

# M1<sup>st</sup> MEMBERS 1<sup>st</sup> LIVING GENEROUSLY

Members First  
November 22, 2009  
Mark 10:17-31

Focus: All we have is God's, can we respond and seek after the Kingdom of God or do we turn away dejected and sad?

I'm one of those people who love to spring clean. I love to throw stuff away. I don't really have knickknacks around my house. I have a few things that I collect, but they each have a very specific space. A part of this is because of my family background. My grandparents and my dad are all hoarders. If you aren't aware of this disease, the exact definition says that Compulsive Hoarding is a mental disorder marked by an obsessive need to acquire and keep things even if the items are worthless. My dad's problem is kept under control because my mom is like me and doesn't like clutter. But he has a few rooms that are out of control with stuff; musty books he can't throw away, bills from 1980, bank statements from his theater company that's been defunct for over 20 years, pictures of actors that he didn't ever hire over 20 years ago. My grandparents are even worse. They stopped hosting the family almost 10 years ago, because their house has been taking over by stuff. There is a small path through all of the rooms, but that's it. We haven't seen the basement in as many years, because there isn't even a path down there anymore. They have all of this stuff that they just can't bear to part with. I know for my grandparents, there is value for them in their stuff. There is a new show on A&E called hoarders. In the beginning of the show it always states that over 3 million Americans are compulsive hoarders.

While we may all not be hoarders, we all have our little quirks or those things, just items in our lives that we can't part with. Mine are shoes; I have over 78 pairs of shoes and refuse to ever throw one away. I might wear them, or buy the perfect outfit that I'll need them. It's so easy to find ourselves overcome with the need for something, for our stuff, for the things that our money pays for. And our culture promotes this desire for things. Commercials target Americans by saying you will find happiness in the products you buy. But in order to buy those products you need money. And then that desire for wealth takes over so that we can get more stuff.

Jesus knew this exact pull of the stuff in our lives and for our need to gain wealth. Jesus spent one-sixth of his time talking about money – the only other subject he talks about more was the Kingdom of God.

We're continuing in our sermon series on Members First. God desires for us to give first to Him. All of the stuff in our lives, all of the wealth that we have stored away, our paychecks on Friday afternoon ... these are all God's. And God just asks for us to give 10% back to be used to bring

about his Kingdom here on earth. Think about it, God gives us 90% to live on. God gives us 100% and we give back only 10%. I'm going to read the story of Jesus' response to one rich young man who wanted to find out about eternal life, but he couldn't see beyond his 100%. [Read Matthew 10:17-31]

It is amazing that of all Jesus had to talk about; Jesus talked about money and wealth one sixth of the time. Jesus not only talked about money, but he mentioned it in conversation, and more importantly, he told his followers about what they should do with theirs and how they were to spend it.

Money was important to Jesus because:

1. How we use our money is **VERY IMPORTANT**

- How we as Christians use our money is very important – we know that we are blessed, and as a body of people, we know that we can make a huge impact in this world, if we give our money to those who are in need. Hence Jesus' words to the young rich man this morning, ***"Go sell what you own and give it to the poor."***

2. Money can **TAKE OVER OUR LIVES**

- But as well, Jesus also spoke those words to the young rich man, because Jesus knew that wealth was indeed a blessing, but that wealth and riches can very easily take over someone's lives. Having too much can be the problem. Because instead of having money, it can be too easy to be controlled by our money. Whether we are in debt or have too much can take over our lives. When we don't have enough and we are in debt, then all of our time, anxiety and focus can be controlled by that. If God isn't in control of our entire lives, including our finances, then our finances become the one in control.

So in this morning's gospel lesson, you have a young man who runs to Jesus. He is excited to learn and follow and asks Jesus how to get eternal life. Jesus begins by reciting the 10 commandments. Well, the young rich man listens to Jesus, but says he is already doing that. Well, Jesus looks at the young man, Jesus' heart is filled with love for this man, and Jesus instructs him, ***Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*** (Mark 10:21 TNIV) The scripture goes on to include this 'poor' young rich man's response, ***At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*** (Mark 10:22 TNIV)

Now what is really interesting about this passage is that the young man listens to Jesus' response and really listens. The scripture says he went away sad. This young rich man didn't shrug Jesus off, he didn't laugh in his face and he didn't walk away calling Jesus another crackpot. Instead, this young rich man walks away sad, because the scripture says he had many possession. You see, this young man wouldn't give up his possessions, or simply, just couldn't give up his possessions to follow Jesus Christ. Maybe you've been in this situation. **Expand...**

This morning's passage isn't about giving of your wealth, because it is about putting Christ first in our lives – and Jesus knew that all too often it is the wealth and the possessions and the stuff that make following him all too difficult. You see, this young rich man believed he was truly

blessed, but he believed that if he gave it all away, he would be bereft of blessings. This rich young man couldn't see beyond his stuff, his wealth and his possessions to continue to trust God if it all wasn't there anymore.

