

Twenty Second Sunday after Pentecost  
October 21, 2018

Text: Mark 10:23-31

Theme: “What a Deal?”

We like deals, good deals. We like deals on food be that in shopping for home or at restaurants. But our taste for deals is not limited to food. We like good deals when it comes to the purchase of most, if not all things. Taste is an issue when it comes to deals. Yes, different people have different tastes. Some like ham sandwiches, others like burgers, some like both, still others like neither. How good a deal is something if what you have purchased does not fit your taste, not really to your liking? Some folks are hard to please and may not know what they are missing.

“Children how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God,” we hear Jesus says (v 25). The word translated difficult here, *duskolon*, deals with hard to please. Originally it was applied to “hard to find food for,” (*dus—hard, kolon—food*), a picky eater. Perfectly good food, even great food rejected, a deal like no deal before, but no thanks, no deal, not to my taste. So it had just been demonstrated as Jesus speaks these words.

No deal was the case for the rich man we saw last week. I won’t preach again last week’s sermon, but we do look back to tie together. The man we saw last week was the one with all the goods who was challenged about his good word to Jesus. He did come with an important question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (v 17) To get the ball rolling Jesus speaks of the commandments, the ones dealing with our relationships with one another. ‘Oh, that—I’ve been doing those since I was a child.’ “Then do this one thing more, just this one thing, sell all you have, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven (right then, not even later), then come, follow me.’

No deal—the man had no taste for that. He really liked the taste of his possessions. He goes away sad—why so? Was it because he thought he was missing out on heaven? Was it the taste of what was put before him was not to his liking at all? He was not looking for a whole new diet, just something he could add to what he was already eating, maybe a little salt and seasoning would be tolerable and doable, but not this! This was not the answer he was expecting or wanting.

The man goes away sad like he had a bad taste in his mouth. Jesus looks around and goes on to talk about camels. “Jesus look around and said to His disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.” (v 23) They really like the taste of those riches, like it so well, can’t get enough of it. “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” (vs 25)

This camel is loaded down, loaded down with many possessions. One could also be loaded with worry about those possessions. We read in our lesson from Ecclesiastes 5:11, “When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has the owner but to see them with his eyes.” With more goods come more staff to keep it all going. Is it adding value or siphoning away? Yes, possessions taste good, but that taste is never really satisfied if it is what drives a person. “Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.” (Ecclesiastes 5:12)

Which will it be lots of bread now or the bread that comes down from heaven? No deal on the latter. I’ve earned my stuff; I want my stuff; I need my stuff. I can hold it in my hand and actually taste and touch it. How can I even taste what you are talking about, treasure in heaven? No deal!

Jesus doesn't adjust to the taste of the listeners. He continues to dish out what He has come to proclaim. The disciples were amazed at His words about the difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom, and before they can catch their breath from that one, Jesus shocks them with His camel talk. So they are talking among themselves. Jesus has said it pretty much impossible for the rich to be saved, then who can be saved?

Jesus was putting before them a shocking way of viewing things. Last week we saw that rich man may have thought the kingdom was within his reach, maybe even thinking he was blessed with goods because he was good. Now Jesus had just said riches were not necessarily a sign of God's favor, that riches made it harder to enter? These were shocking, hard things. Who can be saved? The eye of the needle would strain out everyone would it not? Jesus' words were leaving a bad taste, at least an astonishing one. It was all hard to swallow. What was the deal anyway?

Peter is thinking, and Peter speaks. It does appear this time he was doing the thinking before the speaking. "Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." (v 28) Yes, they had left the fishing nets, the tax booths, families, and went right after Jesus. No, it was not as though they did not see their families again, but they had walked right away from their livelihoods and followed right behind Jesus. Had they not done what they had just heard Jesus tell the rich man to do? 'What's in it for us now, Lord? Do we have treasure in heaven?' Have we made the right deal here?'

Brothers and sisters have we? We have been baptized into Christ. Many of us have pledged our faithfulness to Him in confirmation. Yes, we have let go. We have let go of trust in goods or trust in our own goodness for righteousness before God. As new creations in Christ we turn from wickedness and pursue holiness. The tug of evil is there and it is strong. It always will be in this life. The devil wants you back, prowls around

seeking to devour. But still I believe, believe my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. But is it all a good deal? There are a lot of loaded camels around me who seem like they are becoming more loaded. Is walking after Jesus a good deal?

Jesus answers Peter. 'Here's the deal, Peter. Here's what is it for you all. Let's jump Gospel's here to Matthew as Matthew gives us more of the words of Jesus on this occasion. "Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matthew 19:28) Now we come back to Mark. "Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life." (Mark 10:29-30) How could that be, a hundredfold, now? Where will all that come from? Is this deal for real?

Yes, what a deal, lasting and filling. We read in John 6 the words of Jesus spoken to those who had sought Him out the day after they had been fed with five loaves and two fish, "<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." This is the food that lasts. Is it like this food (the burger and ham sandwich)? These would be quite lasting as they are made of wood. What Jesus gives lasts much longer, for all of eternity. This life is much more enduring than

wood, or silver, or gold, or digitized assets, or camels, or houses, or any possessions of this world, even more enduring than the heavens and earth themselves as Jesus tells us in Matthew 24 (v 35). Jesus' word endures. His words of law and of Gospel expose and lay bare and convict, then comfort, cover, and heal, these words of eternal life.

Jesus' words are free to us and free us. They do bring eternal life as we believe in the One the Father has sent. He laid down His life and took it up again so that He is indeed the Bread of Life and the Water of Life. His bread is the nourishment that lasts and His water is a spring welling up to eternal life (John 4:14) That treasure in heaven is ours right now. It is being kept there. "According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,<sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,<sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

It's our Great High Priest who's keeping it there for us. It is His blood that cleanses, this High Priest who is the sacrifice, the perfect lamb without spot or blemish or defect. He shed the full use of His divine power and took on our flesh so that He might thread the needle of perfect obedience to His own law, the narrowest of openings with no room for deviation—perfectly, straight through never falling to the temptations common to all of us. Because He is there, our risen and ruling Brother, we can approach God's throne of grace with confidence. What a deal!

What about all that talk about fields and family members and houses, even a hundred fold? It's called family of God, the church. We are members one of the other, those practicing hospitality, those bearing one another's burdens and meeting one another's deeds. Hermit Christianity, that is one by choice, is not the teaching of our Lord Jesus.

Yes, what a deal! Our Lord's promises are more than words He does come to us even now here below in a way we can taste and touch in the Lord's Supper. His promises are to be desired, sweeter and more satisfying than honey or gold. Jesus does say that all this provision does come with persecution. Those two words are tucked in there, "with persecution," but there is no hiding them. Right after come the words, "and in the age to come eternal life." (v 30) Persecution, neither desired nor sought, but yet arrives and when it does it can turn us from what does not last to what endures, back to our Lord's strength, not ours.

What a deal! The impossible for us has been completed for us and is given to us entrance to God's Kingdom! We rest in our Lord's promises now and we look forward to the promise of the Sabbath's rest in our Lord's eternal promise. It's a good deal, a good food deal, an eternal food deal. We have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. We long for more. For Jesus' sake. Amen