

What do you Need to Release...?

Mark 10:17-31

Trinity, St. Clair Shores

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May the God who creates us, redeems us and sustains us be with this day and remain with us always. Amen.

*Are you completely and utterly happy with how your life is going? Cool! This sermon maybe isn't for you.*

*For those of us who may long for some things to shift and change, these words might be for us.*

*Are you feeling stuck? Are there parts of your life you'd like to change, alter, course-correct?*

The rich young man came to Jesus, he's been watching him for a while, off to the side. Taking it all in. He sees all the people bringing little ones to Jesus for him to bless. Watches as Jesus' disciples tell the folks to leave Jesus alone. Then hears Jesus rebuke his disciples and say, "Allow these little ones to come to me, God's kingdom belongs to them."

Maybe it was the notion that even little kids could run up to Jesus, that gives the rich young man the courage and go to him. The rich young man runs up kneels down, and he blurts out,

*"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

Jesus replies, *"Why do you call me good, (maybe Jesus thinks the guy is trying to butter him up) the only one who is good is God."*

I imagine the fellow nodding, agreeing and looking up hopefully at Jesus.

Jesus then continues on, *"You know the commandments: Don't commit murder, don't commit adultery. Don't steal. Don't give false testimony. Don't cheat. Honor your father and mother."*

"Cool," thinks our rich young man, I've got this. I've done all these things. Fact is, I've been abiding by these commandments since I was a little one. I can see the hope-filled smile on the young man's face.

Then Jesus says, *"You lack one thing, go, sell what you own and give the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven. And come follow me."*

Whoa---that's actually hard. The young man drops his head, and turns away from Jesus, because he has many possessions.

Wow. Maybe it's our possessions, maybe it's our money, maybe it's our position in society, our job, our sense of self, our need to be right, our need to win, our pride and being independent—what friends is keeping you from walking side by side with Jesus?

What is keeping us stuck, with nary a way for us to move on? Trapped it seems? Do you know the feeling?

There's a cheesy story or fable of brilliance, I'm not sure which, that has always graphically illustrated for me, the Rich Young Man's conundrum of wanting to be with Christ, but incapable of following through.

The fable goes something like this, once upon a time hunters were trying to trap pesky monkeys. They discovered that if they cut a slot in a coconut shell, then filled the coconut with tempting, tasty morsels, like bananas, flipped it over and pinned the coconut shell to the ground; the monkeys would be attracted to the pinned down coconut shell, and slide their hands down through the slot and take hold of the bananas.

Then all the hunter had to do was walk up to monkey, with its hand in the coconut shell and capture it. The monkey wouldn't fight, it wouldn't run, because its hand, is in a fist, grasping the banana, and cannot, while still holding the banana, slide back through the slot. To easily escape capture, all the monkey has to do is let go of the banana and slide its hand back through the slot, and then run at monkey speed. Easily evading capture.

So, there it is: monkeys possessing what they thought would be the elixir of life, and instead, losing their freedom, because they choose not to let go.

As I said, "Cheesy story or fable brilliant?!"

Friends, what is it that is trapping you?

Time, money, habits, addictions, the silly notion that we have to do it all, perfectly, by ourselves?

What might you relinquish, what might you freely give away, so that you, me, we, all of us can inherit eternal life?

Amen.