

With God all things are Possible
Mark 10:17-34

Friends I wonder if any of us, at some point and time in our lives, have come across someone who demonstrates their claim to love God and believe in Jesus Christ by attending church regularly, going to bible study, giving to missions and even telling other people they need to believe in Jesus....

but they look down their noses at other people who don't attend church, read the bible as much as they do, or give as much as they do...

They pride themselves on limiting their interactions with non-Christians lest they give the impression they are endorsing a "sinful" lifestyle.

They believe that if you honor God by keeping his rules, He will honor you and bless you with success, health and wealth, and if you don't obey God's rules – well that explains why there are poor people, or sick people, or suffering people their situation is their own fault... they are reaping what they've sown. These people cannot give mercy or show grace.

There is a term for people like this... people who meticulously obey God's rules, but fail to show God's love to the people around them... we call them **hypocrites**.

Because we instinctively know that somehow you can't claim to truly love God and then not love other people... and scripture confirms that.

1 John 4:20 says *"Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen."*

Hypocrites

Well friends, today's scripture passage is not about them. It's about the opposite of a hypocrite – not quite sure what you would call that? **An Oppocrite?**

Anyways... the opposite of a hypocrite is someone who is a respectable person who shows his love for others through being a nice, considerate, charitable, helpful, honest person – but

shows no love for God. (which is not to say that they don't believe God exists)

And that is precisely who we see coming to Jesus this morning – an oppocrite.

And even though oppocrites show no love for God... they are concerned that God sees that they are respectable persons who treat others well in this life, and they want some sort of assurance that He will take this into consideration in the next life?

So the man, very respectfully of course –because he's a good man... he asks Jesus - "good teacher...what must I do to inherit eternal life?" and the rest of this story this morning is how **Jesus exposes the fact that this man loves his fellow humans but shows no love for God.**

Notice that the commandments Jesus quotes all have to do with our horizontal relationships – murder, adultery, stealing, perjury, fraud, honoring your mother and father...

And the man's response is not – oh you left some commands out...what about Love the Lord your God with all your heart soul and mind? Instead his response is, yes...yes... I've never broken any of those commandments, go on...

Well guess what friends – the majority of Canadians haven't either. Most people are not murders, adulterers, thieves, they don't lie in court, or commit fraud, and they take care of their aging parents...

But this is sort of like defining marriage as a male and female living in a house and each making sure they are responsible for washing dishes and cooking meals and doing other household chores and being nice to each other....

Friends by that definition I'd have been married to the lady I received room and board from in university; I could have been considered married to my mother, or my sisters...

That kind of definition lacks certain important elements which are essential to make marriage what it is – romance and physical intimacy.

And Jesus points out to **this man that He lacks love and intimacy with God** – but not simply by saying – “you lack love and intimacy with God” That would not be very effective in helping the man understand what he is missing.

Jesus wants to do more than just point out his shortcomings; he wants to help him develop his relationship with God. That’s why it says “Jesus looked at him, and loved him”

Friends this isn’t about tender feelings on Jesus part... its helping us understand that what Jesus is about to say to the man is the truth – spoken in love.

So Jesus says “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

You see, in order to have this man identify the kind of love and intimacy and passion that he lacks with God, Jesus identifies the one area in his life where he does have it – it’s with his wealth.

In other words Jesus says “you know how excited and enthusiastic you are about your wealth, you know how you will take risks in order to have it grow, to protect it, how you look forward to enjoying it...that’s what you need to have with God,

As long as you have your wealth you won’t have that with God, so give up your wealth and come and follow me so I can show you why you can be excited, enthusiastic and passionate about God!”

Now friends, similar conversations have take place when women talk to men about their relationship and it goes like this

“honey, you know how excited you are to go and play golf, go skiing, go hang out with the guys, etc... that’s the kind of enthusiasm I want to see you have about us! I want you to have the same passion about us as you do about your job!”

Well guys how do we feel once that has been said to us? Like its impossible right? **You can’t just change how you feel about things** – you can’t just take your attraction to golf, or hockey or whatever and just redirect it onto something else...

Even if you were to comply with an ultimatum of its either your work or me, and you left your work behind and attempted to be more “enthusiastic” about the relationship it wouldn’t feel genuine, it would feel forced wouldn’t it? And you’d probably feel more resentment than love and intimacy.

