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Peace, Sun Prairie  
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Pentecost 21

**Mark 10:17-27**  
**CHRIST LOOKS AT US**  
**AND LOVES US**

His explosive temper erupted once again. After he stormed out of the house the usual pattern was for him to come back later with flowers. He'd walk into the house, find her still sitting at the kitchen table crying. He'd kneel down by her, gently brush her hair out of her face, give her the flowers and say, "Jenna, you know I'd never do anything to hurt you."

How could human nature be so blind to itself? "I'd never do anything to hurt you," and yet there she sits right in front of him with one eye purple and swollen shut. Have you ever considered that you may be just as blind to your own behavior? You may not be physically violent but perhaps you've brutalized someone with words, or cut them with a disdainful look. Maybe without even knowing it you are perceived as abrasive or manipulative or cruel or self-absorbed. Has the

possibility ever occurred to you that somehow you could be putting an intolerable burden on your spouse and even if they talk to you about it you don't really change? You just get annoyed. And yet we maintain, "I would never do anything to hurt anyone!"

If we are blind to how we have sinned against people, imagine how blind we are to the ways we have sinned against God. In Mark chapter 10 we are told about a man who was blind to his sin. The man was excited for a chance to really praise God. He had all the right things to do and say. Listen again to Mark 10, *As Jesus stated 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?"* Not master. Not Lord. Not Son of David or some other name recognizing Jesus as the Savior. Just a courteous, but generic, "Good teacher." And what a curious question! A contradiction. What must I *do* to *inherit* eternal life? You don't do something to inherit something. You receive an inheritance as a gift.

Then Jesus answers in a way that should have bowled the young man over, but more likely went over his head. He said, *Why do you call me good? No one is good –except God alone.* There was the answer to the

man's question. If only God is good, then you, young man, are not good and you cannot do good things. In fact, if you were good, you wouldn't have to ask what's good. Here Jesus talks doctrine. It is the doctrine of original sin. All people are born, not good, but evil. Only God is good. Jesus said so.

Then to make the lesson hit home Jesus goes on, "*You know the commandments: Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.*" "Teacher," he declared, "*all these I have kept since I was a boy.*" Jesus looked at him and loved him. Behold the wondrous love of Jesus. Would you love this guy, or would you be turned off that he is so full of himself? Jesus looked at him and loved him. That's a wonder. That's grace.

How many people look at you and are unconvinced, or how many people look at you and wince, or how many people look at you and privately breathe a tired sigh or how many look at you and hate you? It's good we don't know. We'd probably go into shock.

Christ looks at you and loves you. There's your salvation. We boorishly think, "What have I ever done

that's so bad?" How galling! Christ should be appalled, disgusted. He went to the trouble of coming to earth to be our Savior and we tell Him it was unnecessary? But He looks at us and loves us. What a God who has mercy on a people who don't even realize to what extent they need it! He looks at us and loves us. What grace! What kindness!

Then Christ who loves the young man says something to him that inflicts terrible pain. *"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."* At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Ah, the young man hadn't even kept the First of the Ten Commandments. He did not love God more than his possessions. He had failed. And just that one sin, even though it was a hidden sin and he hadn't ever tried to hurt anybody, was enough to keep him from inheriting eternal life. In essence, with these words Jesus stabbed the young man in the heart and threw him into hell.

Why would Jesus inflict that kind of pain if He loved the man? Jesus did it actually to save the man from hell. Unless the man started to recognize his sinfulness, he would have no need for a Savior like Jesus. That love

with which Jesus looked at the young man is the reason Jesus came to earth. That love was driving Jesus forward to Jerusalem to a hilltop name Calvary. That love would take all the guilt of humankind, even the sins we're not aware of, and with hellish agony atone to God for all of it. That love would come back from the dead and open the gates of heaven to all who believe. What was impossible for us He made a completed reality. He gives it to us freely as a gift, truly an inheritance.

Christ looked at the young man and loved him. No matter how praise-filled his life was, the man needed Christ's goodness, not his own. Christ looks at us and loves us. That's why He sends pastors and teachers, Christian spouses, parents and peers to point out our sins to us, to burst our righteous bubbles. He wants us to be able to have and enjoy His saving forgiveness instead.

After the man walked away, Mark 10 tells us, *Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle*

*than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”*

Isn't it true that when someone points out our sin we get defensive or angry? We're inclined to walk away - walk away like the young man. So if we acknowledge our sin, and turn to Jesus for forgiveness, it is truly a miracle, truly a grace, something only God could have made happen. Luther's Small Catechism states, *I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.* Let us never take that for granted.

Instead let us be filled with wonder that Jesus looks at us and loves us. By that look of love we are assured of God's total goodwill. By that look of love we are assured that we don't need to despair that we are only a burden and problem for others. Christ has forgiven us. By that look of love we are lifted up out of self-concern to become a servant to others. By that look of love we are redeemed as being worth something –worth more

than all the wealth of Wall Street. That look of love assures us even when God seems to be dealing harshly with us and things seem to be really bad, God's purposes for us are only good. When our faith feels so weak, when we have doubts, struggle with temptation, are overcome with guilt or have trouble understanding the Scriptures, that look of love assures us that Christ is not reluctant to send us the Holy Spirit.

Christ could have turned away from the young man. He could turn away from you and me. But in His grace doesn't. He looks at us. He looks at us and He sees it all. But He still looks at us and loves us.