

The Good Teacher

Mark 10:17-31

INTRO:

The word “**Gospel**” means *good news*. Sometimes though, the good news of Jesus sounds a lot like bad news. Jesus is the good teacher who tells the truth. Sometimes . . . the truth hurts on the way to healing. It is a good thing that our good teacher keeps right on teaching us because faithful discipleship is possible . . . even for us.

ME:

Harry Truman said:

“I never give ‘em hell. I just tell the truth, and they think it’s hell.”

“**If it’s the truth, it hurts!**” I don’t know how many times I heard her say that. I guess it is true . . . **SOMETIMES!** But I don’t think it’s true . . . *all the time*. This lady, we’ll call her **Bertha Dust-bunny**, was a member of a Church I served early in my career as a pastor. TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH . . . I wish I had shared last week’s sermon with her. **You remember what that was about, right? Powerful Positive Thinking.** Bertha Dustbunny was always spewing fumes about somebody or something! I think it is what brought her happiness or the closest she could ever come to happiness.

YOU:

Do you think if it’s the truth, it hurts? If you do, *we will all start calling you* **Bertha Dust-bunny!** *What about the good news of the*

Gospel, does it ever sound like bad news to you?

GOD:

Mark 10:17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”
18 Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’ ”
20 He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.”
21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”
22 When he heard this, he

was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” 27 Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

28 Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” 29 Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30 who will

not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

WE:

The question that Jesus is asked is about important stuff! The man asks about eternal life. An important question, but I think he was surprised by the answer Jesus gave him. The Good Teacher demands that this guy give away all his possessions and follow Jesus. This is a call story. Jesus is inviting someone to be his disciple. When we have seen Jesus do this before, the people dropped their nets, or their whatever, and followed him. Not this time. The guy does not answer the call by **following**, but by **walking** away and rejecting Jesus.

The passage does not end there though. It ends on the **resilient** and **positive** note of Jesus affirming the disciples for they have left everything to follow him.

So, what do you think? Which part of the passage should we focus on this morning ? The Rejection of Jesus or the part where Peter declares the allegiance of the disciples to Jesus? This is the part where Jesus promises them a wonderful reward for their choosing to follow him. Unlike most of Mark, today the disciples are shown doing something right. *They finally get the Good Teacher's point! Affirmation and rejoicing . . . what an ending!*

Sometimes it seems hard to distinguish the good news of **grace** from the bad news of **judgement** in Scripture. Martin Luther once said, "**Grace often wounds from behind.**"

Something that seems like judgment, turns out, in the upside down world of the Gospel, to be God's love in action. Some even suggest that sometimes **grace** and **judgement** are the same things. *The difference between good news and bad news is where you are and what you're doing when you get the news!*

Let me share an example with you. Once a student was describing a course he was taking. He said:

“ It is taught by the most insensitive, arrogant professor I have ever had. He is sarcastic, always on the attack, always trying to make us look dumb.”

Then he added:

“I've never worked so hard in all of my life. In fact, this may be the best course I've ever taken. He's a wonderful teacher!”

So, which is it? Is it one or the other? Or . . . is it both?

Aristotle once said that only a friend can teach you the really important things in life. **Why?** *Because only a friend knows how to hurt you in the right way!*

Sometimes it is hard to tell the good news from the bad.

This story is in some of the other Gospels too. In Mark, he is simply identified as a man. In one Gospel he is called “**young**”, and in another he is called **rich**.” **Wouldn't you rather to call him rich or young?** *I sure would, because I am not rich or young!* **So, then . . . this story is not about me, but about all you rich and young people out there in the pews!**

But wait! Not so fast! We are told later that he had a lot of possessions. We all have many

possessions too, so we are not off the hook after all.

