

## Daily Devotional Guide

**Monday** – Read Mark 10:17. What do you think was this man’s motivation? There appears to be urgency in his desire to talk with Jesus. Take a closer look at the question he asked Jesus. Did you notice the flaw in his thinking? He asked what he must “do” to “inherit” eternal life. We do to earn not to inherit. An inheritance is a gift that must be received not earned. So many of us have been programmed to do in order to receive. Why is this a problem when it comes to “inheriting eternal life?”

**Tuesday** – Read Mark 10:18-21. We see the wisdom of Jesus in his response to the man. He leads the man down the path of truth by listing some of the Ten Commandments. Jesus knows the man has been obedient in keeping the law but he has failed to keep one foundational commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me.” Jesus said, “You lack one thing.” Then he instructs the man to give up his wealth and follow him. The one thing he lacked was his ability to trust God completely. His wealth was preventing his dependence on God. What is it in your life that holds you back from trusting God completely?

**Wednesday** – Read Mark 10:22. When he heard Jesus’ response he was sorrowful. He thought living the life of God was about completing a list of do’s and don’ts for a divine bookkeeper. In his mind, he thought he was so close to his goal – that he was just missing one more thing he must “do.” He became sad when he realized that the chasm between him and eternal life was giving up control and trusting God completely. Many of us may be surprised to discover that the Christian faith is not about keeping rules and regulations, but trusting God completely and living our lives out of a loving relationship with Him.

**Thursday** – Read Mark 10:23-24. This passage has been used too often to bash the wealthy. There is nothing wrong with wealth in and of itself. Wealth can be used by God to accomplish great things. It is our attitude toward wealth and how we use it that matters. Anything can get in the way between us and God. For the rich young ruler it was wealth that was holding him back, but it could be something else entirely for each one of us. Jesus does not give the same pill to everyone. Each of us must figure out what it is that gets in the way to a full and loving relationship with God.

**Friday** – Read Mark 10:26-27. The disciples realize the impossibility of being saved. Every human being has hang ups and baggage that prevents full reliance on God. However, Jesus brings us back to the loving truth again by reminding us that it is God’s grace that makes it possible to the live life in relationship with Him. It is nothing we do. We simply must relinquish ourselves.



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# Pasadena Community Church

## The Thirteenth Disciple

Sunday, October 9, 2011

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Mark 10: 17-27

One of my favorite shows is Saturday Night Live. For years SNL has made us laugh at ourselves, our culture and our politics. It has produced great comedic actors like Chevy Chase, Jim Belushi, and Will Ferrell.

Several years ago SNL did a skit called “The Fifth Beatle.” In the skit they satirized a fifth member of the Beatles who left the band before they burst into stardom. It is actually a true story. Early in the band’s life they had a fifth member who left the band for unknown reasons.

In the skit, “The fifth Beatle” is in his London apartment haunted by what might have been. His wife walks in and asks, “Honey, did you take the trash out yesterday?” Immediately, the Beatles song “Yesterday” begins to play. Later, he tells his kids to hold hands as they cross the street. Of course, the song “I Wanna Hold Your Hand” begins to play. Then his wife calls out to a neighbor, “Hey Jude!” and, you guessed it, “Jude” begins to play. The fifth Beatle looks dejected as he is haunted by what might have been.

I must admit that I thought of this skit when I read our text of the rich young ruler. After his experience with Jesus, he must have been haunted by what might have been. You heard the story. A rich young man came running to Jesus before Jesus was leaving on a journey. There was great urgency in his tone and request. He wanted to know how to inherit eternal life – how to experience the life of God. He believed all the right things, followed all the rules, and had done everything right. He thought if he could just do “one more thing” correctly it would all come together for him.

