

Mark 10:17-22

South Carolina has had a lot of rain lately. Three and four feet in certain areas. There is massive flooding. Roads are washed away. People have died. Suppose you were down there and you met a car heading towards a flooded area. The man inside the vehicle asks you if he is on the road to Charleston. Now he has surely seen the signs warning him that the road ahead is closed; that bridges are out; that the road is simply not there anymore. So you tell him that to get to Charleston, he needs to turn his car around. You invite him to follow you back where he came from so he can take the detour to Charleston. But he is not willing to do that. "I've come too far," he says, "to turn back. I would lose too much time going back where I started." You watch in disbelief as he ignores your words and your kind invitation and keeps heading down the road that he hopes will lead him to Charleston.

We meet that man in our text for today. Actually, Jesus meets him. "*What must I do,*" he asks, "*to inherit eternal life?*" Jesus reminds him of all the warning signs that he has surely been taking note of. He points out the Commandments to him, which are signs telling him that he cannot gain eternal life by traveling this road of the Law because the road is washed away.

But the man doesn't even flinch. He's not convinced that the Ten Commandments are signs of warning. He sees them as signs encouraging him; telling him that he's on the right road. "*All these I have kept from my youth,*" he tells Jesus. "No problem here," is what he means; "I've been making good time on that road. I'm surely well on my way to Charleston, aren't I?"

Rather than ignoring him, or becoming angry or frustrated with him, it says that Jesus, "*looking at him, loved him.*" "*There is one thing you need to do,*" He says to the man, "Turn around, give up all the time you have spent traveling down the wrong road, and follow Me, and you will inherit eternal life...you will end up in Charleston."

But the man is unwilling. He walks away sad, *disheartened*, our text says. He will not follow Jesus. Rather, he stays the course on that road which is useless, and which will prove to be his undoing.

Which road are you on in life? Today you are at the junction in the road where that man was. He came up to Jesus. That is where you are today. Jesus speaks to you through His Word here in His house just as He spoke to that man. What will you tell Jesus? That you've been following the road signs fairly well? That you've been kind to your neighbor, and have kept your hands and life mostly clean of sin? Is that how you see the Ten Commandments?... the way that man did, as signs telling you how to live, and then encouraging you by saying, "You're doing the best you can...you'll make it!"

God did not give His Commandments to be encouraging pats on the back. They are road signs...warning signs. The road you and I are on is closed. We cannot enter heaven by that route. The sin in which we were conceived and born, and the disobedience in which we have lived, has completely washed that road away. "*No one is good except God alone.*"

There is only one road that is open to Charleston. It's a detour. You see, man was meant to live in the Paradise of Eden with God. But we failed in the Garden. We closed that road. We washed that road away by our disobedience.

But God stepped in. Not because He had to on our account, but rather, "*looking at us, He loved us.*" And He created a detour. He sent His Son to be the way to Charleston. "*I am the way,*" says Jesus. The road to eternal life is in Christ and in Him alone. All other roads are washed away.

That man in our text refused to believe it. He could not bear to part with all his possessions. He loved the road he was on. It was a nice road. He was comfortable. He was enjoying his life. No, he just could not stand the thought of taking a different road.

"*The road is easy,*" Jesus warns in Matthew 7, "*that leads to destruction...but the road, the detour, that leads to life is difficult and narrow.*" We don't like taking detours. We avoid them. "I can make it through," we tell ourselves; "I'm a good driver...my car is in good shape; I don't need to pay attention to the detour signs."

All who believe this will perish. This is not what God wants for you. "*Looking at you,*" today where you are in life, "*Jesus loves you.*" "Stop your car," He says to you, "and turn around." Repent! No matter how far you have traveled down the wrong road, it is not too late for you. He does not tell you, as He told the man in our text, to give up all your possessions. Rather, He tells you to give up that which possesses you.

If Jesus does not possess you, then you're on the wrong road. If His Word is not firmly in your life, you're on the wrong road. If you are not baptized into His death and resurrection, you're on the wrong road. But the right road is here before you. Christ is the detour that leads to eternal life. And you will take this detour, not because you have what it takes, but because "*looking at you, Jesus loves you.*"

That's why He took the road to Calvary. He walked the path to the cross for you. He gave up His possessions for you, and He possessed everything. But He counted you of more value. Jesus gave up His place in heaven to suffer the agony of hell for you. And because He did that, He is now the detour which leads to life.

He is everything. He is peace with God for you. He is joy itself. He is life. He is forgiveness for you. Yes, you who have been on the wrong road - God forgives you for that. He forgives you for having put, like the man in our text, your life ahead of Christ.

So you've been on the wrong road. God is not angry at you. Rather, "*looking at you, He loves you.*" Today you are at the junction in your road. Here is Jesus for you. He is the way to life. He is the detour to Charleston. His road is not washed away. Today He invites you to follow Him. Amen.