So you would still lack what you need in order to inherit eternal life.

So the disciples are correct in being shocked as Jesus reveals the challenge that this man, this hypocrite who shows love to his neighbors, and loves his wealth, but not God – faces.

They say “who then can be saved”

Well friends, hear the good news! – With human beings a change of heart like this is impossible, but **with God all things are possible. God can change hearts!**

So friends we need to take that good news home with us this morning, we need to take it with us to work, and to school this week, we need to take it with us in our relationships

If only because we may be facing difficult situations that seem impossible to us, and we need to be reminded that God can do impossible things and change hearts and situations around...

But mostly because Jesus wants to speak to us about whatever it might be that occupies our hearts and gets our enthusiasm, excitement and passion instead and prevents us from wholeheartedly following Him.

Jesus gives us that same kind of ultimatum – out of love – but an ultimatum none the less...

As you go about your week friends, take note of the times you feel enthusiastic, excited, and passionate and observe what that is connected to.

Then hear Jesus say to you “**Can you be this way about Me?** Can you give up whatever has your heart in this way and show your excitement, passion and enthusiasm towards Me instead?” Because friends we can’t just say that we “feel” love for Jesus – **we need to show it.**

And then remember – with man this is impossible but with God all things are possible.

God can change hearts, and friends if we want to co-operate with God changing our hearts because we recognize that there are many things which compete for our hearts and lives and prevent us from wholeheartedly following Jesus every day, then here are some things we can do.

Whenever you're about to start an activity or enjoy something start with a prayer of thanks and dedication. This is a way in which you can take whatever excitement, enthusiasm, and passion that you feel about things and direct it to where it belongs. Dedicate it to Jesus.

Do you love your career? As you sit down at your desk on Monday – say a prayer thanking Christ for giving it to you, and dedicate all the excitement and passion that you feel about your job feel to Christ – after all it is a gift from Him.

And you can do this for everything – nothing is insignificant. I like my car, and I like my dog... and I will often thank Christ

for both. I recognize they are gifts from Him and that makes me feel more love towards Christ.

The next thing we can do is begin each day with a “steward’s prayer.” That is a prayer which helps us to remember and recognize that God owns everything, it all belongs to Him and thus we have a responsibility to care for it and use it in a way that honors Him.

Everything has been given to us in order that we might look after it on Christ’s behalf and give an account to Him of what we have done with it - our possessions, our money, our time, our health, our intelligence, our friends, our family...

Everything.

Stewardship is how we put our emotions of love and passion and enthusiasm for Christ into action. It’s how we leverage what we have been given towards promoting and growing Christ’s Kingdom, and it’s how we prevent ourselves from using what we have been given selfishly.

But sometimes friends, our sinful nature creeps up on us and there is something which we get a little too possessive about, we begin to think that we own it, we can do with it as we please...

So it's good sometimes to **do an inventory** of our possessions, our interests, our time commitments, our financial commitments and ask ourselves...

“if Christ asked me to give this back and no longer steward it simply because He is my Lord and that is his right...would I be able to give it back or have I become too attached to it?”

If we find that our excitement, enthusiasm and passion have become solely focused on that which we are stewarding and no longer about the One whom we steward them for – if we've become an oppocrite – then we need to ask forgiveness and **take a fast for a while from whatever it** is that has our heart so that we can concentrate on giving our heart back to Christ.

And friends, that is made a whole lot easier if we work on **getting to know Jesus better** so other things just can't compete

with him. That's why Jesus invited the man to follow Him – what better way to get to know Jesus than to hang out with him for an extended period of time.

So pick up your bible and read the gospel, just a bit each day – with the goal of spending time with Jesus. If reading is tough for you – watch the Jesus Movie, watch the Passion of the Christ.

Make a commitment to spend regular time with others who know Jesus well – worship Jesus together with them, be in a Christ Care group with them.

Put those big rocks in the jar first friends, and you will have the time, energy and resources you need to fit everything else in around them.

It's preventative medicine – if you don't want to have Jesus ask you to give something up, make sure He has no reason to do so in the first place – make sure that getting to know Jesus and spending time with Him is the number one priority in your life.

Sounds difficult, I know – and with our hectic busy lives it would seem impossible right?

But remember the good news that Jesus speaks to us –

With humans this is impossible, with God all things are possible.

So may God continue to do the impossible in hearts and lives friends. Amen.