**Sermon for Sunday 10th October**

**Mark 10 v 17 – 31**

Have you ever left home and had a funny feeling you have forgotten something? You don’t know what it was, but you just had this nagging feeling. A man said every time his family drove off for a vacation, his mum would say, “Honey, we’ve got to go back home, I think I left the iron turned on. I don’t want the house to burn down.” His dad would turn around and they would go back and check and the iron would be turned off. This continued for several trips. Finally on one trip, when she told her husband to turn around and go check, he didn’t say a word. He pulled the car over to the shoulder, got out and opened the trunk and handed her the iron.

Our passage today introduces us to a young man who has that same nagging feeling. He has not forgotten something but is searching for something. He’s often called the Rich Young Ruler. Matthew tells us he was a young man; Luke describes him as a ruler, or what we would call an aristocrat. And Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us he was rich. He was a man who had two things, everything and nothing. He was wealthy and successful, but he turned away from Jesus with nothing. He was searching for something more in life.

Every Jew knew the Ten Commandments by heart. They knew them as well as any of us could count to from one to ten. The Ten Commandments were divided into two sections, or two tables. The first four commandments have to do with a relationship with God. We should have no other Gods, we shouldn’t make and worship idols, we should never take God’s name in vain, and we should remember the Sabbath Day. The second table contained six commandments about how we relate to one another. This is the table that Jesus quoted. But he intentionally omitted one of the Ten Commandments. You might not have caught it, because you may not have them all memorized.

Jesus left out one; did anyone catch which one He omitted? Let’s go through them. He didn’t give them in order, but let’s check them off. He said, “Do not murder.” “Don’t commit adultery.” “Don’t steal.” “Don’t bear false witness or defraud” “Honour your Father and your Mother.” Which one did Jesus leave off intentionally? “Do not covet.” That means a desire to have more and more stuff. Jesus knew this was the young man’s problem. He smiled and said, “I have kept all these since I was a boy!” Jesus said, “There’s one thing you lack.” You see, the young man already had a god in his life. His god was gold and his creed was greed.

Jesus wanted to point out that the young man had a problem with greed and covetousness, but He didn’t just come out and say it. He kept probing until the young man saw the problem himself.

You don’t need to sell all your riches unless your riches have become the god of your life. This young man is the only person to whom Jesus ever spoke those words. Nicodemus was wealthy, Joseph of Arimathea was wealthy, but Jesus never told them to sell all their possessions because Jesus knew their possessions didn’t possess them.

Jesus provides a personal solution to remove any competing gods

Jesus looked into the young man’s heart and saw that money was his god.

Mark is the only one who gives us the tiny detail that Jesus looked at the young man and loved him. We know that God loves the world. We know that Jesus loves everyone. But don’t forget that Jesus loves individuals. He looks at you and loves you. Jesus really did want the young man to make the right choice.

This young man came to the right person in the right way but wouldn’t repent and believe because he was looking for something to do, not someone to follow. He wanted to make his own way, but there is only one way into eternal life, and Jesus was there to show him. But he didn’t see it because he trusted in himself rather than Jesus.

Jesus offers eternal life, but He won’t force you to follow Him

The point Jesus is making is that it is impossible for anyone to gain salvation through his or her own merit. This young man trusted his wealth.

What are you trusting in today? Is there a competing god in your life?

The wealthy man could not separate himself from material things that he could see and enjoy in order to enjoy spiritual things he could not see. His possessions were more important than eternal life. His wealth controlled him.

Jesus was addressing a heart where wealth had taken control. How the rich man viewed his wealth was a spiritual problem that was not just preventing him from finding fulfilment, it would ultimately deny him eternal life. He was owned by his possessions.

We cannot make our own way. We must follow God’s way, and his way is through faith and trust in Jesus alone. If we refuse him, we lose eternal life.

**I close with a story:**

The cheerful little girl with bouncy golden curls was almost five. Waiting with her mother at the checkout stand, she saw them, a circle of glistening white pearls in a pink foil box.

Oh mommy, please, Mommy, can I have them? Please, Mommy, please?" Quickly the mother checked the back of the little foil box and then looked back into the pleading blue eyes of her little girl's upturned face.

"A dollar ninety-five. That's almost $2.00. If you really want them, I'll think of some extra chores for you and in no time you can save enough money to buy them for yourself. Your birthday's only a week away and you might get another crisp dollar bill from Grandma."

As soon as Jenny got home, she emptied her penny bank and counted out 17 pennies. After dinner, she did more than her share of chores and she went to the neighbor and asked Mrs. McJames if she could pick dandelions for ten cents. On her birthday, Grandma did give her another new dollar bill and, at last, she had enough money to buy the necklace.

Jenny loved her pearls. They made her feel dressed up and grown up. She wore them everywhere; Sunday school, kindergarten, even to bed. The only time she took them off was when she went swimming or had a bubble bath. Mother said if they got wet, they might turn her neck green.

Jenny had a very loving daddy and every night when she was ready for bed, he would stop whatever he was doing and come upstairs to read her a story. One night as he finished the story, he asked Jenny, "Do you love me?" "Oh yes, daddy. You know that I love you." "Then give me your pearls." "Oh, daddy, not my pearls. But you can have Princess, the white horse from my collection, the one with the pink tail. Remember, daddy? The one you gave me. She's my very favorite." "That's okay, Honey, daddy loves you. Good night." And he brushed her cheek with a kiss.

About a week later, after the story time, Jenny's daddy asked again, "Do you love me?" "Daddy, you know I love you." "Then give me your pearls." "Oh Daddy, not my pearls. But you can have my baby doll, the brand new one I got for my birthday. She is beautiful and you can have the yellow blanket that matches her sleeper." "That's okay. Sleep well. God bless you, little one. Daddy loves you." And as always, he brushed her cheek with a gentle kiss.

A few nights later when her daddy came in, Jenny was sitting on her bed with her legs crossed Indian style. As he came close, he noticed her chin was trembling and one silent tear rolled down her cheek. "What is it, Jenny? What's the matter?" Jenny didn't say anything but lifted her little hand up to her daddy. And when she opened it, there was her little pearl necklace. With a little quiver, she finally said, "Here, daddy, this is for you."

With tears gathering in his own eyes, Jenny's daddy reached out with one hand to take the dime store necklace, and with the other hand he reached into his pocket and pulled out a blue velvet case with a strand of genuine pearls and gave them to Jenny. He had them all the time. He was just waiting for her to give up the dime-store stuff so he could give her the genuine treasure.

Amen