

March 16, 2016

I Have Sinned: Spiritual Immaturity

Mark 10:17-22

Opening words: One of our basic human spiritual needs is for forgiveness. It is one of the things that draw us to Christ. Jesus did not come into the world to be our role model. Jesus did not come into our world to be our teacher. Jesus did not come into our world to entertain us. Jesus came into the world to save us from our sins. Never forget, Jesus is our Savior. Colossians 1:13-14 says, "*He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*" Lent is a time to confess our sins and repent. This is the ninth and final sermon in my 2016 Lenten sermon series, *I Have Sinned!* On Sunday, I begin my 2016 Holy Week sermon series, *Jesus!* This evening we look at the sin of spiritual immaturity. Our Gospel reading for this evening is Mark 10:17-22.

Mark 10:17-22 ¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother."

²⁰ "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

²¹ 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."

²² At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

We find ourselves in the tenth chapter of Mark. It is late in the Jesus's earthly ministry. Every day, the Master finds himself closer to the cross. In other words, his actions and his words take on heightened meaning. This evening's story is no exception. We have looked at this story several times in the past. It is a story that is found in all the synoptic Gospels; Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is only when you combine the three that you get the whole story. He is a rich young ruler, who has everything this world has to offer. Yet, something is missing. According to our text, the rich young ruler runs up to Jesus and drops at his feet. Those facts are important because it shows his sense of urgency and his humility. He asked Jesus the question we need to ask Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus reminds him of the commandments that deal with relationships: do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not fraud. Honor your father and mother. With hope in his voice, he says there has never been a time in his life when he didn't keep these commandments. He wants to hear that his salvation is guaranteed. The problem is, he doesn't. Instead, he hears there is still one more thing he must do. Jesus says he must surrender all of

his possessions. This good man leaves Jesus's presence brokenhearted, because he just can't do it. Is anyone here this evening willing to surrender all their possessions and follow Jesus? That is a hard thing to do.

The rich young ruler was so close, yet he was so far away. He is not the only one. Pontius Pilate had the same problem. He was so close, yet he was so far away. You remember his story. He was the Roman governor at the time Jesus died. He held the power to end Jesus's life and the power to let him go. There was something about Jesus that was different. He both respected and feared Jesus. He wanted Jesus to live, but the crowd called for Barabbas. The guilty man walked away, while the innocent man died. Pontius Pilate was so close, yet he was so far away.

Judas Iscariot was so close, yet he was so far away. Jesus traveled with Jesus for years and experienced so much! He saw the miracles, he felt his presence, he heard the teaching. The brother even prayed with Jesus, but it wasn't enough. For years the church has debated why he did it. Perhaps he was too political, perhaps he was too impatient. Perhaps he just tried to force Jesus's hand. It really doesn't matter why he did it; he did it! He betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. By the time he realized his mistake, it was too late. Judas Iscariot couldn't live with that mistake, so he took his own life. Judas Iscariot was so close, yet he was so far away.

The rich young ruler, Pontius Pilate, Judas Iscariot and countless others have been so close, yet so far away. Let me ask you two questions this evening: How close are you to Jesus? How far away are you from Jesus? How you answer those two questions says a great deal about your spiritual maturity. Could it be you are so close, yet you are so far away? One of the things you don't want to be is so close, yet so far away. Let me say this clearly. God expects you to grow in the faith. If you are spiritually immature after all this time, then there is something really wrong. Do you consider yourself a spiritually mature person? If you have a hard time answering that question, then this message is for you. This evening, I want to give you seven signs of spiritual immaturity. They come from Crosswalk. They spoke to me. I hope they speak to you. If you are ready to begin, say, "**Amen!**" I will be brief.

- 1) Spiritual infants are self-centered.** They arrive at church thinking, "What can I get out of this?" Then, they sometimes leave saying, "I didn't get a thing out of that today." Church is all about them. Are you self-centered?
- 2) Spiritual infants are noisy.** They cry a lot, particularly when they don't think their needs are being met. For example, you criticize a mission project because you don't agree with it. The money should be spent on something that meets your approval. You just can't complain enough. Are you noisy?
- 3) Spiritual infants are messy.** Toddlers do not clean up after themselves. That's someone else's job. On Sunday night after everyone has vacated the premises,

walk around the church building and you'll know in a heartbeat whether the congregation is mature or immature. Are you messy?

- 4) Spiritual infants are impatient.** The crying baby cannot be told that the milk is warming and should be ready in a few minutes. He wants what he wants and he wants it five minutes ago. To them, the church is there to provide services which members pay for with their offerings; if the services are inferior, they withhold their money or even leave. Are you impatient?
- 5) Spiritual infants are defined by what they cannot do.** They cannot cooperate, cannot submit to others, and cannot understand deep things. They are unable to apologize and mean it, and resist sharing. Are you defined by what you cannot do?
- 6) Spiritual infants are explosive.** They are mad because their birthday wasn't in the bulletin. They are mad no one noticed they were on vacation or no one called. They are mad because no one supported their ministry. They explode over every little issue. Are you explosive?
- 7) Spiritual infants are irresponsible.** They're great at expecting a lot from others and nothing from themselves. They always know who is to blame for all that's wrong in the church. Aren't you glad we don't have any irresponsible people in this church. Are you irresponsible?

This is the real question. Are you spiritually immature? Maybe you are just like the rich young ruler? Maybe you are like Pontus Pilot? Maybe you are like Judas Iscariot? Maybe you are so close, yet so far away? If so, then there is only one thing left to do, GROW UP!

Will you pray with me?