of his money in a box under his bed. Well, one day, he had a heart attack and on his death bed, he told his wife, *“I want you to go home and get my money box and put it on the roof of the hospital so I can pick it up on my way to heaven.”* Well, that’s what she did, but the day after he died, she got to thinking, *“I wonder ...!”* So she went up to the roof and sure enough, the money box was still there. She broke down and started to cry and said: *“Oh George, I knew I should have left this in the basement.”*

Brothers and sisters, put your trust in God, not in your possessions or your prosperity for this truly is the way to life.

In the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.