

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

We live in a world in a society where we think “more is better.” If we had a better job, if we had a better car, a bigger house, more money, more friends we’d be looking pretty good in the eyes of our culture. Having many possessions holds value for us. We work hard for the things that we have, and yet in today’s gospel lesson, Jesus turns our way of thinking up-side-down.

A rich man asks him what he needs to do to inherit eternal life. And, simply Jesus tells him to obey the commandments. And the rich man is happy to hear what Jesus says because he has done all of those things. But, Jesus doesn’t stop there. He also tells the rich man to sell what he has and give the money to the poor, then come and follow him. This is the point where the wind was knocked out of the rich man. Go and sell your possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow me.

What Jesus asked of the rich man, what he asks of us is counter cultural. Somewhere along the line we learn to think that bigger is better; do what you have to do to get ahead in life, no matter what the costs. We may be kind to others and obey the commandments along the way, just as the rich man has done, but are there things that we could do differently along the way?

If Jesus was here right now and asked us to go and sell our possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow him – what would we do? Would we sell our possessions and go against the norms of our culture? Would we say no and walk away? Would we wrestle with the idea and walk away sad and grieving as the rich man did when Jesus asked him? What would we do?

And now, back to the rich man. He walked away grieving after Jesus told him to sell his things and follow him. The rich man loved what he owned and he struggled with having to give it up. Jesus called him to follow him. We don’t know if the rich man did as Jesus asked or if he just went away.

The call that Jesus offered the rich man, is the same call that he offers to each of us. Do we accept that call? Is our life full of stewardship – do we care for God’s creation, for the animals, the land, the water, and the people that surround us? Do we give of our time, talents, and resources as part of our way of life or do we store up possessions for ourselves? These are hard questions that we all need to ask ourselves, myself included.

As I thought, prayed, and struggled over what I would preach today I realize that there are things that I could do differently in my life to follow the call that Jesus has given to me, that same call that he gives to all of us: to be good stewards of the gifts that God has given to us –nature, our talents and resources, and other people.

What can we do differently in our lives? Where are we having difficulty in responding to God’s call to us? Are we looking out for ourselves? Are we ignoring our brothers and

sisters in need? Are we forgetting that part of our calling from God is to be a good steward and to care for all of God's creation through the many gifts that he has given us?

I was reminded of a holiday letter that was fairly popular in 1999 as I struggled with this text. Weakeyes Cody wrote:

I am now old enough to have lived a great deal of our history. Indeed, witnessed a significant percentage of it. And I can tell you this: I don't recall happening the way some journalists have written it. Moreover, we live in bigger houses and have smaller families; more conveniences but less time; are better educated but show less common sense; more knowledge but less judgment; more experts but more problems; more hospitals, but more sick people. We smoke too much, drink too much, spend too much and laugh too little. We've added years to our life but not life to our years. We drive too fast, get angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom. We've multiplied our possessions yet reduced our values. And when was the last time you sat and talked with your wife, son, daughter, dad, mom, or a friend for more than fifteen minutes?

Cody's words reminded me so much of the push in our culture that more is better. And I wonder, is more really better?

Jesus calls us to go against the grain. He calls us to be good stewards, to use our time, talents, and resources to care for God's creation, not to store up possessions for ourselves.

We have a lot to think and pray about. Responding to Jesus' call is countercultural and difficult. Although it's hard, the good news for us is that God is with us and works with us when we struggle. Being countercultural in our daily living may be difficult for us, but with God all things are possible.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.