

PROPER 23 YEAR B OCTOBER 10, 2021

Amos 5:6-7, 10-15

Ps 90

Hebrews 3:1-6

Mark 10: 17-27 (28-31)

Why did the young man approach Jesus in the first place? Was he attracted by the miracles? Did the teaching warm his heart? Did he feel that niggling restlessness that he was missing something in his life?

Whatever prompted him was enough for him to approach Jesus and inquire about following Jesus and obtaining everlasting life. But his starry-eyed desire was deflated in one sentence when Jesus explained what he needed to do. Following the commandments was not enough – he was asked to sell his possessions and give his wealth to the poor.

Just because we want something, it is not always ours for the asking. Desires and dreams can involve hard work and in this case sacrifice. This is when discernment comes in.

What is it worth to us to get what we want or in our ignorance to obtain what we think we need? Is the desire great enough for whatever cost? Does the sacrifice benefit others or merely fill our own wants? Do we serve the common good in our sacrifice? Honest examination can change our minds. Maybe the new and better something is worth the cost but it may not be if the result is only our gratification.

In the gospel story, the young man's decision was quick. Jesus told him what he needed to do and the man immediately went away. Did he ponder his actions – the desires as compared to the sacrifice and then decide it was worth it and return to Jesus. Probably not because there is no more mention of him and that seems to be the end of the story. The disciples do not understand about how difficult it can be for the rich to enter heaven. Jesus explains that failure is inevitable if one tries to do this on their own using only your wealth. It can only be

successful with God's help. By believing in Jesus and the good news the disciples will be rewarded for the sacrifices they have made.

When we are placed in a similar situation – sacrifice versus reward - it is easy to make a quick decision whether it be yes or no. But easy answers are not always best. A yes answer can be just the beginning. A verbal yes to joining a religious community is only the first step in the process. There is a reason that the process takes years. One must grow into the decision and grow into the life to see if it is a fit and to discover the rewards.

Sacrifice is a tricky word. It can have a very negative connotation. On the surface sometimes we can only see what is being relinquished and given up. However, it is often the first step to greater things.

There is a continuum between sacrifice and reward. Looking at just one or the other gives a false outlook. Somewhere in the middle the two meet and the giving up becomes the reward for what is gained. Perspective is needed but often is missing in the beginning and only comes through the living and the experience - the benefits that result but cannot be imagined in the initial commitment.

The gains can be monumental – peace of mind, a feeling of belonging when you did not feel that way before, acceptance, happiness, joy. They may not be monetary or material but they can far outweigh any sacrifices. Staying the course is the way to the result. For the young man and for anyone seeking and finding a closer relationship with God, the gains can be overwhelming. St Augustine said that we are restless until we rest in God. The reward of resting God and God's love is monumental.

This month's writer for FWDD is fairly new to the Episcopal church. By her own admission, she has no regrets for saying "yes" to Christ and following where he leads. She values the rewards and prays for her commitment to grow. She desires to see the face of Christ in all and to continue her service to others. She is someone who welcomes the sacrifice and revels in the joys.

A good message for us all.