Well, Jesus saw the passion in his heart and discerned that his intentions were pure. The text

says that Jesus looked on him with love. But love always wants what is best for a person. So, Jesus loved him enough to tell him the truth. Yes, he believed the right things, did the right things, and followed all the rules, but Jesus told him that he lacked one thing. There was one obstacle in his life that was keeping him from experiencing the fullness of God and living a real life. Jesus said that if he could let go of this one obstacle real life would come.

The man went away sad because he knew in his heart he could not do what Jesus was asking him to do. We don’t know this man’s name. The text does not tell us. Imagine what might have been if he had been willing to do what Jesus asked him to do. Maybe he would have become known as the 13th disciple and a gospel would have been named after him. Maybe he would have written an epistle that ended up in the New Testament. Just think of all the miracles of Jesus he could have witnessed. He could have seen the resurrected Lord! But it wasn’t to be because he lacked one thing and was not able to do what was necessary to get to the place where he could follow Jesus.

The one obstacle for this man was wealth. He obeyed all the commandments except the first foundational one, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” He trusted his wealth more than he trusted God and this was holding him back from a transformational experience of God.

Now, for years preachers have used this text to beat up on rich people. I don’t believe that is the purpose of the text. Nowhere in this text are we told that wealth in and of itself is a bad thing. Our attitude toward wealth and how we use it determines whether it is good or bad. For the rich

young ruler it was love of money which had taken over his life. But Jesus does not prescribe the same pill for everyone. For some, the obstacle is wealth but for others it is something else.

The purpose of this text is to allow the Spirit of Christ to confront us with love and show each of us the one thing we lack in our pursuit of real life – the one obstacle holding us back from experiencing the life God intended us to live.

Today I want you to ask yourself: What is the obstacle in my life that is keeping me from experiencing the kind of life God wants me to have? What is holding me back?

I don't want to beat around the bush this morning. I want to get down to the nitty gritty and confront some of our obstacles head on. I want to uncover the obstacles I have found in myself and in others whom I serve which prevent us living the life of God.

### **Control**

You want to know how to get rid of the joy in life? Try to control it. Let me tell you that a life spent trying to control everything is a paralyzing and joyless existence. God did not intend for us to control everything.

The most powerful word in life and in faith is the word "Let." When we let, we soar. When we control, we suffocate ourselves. I have discovered that the only way to find peace is to let go and let God. The only way to find contentment in any and all circumstances is to put our issues at the foot of the cross and say, "Lord, not my will but yours be done. I cannot handle this on my own. I need your help and power."

Many of us love the old hymn "What a friend we have in Jesus." I love the verse that says, "Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer."

Meister Eckhart once wrote, "The only hell we experience is what we refuse to let go of." Reflect on that for a moment. It is one of the truest statements I have read in a long time.

### **Staying Busy**

There is a deadly mantra in our culture today which has infiltrated the church. When people ask us how we are doing, we are fond of saying, "I'm busy, busy, busy!" We want everyone to think that we are so busy. We want everyone to

know that all the things we do make us who we are. We are convinced that the more we do the more important we are. This myth has taken over our culture so much that no one has time for anything significant anymore. Everyone is looking at a screen all day, whether it is a computer, cell phone, smart phone or I-Pad! Families don't have time to sit together at the dinner table and look at each other. Couples don't make time for each other. It is an epidemic.

Let me say this loud and clear: God will not compete with our busy schedules! If you don't feel connected to God, take a look at your schedule. Do you make time for God? Many of us need to stop and be still and know that God is God and that we are loved by God. We go ninety to nothing in this life because the world has convinced us that unless we do something we are worth nothing. So we run around with this pain and frustration thinking we are only as good as our last project, last deed, or our last activity.

The world has also convinced many of us that unless we stay busy we will miss something important, some opportunity. I have learned that the opposite is true. When we miss something significant it is not because we are not busy enough; it is because we are not quiet enough and haven't slowed down enough to catch it.

A curious man once approached the desert father Abba Anthony. He asked, "Father, what must one do to please God." He said three things. The first two were expected. He said, "Always be aware of God's presence and always obey God's word." But the third thing was surprising. He said, "Wherever you find yourself, do not easily leave." Trust God enough to stay where you are and let God work.

