

Sunday, October 14, 2018

Job 23:1-9,16-17

Hebrews 4:12-16

Mark 10:17-31

### Fixing the Problems of Life

Wouldn't it be great if we could really fix all the problems of life? Or would it? If we knew everything there is to know about our bodies- minds- emotions, spirit, would have a purpose any longer? Would we need to work at resolving problems of transportation, housing, electricity or even growing food well and abundantly? What if we had all we needed and everything was great and wonderful and all were treated fairly and equally? What would we do?

Job had it all. He was rich and wealthy amongst his community. Then God introduced him to the evil one or Satan. Job's story is a story of testing of faith and how to fix problems in your life or at least try. Job had a large family, many cattle, livestock and wealth. He had many friends and was envious of many neighbours. He was a good businessman. But what God saw in Job was beyond this, Job also had faith. God knew this and when Job was tested by the devil about his faith he endured the test. When he was filled with grief at losing his family except his wife he remained faithful. When he lost all his wealth he grieved as he should have but did not question God. And when his friends sat in grief with him he did not curse God and die. He endured through it all and picked himself up and kept going. He had faith in God that no matter what happened to him, God would still love him and care for him. He had many problems at this time in his life but God saw him for who he was and Job pleased him through faith.

How rich was Job? How rich is the young man to whom Jesus spoke? How rich are you? We might define our being rich in different ways. Years ago a family was deemed rich if they had indoor plumbing and bathrooms. Today one house might have 2 or 3 bathrooms with 3 occupants. A household might also have 2 cars. 3-5 bedrooms, laptop or computers for each person who lives there, appliances of many kinds to make regular chores easier, phones for each person and maybe a landline, then food storage, and storage room for everything else from closets full of clothes, appliances galore and food packed in fridges and freezers.

Yet 40-50 years ago one was considered rich if you could afford to put gas in the one vehicle you owned for up to 10 years, your house had 3-4 bedrooms with maybe 4 or 5 kids, one television maybe, and only one income. If you had any appliances you were rich and if you had more than one pair of shoes or boots you were very rich.

But how do we define being rich? Methodist founder John Wesley, stated that the word "rich" in the Bible means to have the necessities of life (food, shelter, and clothing) and then something left over. But here is part of the problem of people today. We have increased the number of things we regard as necessities. There are hundreds of things that we call necessities that our parents referred to as luxuries or unimaginable and not needed. The Bible says that shelter, food, and clothing are necessities. To have these and something left over, as almost all of us do, is to be rich. And this is the dilemma we all face today much like the rich young man who went up to Jesus and fell on his knees and asked, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus answers him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." And then he states that if you know the commandments—do not murder, commit adultery, steal or give false testimony, do not defraud, but honour your father and mother then you are good."

The young man declared that he has kept these commandments since a boy. But then what Jesus tells this young man totally devastates him, "One thing you lack, --go and sell everything you have and give to the poor,-- and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me."

Jesus challenge to the rich young man was to be good that is ultimately good. He must give of himself and what he has in behalf of others. He needed to realize that "The gift without the giver is bare." This was similar to Henry Thoreau's words, "Be not merely good; be good for something."

The young man was devastated and he went away. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" How hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. 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.

The disciples hearing these words were even more amazed and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus responded by saying that with this man, this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.

Peter then told Jesus, “We have left everything to follow you!

Jesus responded by saying, “I tell you the truth, no one who has left home, brothers or sisters, or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a 100 times as much in the present age and in the age to come- eternal life. This is not a matter of being rich—it is a matter of faith in action.

Why did Jesus cite the impossible as being a camel in the eye of the needle? This was something his listeners could relate to and yet the impossibility of it all was very clear. Today we can photoshop different things and make what was impossible seem possible. But what did we think was not possible in these last 100 years? People going beyond the atmosphere, walking on the moon, envisioning the galaxy and the milky way. It was also impossible to be diagnosed with several diseases which caused ultimate death 20-25 years ago yet today it is possible and to lead a full life as well. It was impossible to drive and transport cargo and people without horse and buggy yet what is developing now == electric cars and autonomous automobiles? What was once impossible is possible but only if there is a focus on doing good, not for the sake of self, but for the sake of others.

There are many problems in our world that need fixing. But we cannot leave them all to others to fix. For if we believe and have faith and are called to do good, we need to put our faith into action. What we cite today as impossible, can be a reality in the years to come just like what has occurred in these last years. And what we are called to do is to be good with what riches we do have. John Wesley proposed an excellent guide to goodness. He said, “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, In all the ways you can, At all the times you can, As long as ever you can”. We are called to serve in faith and to love others. Eugene Peterson has noted this need of faithful action in our churches and communities today as he writes:

“Millions of people in our culture make decisions for Christ but there is a dreadful attrition rate. In our kind of culture anything even news about God can be sold if it is

packaged freely; but when it loses its novelty, it goes on the garbage heap. There is a great market for religious experience in our world; there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship.”

We are all apprentices to the kingdom of God; as we each continue to grow a little bit at a time in the knowledge and heart of Jesus Christ. Once we commit to his service, God knows that we are needed to share with others the hope we have and the joy we have in being one with each other in Jesus Christ.

As a church family we are rich—having more than we need—fridge of treats, lights on, shelter and heat on for comfort. We also have the integrity and the purpose of our mission being defined and redefined as the years go by. We continue to strive to do good in various ways through the life and the work of this church. We modify as we need, we focus our attention on what was once, and refocus on who we are today. All things are possible with God and we continue to need God’s guidance when we are grieving losses, when we are tempted to go where we should not go and when we are learning more about God’s will for us. We need God as we seek to be fulfilled in his rich promises and to do this we must share and show our love in Jesus.

Someone else has expressed the ideal of goodness in a wonderful way, saying, "I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore, that I can do, or any goodness that I can show to my fellow creatures, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

We are all apprentices as we journey this life together walking and learning from the master, as Jesus takes hold and fixes the problems of life.

Let us pray:

God we praise you for Jesus and that He is the One whom we follow and love. He has taught us that we are continuing to learn and will need his guidance no matter how old we are. Remind us again that we are together in this journey of life. Amen.0