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SERMON TITLE: "Hidden Wealth"
SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:17-27
DATE: December 3, 2017
Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

READ MARK 10:17-27

This is a pop quiz. See if you can make a hundred.
Can you name the Ten Commandments? (Ex 20:3-17)

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

How old were you when you learned these? You still know them, right?

The rich young ruler knew these laws or commands because he was a Jew. He was raised on them. Yet he still asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus said, "You know the commandments," and he did, just like you knew the commandments when I asked you.

The boy had loved the commands. Now if you had a child and that child wanted to obey—some children do want to follow the rules—others are willful. Most are somewhere in between.

The young man had been working for years to save his soul. He felt that he was doing pretty well. In addition, he had accumulated a lot of money, not by swindling people. Although politicians are occasionally suspect of rich people and often infer that wealth comes by cheating someone, in Bible times, people who were wealthy were thought of as blessed. The young man worked hard; he was frugal; and had reaped the rewards of financial success. He would have been highly respected.

But, the young man felt that something was missing. All "life's goods and aspirations" are not fulfilling his needs.

He is doing the things that the world calls successful, but he discovers that it is not fulfilling. His question comes from that need. It comes from the soul, because on the outside, he is doing quite well. But in his soul, not so much.

There is a difference between the outside and the inside.

On the outside, we can look good by keeping the rules. This young man was trying to prove himself by religion. He followed the commandments. He did things—from the outside. But, it had not sunk into his heart and he was not satisfied.

Religion which keeps the rules doesn't get rid of the self-absorption because it is outside trying to work in.

From a business standpoint he had made it. Yet, he still went to Jesus to see what was missing. Good financials don't always help you sleep at night. Good financials and following religious laws are on the outside, not the inside.

I have done all this but I'm not feeling it inside. Is that all there is, Jesus?

Jesus is the one who said, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36)

Perhaps the rich young man had heard Jesus say that.

Jesus is the one who turned the world upside down because he was the king, God's Messiah. But, he gave up his rule in heaven to come here to die. He did not come to earth as God's representative for revenge or an eye for an eye or winning by domination. He took up a cross.

He gave up riches and power to gain eternal life for us because he wants us there.

So Jesus looked at the man and loved him. Why? Jesus loved him because the man was seeking. Jesus wanted to give him a real answer to his real question, *how do I find eternal life?*

“One thing you lack, sell everything you have and give it away . . .” Whoa!

Okay, I’m supposed to turn my life upside down? He said let go of what you think gives you power and come be my disciple? I don’t know if Jesus understands the levity of his words. I’m just not sure that Jesus gets it because he blows these bombs out there and it changes his whole life. He said to the man, *let go of what you think makes you powerful.*

The man’s face fell. He was shocked.

He went away grieving. Wealth was his identity. Wealth gave him status. Wealth gave him connections. Wealth allowed him to buy anything he wanted.

But wealth also divided him. Wealth was something on the outside. It could be gained. It could be lost. Wealth could not save his soul because it could not change him on the inside—in his heart.

What the man was doing was valuable for his life on earth but did not have a thing to do for his life eternally.

Two weeks ago we talked about the poor widow who tithed two pennies—all that she had to live on. This week we have one of the guys Jesus referred to, who could give, and most likely who did give a great deal of money out of his surplus. Now Jesus asks him to give it up.

Jesus said, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it” (Mk 8:35).

Let’s say the man follows Jesus’ advice. Let’s say he gives away his money. He gives a good part of it to DUNCANVILLE OUTREACH MINISTRY to help the poor. He gives money to the church to start a benevolence fund for those who have a sudden crisis. He gives money to **Santa Cops** so that every child in Duncanville receives a toy for Christmas. He gives money to HELPING TO HEAL ministry, which is a new non-profit which ministers to seniors who are poor and have no family around. There are boxes in the entry for both of those ministries to the poor.

He gives money to others who are unable to meet their needs—like the poor widow who gave her two cents to the temple. Perhaps the man paid her rent for a year, or repaired her car, or paid for a visit to the dentist.

Perhaps the man started a new 501(c)3 like **Oasis Center** to help at risk and formerly incarcerated youths to learn a skill and start a new life. Perhaps he sent someone to college who could not afford it.

What if he went away and then he determined to refocus his ideas about money and religion. He prayed, then went back to Jesus and said, “Here’s what I have decided to do with my money.” What do you think Jesus would do?

“Welcome son. You will never regret it.”

Having true riches involves giving. Giving is caring. The contribution of the poor matters greatly, even if it is just a few pennies. That’s why Jesus applauded the poor widow. Giving provides the giver with a sense of empowerment.

God can do magnificent things with what you give.

But, if you have plenty, do not be consumed with wealth because finding meaning is not at all about the money. Money will not help remove the stain of sin; the sense of inadequacy. Money will not give you a positive self-image. If it did, the man would not have come to Jesus with his question, for he had more than enough money.

The young man needed a new identity, that of being a disciple of Jesus.

The rich King Jesus, said to the rich young ruler, *it is about serving others. It is not all about accumulating wealth for yourself, but about community. It is not all about power, but trusting God.* It is about identity with Jesus Christ.

That is real life.

What grabs you? What can you not let go of? What must you have to feel good about yourself?

If the answer is Jesus here are some of the riches you gain: You are empowered to serve. You access divine wisdom. You have eternal life. You have help like you can never find in money.

My husband has a little shed in the backyard. It is big enough for a lawnmower, a weed eater, some gardening tools, and a small desk. I went out to get something and on the desk was a list. On the list were people and things and dates. Also was the word “granted.” This was his prayer list. I was incredibly touched by the list and the word “granted.”

I thought of how to deal with some of those things on his list through money—impossible! There is a greater wealth, so great it doesn’t even begin to compare.

Do you have true riches this morning? Give away or repurpose what you are relying on that keeps you from following Jesus. **Become truly wealthy today.**

AMEN