Members First put their **WHOLE TRUST IN GOD.**

That is why Jesus talked about wealth 1/6 of his time here on earth, and why Jesus found it so important to instruct his followers on their money, because Jesus knew that money gets in the way of faith. Wealth is a security blanket. If you have an abundance and way too much, you rely on your self and your bank account and your own resources. Your riches are a foundation to lean on in life, rather than having Jesus as your one true Firm Foundation. This young rich man from this morning and most of us gathered in this church allow our possessions, our wealth and our stuff to get in the way of putting Christ first in our lives.

Our finances get in the way. We tell ourselves that our stuff is the end all be all. 3 million Americans take this to a disturbing extreme where their stuff gets in the way of their relationships, their homes and their families. I've always found this passage interesting because Jesus doesn't tell this rich young man to give his tithe, 10%. Jesus doesn't even challenge him to give 25%. Instead, Jesus tells him to give it all away. Because that young man had so much he'd just be giving of his wealth. This man was addicted to his wealth. It was all about his money and Jesus challenges each and every one of us to break the addiction that our money, wealth and possessions of ourselves. **POINTS**

But we all sit on the precipice of relying on ourselves and our own wealth. We forget that our blessings are from God and that Jesus warns us over and over again, "***Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.***" (Mark 10:24 TNIV)

Before co-founding Habitat for Humanity, Millard Fuller was a successful businessman who followed his estranged wife Linda to New York to try to convince her to come back to him. She was not easily convinced that he could turn back from his headlong rush for material wealth. Millard recalls: "we were in a taxi right after Linda and I had a very tearful session. We'd gone to Radio City Music Hall and they showed the movie Never Too Late. It was about a woman's getting pregnant after she thought it was too late. The message was that it's never too late to change anything. I had a sensation of light in that taxi. It was not anything spooky. All I can say is it just came into my head: Give your money away, make yourself poor again and throw yourself on God's mercy. I turned to Linda and said, 'I believe that God just gave me the idea to give all our money away; give everything away.' She said, I agree. Let's do it." Friends, family, even pastors tried to talk them out of it. "I told them no, if I think about it I won't do it, because it's not logical. But I believe that God is calling us to do this."

Members First **OFFER EVERYTHING TO GOD.**

Giving of your possessions and your tithe to the church isn't logical, but you are called to do it. Jesus wants us to offer absolutely everything – 100%. And God will give us 90% in return. Jesus

knew that that stuff is just a stumbling block to find true meaning and trust in him. We are all called to offer everything: ourselves, our lives, and even our money.

Now I want to tell you a story, listen to this Gospel message again. Close your eyes and picture this story as it unfolds...

We should never forget what those who were witness to the scene, or the writer Mark. That witness noted carefully that Jesus remained looking after him with love and a smile. Just as he is looking after you and me, saying to his amazed disciples, ***“With human beings this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” (Mark 10:27 TNIV)***

You have an opportunity this day and each day to choose God.

Members First **CHOOSE GOD FIRST.**

We are no different than that young man who stood before Jesus. He had done everything else in the faith. He checked off those commandments and completed his to do list of faith, but there was one more step. Christ called him to give everything ... and he found himself unable to walk away from his wealth, so he walked away from Jesus sad & grieved to his core. How will you walk this morning?

In front of you, you'll see a step up chart. This chart represents our giving patterns. Continually in the scripture, we are called to give 10% of God's back to God. Find your weekly giving amount. Now figure out how much you actually give in a week and note how much 10% would be. Are you at God's level? If the answer is no, truly pray and talk to God about where you are called to go next. Are you being called to step up immediately and go to 10%? It can be done, Jesus tells us, ***“With human beings this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” (Mark 10:27 TNIV)*** Maybe you can't just step up to 10% right now, so consider stepping up just one step on this sheet, \$5 per week.

1. Going into 2010 – everyone's expenses increased
  - a. Plan for Funding Ministry – held line 2009 v. 2010
  - b. Grant & Uncontrolled increases – difference in expected giving & expenses
2. Generosity – we've been generous ... continue to be generous
  - a. GIFT - \$220,000 extra in one year
  - b. God thing that need just half of that to meet everything in Plan for funding ministry
  - c. Step Up ...