

How Do You Like Your Eggs?

Mark 10:17-22

The man in our Gospel reading knew how he liked his eggs. He knew a lot of things. We know about him from Mark that he is rich. We know from Matthew that he is young. We know from Luke that he is a ruler. He was likely the ruler of a synagogue, and so knew his scripture. He knew that Jesus had just give a good scriptural answer to the Pharisees about God's original intent for marriage. The man sees Jesus take the children in his arms and bless them.

Having witnessed these things, the man knows there is something exceptional about Jesus. He shows Jesus the utmost respect by kneeling and addressing Jesus as "Good Teacher." It is at this point that what he knows begins to fail him.

He knew a little bit about Jesus, but not quite enough. He sees Him as someone to be respected, but Jesus is more than that, isn't He? Jesus, in a somewhat understated way, points this out to the man: *Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.* I can hear Jesus coaxing the man: "You are almost there! Just a little closer and you will see me for who I really am."

But there is something in the way. The man saw Jesus welcome the little children, but doesn't see himself as one them. Jesus had made a very important point that the man seems to miss: *Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*

The key word here is receive. That is what children do. They are not in a position to care for themselves. They must receive.

Is this the posture of the man talking to Jesus? Not really. An inheritance is something one receives, but this man asks, *[W]hat must I do to inherit eternal life?* He wants to do something.

Jesus brings up some of the Ten Commandments. Notice that Jesus doesn't say, "You must keep these." What Jesus says is, *You know the commandments...* Because of the man's perspective, he interprets Jesus' words as a command to follow – something he must do. And he believes he has been doing a good job of it. *"Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth."* From his youth, but not as a child – doing, not from a posture of receiving.

He believes he is really close to inheriting eternal life. He has worked really hard to inherit it. But he has this sense that there is just some little thing he is missing.

Jesus knows this too. He says to them man that He loves: *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.*

The man's response? *[H]e went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.* He knew how he liked his eggs. He like lots and lots of them in a big, very big basket. They were his eggs, and he didn't really want to share them with anyone. Sell them? Give them away? Use them to feed the poor? All of them? All of his eggs? Then he would be poor. Then he would be in a position where he himself would have to receive, to be given to.

Exactly! As long as we maintain that we are doing pretty well, and that we just need a little help from Jesus to get the rest of the way to eternal life, we will fall short. We will miss out on what Jesus wants to give us.

Jesus does not tell us to sell all that we have and give it to the poor. Those were His instructions to this particular man. His eggs

were his idol. Wealth could also be what is getting in the way of the relationship Jesus wants to have with you, but it could be something else.

Several idols have been exposed as false gods in the COVID pandemic. Countless sacrifices have been offered on the altar of good health. People around the world have been living in fear that they will lose this one thing that is so important to them.

This also points to another idol: control over one's own life. This false god has been challenged. Many have seen just how little control actually they have.

The god of science has been knocked down a notch or two. "Follow the science!" the preachers of this religion proclaim. Some, at least, have seen how undependable this god is.

The gods of smugness and pride have been unmasked in the pandemic. People on all sides of the various issues are certain that they right, and that anyone who disagrees is a fool.

None of these are what Jesus has in mind when He says we are to *receive the kingdom of God like a child*.

So what are we to do? There are commands to be followed. There are idols to be thrown down. But those things are Law. And that seems to be where the man in our text gets stuck – in the Law – what he must do. He seems to miss, at least initially, Jesus' invitation to be given to, to receive: *come, follow me*.

The rich young ruler may have seen this as another command, as something else he had to do. But Jesus offered it as a gift, as Gospel. We would like to think that even though the man went away sorrowful, he didn't stay that way. We would like to think, that like us, the man came to see that being on the receiving end of what Jesus has to give is the best possible place.

Jesus showed how much He has to give as he healed all kinds of diseases, gave sight to the blind, restored hearing to the deaf, enabled the lame to leap for joy, and brought others back to life.

He himself was brought back to life after He offered Himself as payment for our sin. It was never the heavenly Father's plan that we should have to do something to inherit eternal life. He would give eternal life as a gift earned by His Son, Jesus.

It was Jesus' purpose for coming into the world born of the virgin Mary, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger, to eventually be nailed to a cross. He would, all the while, live in perfect obedience to His Father and show what the kingdom of God was like by living a life of love and service to His own creation.

That service culminated in taking the sins of the world on Himself and being nailed to a cross to die in payment for those sins. Those hands, extended on the cross, continue to work today.

Jesus extends a hand of invitation to you this morning. Jesus' hand, with the nail mark of love, bids you to believe the words of absolution I speak are His words: "I forgive you all your sin..."

Jesus welcomes you to His table to feast on His very body and blood in the bread of wine of His Supper. Here He also promises to deliver to you the forgiveness of sins He earned for you on His cross.

To you Jesus calls, "*Come, follow me*. I have a wonderful inheritance to give you. There is a lot more to come, but there is no need to wait. I will start now by giving you the forgiveness of sins, and the joy and peace that comes with it!"