As Jesus was going down the road, he met a man. Down the road means he is heading towards the cross in Mark. So this is on his mind throughout this encounter. It was probably always on his mind, though. So this “**man**” calls him “**Good Teacher.**” Jesus is a Teacher, a rabbi, who is called good. This guy obviously goes to Church, or actually to synagogue, so he jumps into a discussion with Jesus about eternal life. But Jesus does not seem to be in the mood for this conversation right now. In an attempt to brush him off Jesus tells him to go and obey the Commandments and then come back and they will have this little talk.

I picture Jesus looking down the road at this point and then the man says he has obeyed

them all since he was a kid. He's never broken a commandment. He has Jesus' attention now! Jesus' deep eyes look deeply into this man's eyes. He sees a man who has been successful in life **materially** and **spiritually**. Jesus looks deeper and then pans out a bit. He sees the problem is much closer to the surface.

Jesus speaks:

“Go, sell everything you have, give the money away to the poor, then . . . come follow me.”

The guy's posture slumps. Perhaps he shruggs his shoulders, *hops into his Porsche and peels out down the road!*

Jesus said:”**Man, is it hard to save these young rich guys!**

The disciples ask him how hard is it?

“As hard as it is to get a fully loaded camel through the eye of a needle!” Impossible! But with God all things are possible!

The sincere seeker kneels at the feet of the Good Teacher to learn a lesson and he fails the course on the first day. This is the only time in all the Gospels someone rejects Jesus' call. This may seem like bad news, it may not be. People with many possessions often come off badly in the Gospels. That is bad news.

But where does the story end? Does it end with this guy peeling out in his Porsche? Or, does it end with Peter speaking out, “Lord we have left everything and have followed you!”

So then, we are not like the inquiring man asking theological questions and shocked by the answers. When Jesus called us to follow him,

we did. We started the class, we are in out now! We kept taking notes, even when they did not make sense. Some days, we may want to walk away like this man, or just sleep in late! This would be easier than being shocked by some of the things the Good Teacher says to us. But here we are. Here to listen, here to learn, here to live.

*So then, Jesus says, “**Rejoice!**”*

The story doesn't end in rejection, but in Jesus' promise and in rejoicing. Jesus promises them that for everything they have given up, he will give them much more.

Following Jesus is about sacrifice as well as blessing.

Leviathan is about an underwater mining crew that uncovers a dangerous disease. It con-

sumes the crew one at a time, joining them and blending them together into a horrible sea creature. At one point, a doctor on the crew realized that if they escape to the surface they will expose the world to the horrible beast.

The doctor thinks that it would be better for the half dozen to die to save the world. *But the others think he is crazy!* Two other crew members manage to escape to the surface despite the doctor's warning. So, they risk exposing the world to Leviathan.

Who is or are the heroes here? The doctor was practicing self-sacrifice for the good of the world. But most would call the two escapees the heroes. The man and the woman are rugged, self-interested, selfishly heroic and courageous individuals.

Wasn't the real hero the doctor who acts for the good of the many? He can teach us much more than the survivors. As we see in the Scriptures, self-sacrifice is more important than self-interest. Community is more vital than status and fellowship is better than success .

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

Jesus is the Good Teacher even when the class called life gets tough.

YOU:

How will you spend time with the Good Teacher? How will you sacrifice like he sacrificed for you and me?

CLOSE:

“If it’s the truth it hurts.” **NOPE**, not always Bertha Dust-Bunny. The truth can certainly

hurt, but it also **heals**. It also sets you free, at least I've heard that somewhere.

I read that **theology** and **truth** never come alive in wordy, abstract debate. They live best when they are lived in people's lives. We need to take the time to show people how life should be lived. Think about how blessed we are to know our wonderful God by whom we are so marvelously made! From this comes an awareness that it is our purpose to nurture our gifts in God's honor and God's glory, and live our days in obedience to God. It is finding time to pause to praise God and fellowship with others. It is lifting up the stories of God at work in and through the lives of others. It is finding joy in following Christ in service to others.

So yes, they truth can hurt. But the same truth can **heal**, can **liberate**, can set you **free** to live

in a way that makes God smile and so that others hurt a little less.

Let's pray together now...