

Mark 10:17-22
“Roadblock”

You may recall in a recent sermon I asked the question, “What aren’t you willing to give up for Jesus?” I was reminded of this question after encountering this text in light of our subject matter, generosity. I would like to reframe that question this morning. Is there anything that you possess that would be too much to relinquish if God was so inclined to ask you to do so? Have we drawn lines in the sand and said to ourselves I will go as far as that? Or maybe we have not drawn lines in the sand because we have convinced ourselves that God would never ask us to go there, to give that up. Is there anything in your life that garners such emotional attachment? If there is, then that thing constitutes a roadblock to you fully embracing the generous lifestyle Christ is inviting all his followers into. Let me be clear by stating that generosity is about our whole being not just our financial resources. Generosity is a matter of the heart and anything that we are unwilling to relinquish for Jesus holds a place in our hearts that rightfully belongs to him, be it a loved one, accomplishment, a position and/or a possession, and that, Sisters and Brothers, is a problem. It is a hinderance. It is a roadblock. Drawing from our text I want to share three things about a roadblock that make it extremely hard to relinquish.

First reason a roadbook is extremely hard to relinquish is it becomes one’s primary source of identity. I do not believe that it is a coincidence that this story is commonly known as the story of the “Rich Young Ruler”. This young man’s identity was tied up in his possessions, in his wealth. So much so, he was willing to

forgo eternal life. **V17**, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” I am convinced this young man expected Jesus to tell him he was set. But he doesn’t. Jesus tells him very plainly and lovingly the truth, and his response is captured in V22. “²²Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” And this is some of us. We believe the things we do make us right with God and assure us of eternal life and Jesus looks on us and sees there is something in our hearts that holds greater place than he, and he calls us to do as he did this young man, relinquish it and follow him. And just like this young man we turn, disappointed, saying to ourselves, ‘that is too much’, and walk away. Failing to see the generous nature of Jesus’ offer and forgoing the opportunity to experience the generosity he would have produced through us had we followed. The travesty of this story is that Jesus wasn’t inviting him to give up his wealth for nothing, it was a trade, and uneven trade at that. **V21**, “²¹And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” When a roadblock becomes our primary source of identity it has the power to compel us to risk everything to hold on to it, even eternal life.

Luke 12:16-21 “And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully,¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”²⁰ But God

said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.’”

Second reason a roadblock is extremely hard to relinquish is it becomes one’s primary source of security. And know this, the security it offers is short-lived. I can’t help but imagining in that moment the young man thinking to himself, “If I give it all away how in the world will I survive?” I firmly believe, what one anchors one’s life to; what one put one’s hope in; where one finds one’s comfort and security has become one’s god. **Jesus’ invitation to this young man was an invitation to shift his worship from an idol to the true God. To make his possessions a tool rather than a hinderance.** The truth is he had two idols, he works and his money. Just because we do a number of good things and have plenty of money or possessions does not necessarily mean we belong to and are blessed by God. And let me be clear, God has no problem with anyone having wealth or great wealth for that matter. God has a problem when our wealth, whatever it might be, becomes our source of security and, as such, becomes our god. **How easily humans make created things their god. Idolatry makes generosity and many other God honoring things impossible. Remember, generosity is a matter of the heart and God does not cohabit.**

Proverbs 23:4-5 NLT “Don’t wear yourself out trying to get rich. Be wise enough to know when to quit. ⁵In the blink of an eye wealth disappears, for it will sprout wings and fly away like an eagle.”

Matt 6:24 “²⁴ “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

1Tim 6:17-20 “¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”

Third and final thing that makes a roadblock hard to relinquish is it becomes one’s god. V22 “²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” He could not bear parting ways with what had become his god. Such anguish Jesus’s invitation created in him. Jesus’ love for him laid him bare and he could not stand what he saw in himself. Instead of falling on his knees crying out to God for help he walks away from riches untold. Riches beyond his wildest imagination. This is what idolatry will do to us. It will have us grasping rather than giving. Always wanting more rather than trusting in God’s provision. Always working rather than being at peace. It will keep us in the dark while deceiving us into believing we are in the light. Idolatry is terribly destructive. Robbing us of the abundant life and all that comes with it, while all along telling us it is the way to the abundant life.

John 10:10 “¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

God doesn’t want our stuff. He wants to give us and our stuff purpose. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**