

Do Your Things Own You?

Sermon 2018-10-21 - Year B - Pentecost 10-8 - The Rev. Christopher Klukas
Amos 5:6–15; Psalm 90:1–12 (13–17); Hebrews 3:1–6; Mark 10:17–31

- What does it take to become an astronaut?¹
 - A bachelor's degree in engineering, biological science, physical science, computer science or mathematics.
 - At least three years of related professional experience obtained after degree completion OR at least 1,000 hours pilot-in-command time on jet aircraft.
 - The ability to pass the NASA long-duration astronaut physical. Distant and near visual acuity must be correctable to 20/20 for each eye.
 - You must also have skills in leadership, teamwork and communications.
 - NASA's Astronaut Selection Board reviews the applications (a record-breaking 18,300 in 2016) and assesses each candidate's qualifications. The board then invites about 120 of the most highly qualified candidates to NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, for interviews. Of those interviewed, about half are invited back for a second round. Once the final astronauts are selected, they must complete a two-year training period.
 - To be one of the few chosen out of nearly 20,000, you need to be the best academically and physically and you need to stand out as a leader and team player. Do do this requires many sacrifices and intense focus.
- The rich young man in today's Gospel had a goal. He wanted to inherit eternal life, and he had done a lot to work towards this goal. He was diligent in keeping God's commandments. But Jesus said he lacked one thing. To sell all that he had, give the money to the poor, and follow him.
 - The man walked away sad because he had "great possessions"
- Do you own your things or do your things own you?

Money is Morally Neutral

- Dave Ramsey likes to remind people that money is morally neutral.
 - He uses the image of a brick which can be used to build a building or to break a window. The brick is neither good or bad, it is what we do with it that makes a difference.
- 1 Timothy 6:9-10 - "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evils"
- Jesus is not saying that the rich can't go to heaven.
 - He is saying that wealth comes with temptations and that can be hard to avoid.
 - We can't let money or possessions become idols to us.
 - This is why Jesus instructed the rich young man to give up his possessions. Jesus knew that his possessions had become idols to him.
 - This is not unlike his instruction at the end of chapter 9 saying that if your eye causes you to sin you should cut it out and throw it into the fire! - Mark 9:47.

¹ https://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/postsecondary/features/F_Astronaut_Requirements.html

- You might be thinking, like Peter, that you are not wealthy, so you are off the hook! Most of us would be considered wealthy in the context of most of the people in the world. And even if we aren't, we can all fall into the trap of making idols out of our possessions.
 - The LeMarquand's sold all they had so they could follow God's call to be missionaries in Africa.
 - If God called you to do the same, what would it be hardest for you to give up? That just might be an idol.
- What should we do? Give.

Giving

- Our primary reason for giving is not out of obligation.
 - "How much do I have to give"?
 - This is a law-oriented approach, and this is one of the traps that the rich young man had fallen into. He was trying to earn eternal life through his actions.
 - I am sure that this man gave a tithe or tenth of all that he had. This was a commandment of the law after all.
 - 2 Corinthians 9:7 "God loves a cheerful giver."
 - A cheerful giver might ask, "how much do I get to give"?
- Giving frees us from our idolatry of riches and possessions
 - Giving reminds us that all that we have does not actually belong to us.
 - God has blessed us with resources and made us stewards over it all.
 - We need to remind ourselves regularly that all we have belongs to God, and giving helps us to do that.
 - It helps us to lay aside the things that trap us and find freedom!
- Giving to the church is an investment in God's kingdom
 - As Christians, Jesus calls us to make disciples of all nations, and we desire to see God's kingdom thrive and expand.
 - God invites us to participate in his work through giving our time, talent, and treasure.
- As you consider your giving for 2019, I don't want you to give out of a sense of obligation or compulsion.
 - Rather, I want you to prayerfully consider in your heart what you are to give, asking God what his desire is for you.
 - Mother Carrie and I will be doing this too.
 - On November 4, we will have an opportunity to bring your pledge cards forward and lay them before the altar as an act of worship.
- There is much work to do as we rebuild the mission of this church so we can more effectively make disciples for God's kingdom.
 - Thank you all for your contributions of time, talent, and treasure in 2018. Your contributions make a big difference in God's kingdom.
 - I look forward to working alongside you, under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, as we move into 2019!