

October 24, 2011

Dear Parishioner,

“[Jesus] said to him, ‘You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have ... and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’” Mark 10:21.

These words of Jesus are radical, disturbingly so. Jesus was radical, however, very radical, and he said radical things. He claimed to be the Son of God (Luke 2:49); he claimed the power to forgive sins (Matt. 9:2); and he predicted his own death and resurrection (Mark 8:31-32). These claims by Jesus are the fabric of our Christian faith; we do not question them or parse them, but rather we take our comfort in them, and rightly so.

So what are we to make of Jesus’ not-so-comforting admonition to the rich young ruler? Try as we might to soften it into something more palatable, we are left with our knowledge that Jesus says what he means and means what he says. The rich young ruler realizes this himself because, “[d]isheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful...” (Mark 10:22). I don’t think Jesus spoke to the young man to make him, or us, sad. In fact, Mark notes that Jesus spoke these words out of love. (Mark 10:21). I also don’t think that Jesus is talking only about our possessions, our stuff. As is his wont, Jesus is talking about things deeper and broader; he is talking about ridding ourselves of *all* those things that stand between our hearts and him.

I hope during this year’s stewardship campaign that we will prayerfully consider our pledges to the Advent with these words of Jesus as a point of reference, realizing that stewardship is about more than giving money to our church. Stewardship is an opportunity to search ourselves for those things, be they money, work, family, you name it, that stand between us and God, and to rid ourselves of them and to follow Him. In doing the seemingly impossible, we are given the blessing of relying on God himself, whose “grace is sufficient for [us], and [whose] power is made perfect in [our] weakness,” (2 Cor. 12:9), and who promises us “treasure in heaven.”

Faithfully,

Lee Pope
Stewardship Chairman