The single most important thing we can do with our lives is to spend time with God. Everything else is just filler.

### **What Other People Think of Us**

Many people waste precious energy and time worrying about what other people think of them. There was a turning point in my ministry when I stopped worrying about what other people thought about me. Early in my ministry I used to be consumed by what other people thought of my preaching or the way I did things. It didn't take me long to figure out how futile this was. One day it dawned on me that the only person I need to be

concerned with is God. It is what God thinks of me that matters. It is God who I will be accountable to in the end.

I know that many of you need to hear this message today. For God is saying to some of you today, "Stop worrying about what other people think of you. Quit looking at the mirror comparing yourself to others and judging yourself by what others think or say or do. Stop looking in the mirror and start looking in the Bible! I haven't created you to be like this person or that person. I have created you to be you!"

Real liberation comes when God frees us to be who he has made us to be.

### **Trying to be Perfect**

This was rich young ruler's other issue. He thought that if he was perfect enough he could experience eternal life. Did you catch the flaw in his original question? He asked, "What must I *do* to inherit eternal life?" He thought he could do something to receive this gift. He thought that if he checked one more thing off his to do list he would make it. He saw God as this divine bookkeeper. But we *do* to earn, not to inherit. And we inherit eternal life. It is not earned. It is received as a gift.

The rich young ruler's problem was that he thought following rules was the way to life. That is religion; it is not Christianity. Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship – a loving relationship with God.

There are so many who fall into the religion trap. They have this list...go to worship on Sundays...don't cuss...don't tell dirty jokes...throw some money in the plate...read the Bible.... They think that if they check off enough of these things life will have meaning. But that is not how our faith works. What we do is inspired by an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus says to many of us today, "I don't want you to know about me. I want you to know me. I don't want you to keep rules. I want you to keep a relationship with me. John Wesley said that "the difference between the religious and the born again is an experience with the risen Christ."

Someone once said, "There is nothing more exhausting than tending to the outside of holy things." This is what so many in the church do. They exhaust themselves by tending to the appearance of religion instead of getting on the inside where there is a vital relationship with God.

A good illustration of this is the true story often told about Tony Campolo when he spoke to an Annual Conference of United Methodists. There must have been 5 or 6 thousand United Methodists gathered in an arena waiting to hear this dynamic preacher. He got up to the podium and said, "Did you know that there are millions of people starving in this world and no one seems to give a (bleep)." A gasp went through the arena. They couldn't believe he used such language. Campolo continued, "The problem is you care more about the word I just said than the starving people."

What is your obstacle? What is holding you back from experiencing real life in God? You see, the point of our text for today is belief is not enough. Jesus said that even the demons believe. Keeping rules is not enough. Doing good things is not enough. The rich young ruler did all those things and it still was not enough. There was one thing the rich young ruler was not willing to do – trust God completely. He could not let go of his possessions and trust God completely.

What is keeping you from trusting God completely? What do you need to let go of in order to be all you can be for God?

I love the Pixar movie "UP." It is about a man who dreams of going to Paradise Falls. He thinks hard about how to get there and suddenly gets the idea of tying a bunch of helium balloons to his house. He believes he can just fly there. Well, it is an adventurous journey and there comes a point when he thinks he is not going to make his destination. Balloons start to pop and things look bleak. Suddenly he realizes that the only way he can make it is by throwing his stuff out of his house. As he lets go of his stuff, he becomes lighter and soars away.

What do you need to let go of? What is keeping you from trusting God completely? Jesus said that only when we lose our lives in Him do we find life.

You may be reading this sermon thinking this message is just for you. It is. You have been wrestling with God for a long time. You have run out of excuses. You have run out of answers. You have run out of strength. It is time to let go of what you have been holding onto. It is time let go and let God. It is time to trust God completely. Life is on the other side of trust. Amen.