

The title for today's message is: **Eternal Life, Inheriting vs. Earning**

The young rich man asked: “**Good Teacher, (meaning Jesus) what must I do to inherit eternal life?**”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and his son Jesus Christ. Amen.

How many of you here this morning enjoy shopping? For a lot of us, shopping can be a wonderful experience, especially if we are shopping for something we like.

When time and money are available for a shopping trip, we often look through the ads either in the newspaper or online to find the best deals.

We then travel to the store or the mall with great anticipation. Once we get there, we see all sorts of cool things.

We look at things that are not on our list and we think, “I already have one of those at home, but I could use a new one with all the latest features!”

It's a lot of fun isn't it?, that is until you get to the checkout stand. And the cashier runs your items through the scanner.

Suddenly that joy and excitement vanishes. You think to yourself, how did this happen? There must be a mistake!” But sadly there isn't.

All those extras added up, turning your wonderful shopping experience a bit sour. Or, for others, it happens when you get your monthly phone, cable, or satellite bills.

Much to your surprise, the total is more than you expect, so you go through each itemized charge or item,

And you find all sorts of extra charges, a few extra long distance calls that someone in your house made that went over your limit.

Or, if you start out to build something, or start a home improvement project which ends up requiring more money and work than expected.

Okay, what does all this have to do with our text? Well we can see that the man who approaches Jesus has a similar experience.

First of all, Mark tells us that when the man comes to Jesus, he seemed to be very excited.

In fact, he runs up to Jesus and falls to his knees before Him, showing his excitement for the opportunity to ask Jesus a question.

He addresses Jesus ***“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** Great question, a question that’s still asked today.

Now, Jesus starts His response by saying ***“Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”***

Jesus, being God in the flesh, the 2nd person of the Holy Trinity, can see beyond this man’s question, and right into his heart.

Jesus said: ***“You know the commandments: Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, do not bear false witness. Do not defraud, and honor your father and mother.”***

What Jesus is saying here, is “Okay, so you want to talk about being Good and inheriting eternal life? Well, first of all, we have to understand God’s definition of Good.

Are you good according to God’s standards? Have you perfectly kept the commandments?

Jesus gives this man a brief review of the commandments. And the man’s response is telling.

He says **“Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”** He listens to Jesus reel off the commandments on how to treat our neighbor.

He’s what we would consider a “good person.” I can just picture this guy treating this like a checklist as Jesus is reciting these commandments.

“Let’s see now....do not murder, check. Do not commit adultery, check. Do not steal, never done that one, check.

And it goes like this on down the list. It’s like that shopping analogy I started the message with.

He’s looking at the list of commandments, and treating them as a shopping list, and now, here he is at the check out counter.

He’s now ready to find out if all his goodness has earned him eternal life. But, remember when we talked about that surprise in that analogy?

Well, here’s the way it all comes into play. Jesus looks at this young man, and says **“You lack one thing:**

**Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me,”** But what happens?

At that the man went away sorrowful, you see, he had great possessions. Jesus gave this man “sticker shock” if you will.

It turns out, the total is more than he’s willing to pay. It’s as if he’s saying “Now wait a minute, Jesus! I kept all those other commandments, what’s up with this?”

You can’t expect me to sell everything I have, give the proceeds away, and then follow you!

He probably said: I’m sorry, but I have to walk away at this point.” What Jesus is reminding this man of, is the 1st Commandment.

Up to this point, Jesus was asking the man if he had kept commandments 4-10, the ones that deal with our relationships with each other.

Now, Jesus is asking him “okay, so since you think you’re such a good person according to the world, let’s find out if you’re good the way I define it.

Do you have any other gods before Me?” Jesus’ response here in saying this man lacks one thing reveals to him that the man has indeed broken at least one commandment, the first one.

In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther gives us the following definition of the first commandment. “You shall have no other gods.

Just what does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” This man indeed lacks one thing.

He hasn’t put his trust in God. Instead, he’s put his trust in his material things.

No doubt, since he was a wealthy man, he probably also had a lot of power that often goes with wealth.

This man simply couldn't bear the possibility of life without his stuff. His wealth became his god.

In the end, Jesus saw what this man was up to. While he outwardly asked the right question, inwardly, he was asking something completely different.

Go back to verse 17 for a moment. He asks Jesus ***“what must I do to inherit eternal life?”***

In the end, it appears this man was really asking what must I do to “earn” not “inherit” eternal life?

As you can see, there is a big difference between the two questions. It's a difference that we have to really understand in order to get the right answer and understand why Jesus said what He said.

We have to start out by asking this question; “What's the difference between earning something or inheriting something?”

An inheritance is something you receive simply because it's given to you. You don't do anything to earn it, or to get it. It's all done for you.

And Jesus, by saying to the man, “that he lacked one thing” was trying to remove any thoughts that he could earn his way into heaven.

That it was solely Jesus' work that would get him there. My friends, in a lot of ways, you and I are often times, like that rich man.

We too approach Jesus and ask Him, not what we must do to inherit eternal life, but what must we do to earn eternal life.

Perhaps some of you had your “shopping lists” out as you heard Jesus recite some of those commandments, and came to the conclusion I’m a pretty good person.

God must approve of what I’m doing, because I don’t commit any of those really bad sins.

I’m not like those people who never come to church, or those people in the pew ahead of me, or behind me.”

But the truth Jesus speaks here is “you can’t earn our buy eternal life. For some, its hard to hear these word’s of God.

Even if one doesn’t have great material possessions, it’s hard to hear God’s word, telling one to let go of something.

It’s hard to hear God’s word telling one that certain things that our society is open to is sinful?

Especially if we or someone we know is caught up in it. It’s like what we talked about last Sunday with the topic of marriage and divorce.

The law in last weeks sermon was hard for some to hear, why? because some want to be in total control.

That’s right, some people want to be the ones who decide what’s right and wrong.

Yes, we too have come to Jesus, asking the same question “What must we do to earn eternal life?”

And Jesus responds to us here today; “You can’t do anything to earn it. So let go of all those worldly possessions, thoughts, words, and deeds.

And let me forgive you, cleanse you, and pay the price for your salvation by My suffering and death.”

My friends, let us go from here into our vocations this week, telling everyone the good news regarding Jesus Christ.

And the answer to the question, “What has Jesus done so we may inherit eternal life? The answer is, He’s done it all for us!

Amen!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.