

Jan 29,12 Matthew 19:16-30

ROADS WE TRAVEL

BARRIERS WE FACE

I wonder what kind of questions we would ask if we had a chance to talk to Jesus face to face. I wonder if we would ask what heaven is going to be like. I wonder if we would ask what we will be doing for all eternity. I wonder if we would ask what our bodies will look like, will we age, or stay the same. I wonder if we would ask about a whole lots of things that we think about when we think about heaven. Eternity is going to a long, long, long time. In fact eternity will never end. So maybe we would like to ask things about eternity.

Now I know those are some of my questions that I might ask and I'm sure you would have yours as well. Sometimes people asked Jesus when the time on this earth was going to end and he said he didn't know, only his Father in heaven knows. He then said not to worry about when, but always be ready for that day. There were some religious leaders who wanted to see miracles right before their eyes. Of course other religious leaders always tried to trick him into saying something that would get him into trouble so they could bring him up on charges. And that is the way his ministry on this earth kept on going. He preached and taught and healed many. Some listened and believed, others listened and argued, then there were those who listened and walked away. Nicodemus was the religious teacher of his day teaching the things of God to the

religious leaders. He had studied the Scriptures and he shared his thoughts with the religious leaders. When Jesus came his way and he heard him speak Nicodemus was challenged. His heart was strangely warmed and he wanted to know more about this man. Because of his position secretly he came to Jesus at night to find out more about God's teachings. Of course we know that conversation was about "being born again" and that "God so love the world that he gave his son and those who believe shall receive eternal life."

Think about that for a second because this could have been a barrier for Nicodemus. He was a scholar and teacher and this was a faith question. Nicodemus couldn't understand the fact that 'being born again' was not about a physical rebirth but a faith birth through the Holy Spirit from above. It blew his mind. I can see the look on his face. He is dumbfounded. In reality when Nicodemus left that night we don't know what decision he made toward following Jesus. Is he the son of God? Should I trust him? Maybe it drove him back to the Scriptures to check things out about the coming of the Messiah. He had barriers to overcome. By the end of John's Gospel we know his heart was filled with the love of Jesus for in the court room he stood up for Jesus. His barrier came down and when faced with a decision to stand up for his faith in Jesus he made the right one.

We face lots of barriers in our lifetime. Some barriers, like near construction zones are there to warn us to beware. There are other

barriers that keep us from understanding things. There is the stubborn barrier where one has a closed minded.

There are other barriers in life that some of you have perhaps faced. Barriers like education, or gender, or some even have faced racial barriers or even religious beliefs. Then there are physical ones as well. Barriers are out there in this world. Barriers stop things from happening. Barriers stop people from getting work. Barriers stop people from advancing in their job. Barriers stop people from receiving Christ. Barriers stop people from being totally surrender to him as well.

This morning on our road the barrier that we are looking at has to do with what the man came looking for. The Rich Young Ruler is out topic. His goal to find eternal life. His road map was to come to Jesus, the teacher, to find how to get there. Listen to Matthew's account of this story. Matthew 19:16-22

A man stopped Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" [17] Jesus said, "Why do you question me about what's good? God is the One who is good. If you want to enter the life of God, just do what he tells you." [18] The man asked, "What in particular?" Jesus said, "Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, [19] honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as you do yourself." [20] The young man said, "I've done all that. What's left?" [21] "If you want to give it all you've got," Jesus replied, "go sell your possessions; give everything to the poor. All your

wealth will then be in heaven. Then come follow me." [22] That was the last thing the young man expected to hear. And so, crestfallen, he walked away. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and he couldn't bear to let go."

Let me repeat that last line because I think it is very important in our lives as well. Let them sink in. *"He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and he couldn't bear to let go."*

He couldn't let go! Ever feel like that? Ever feel you couldn't let go of that anger you've had for many years? Ever feel that you couldn't let go of the hurting that you felt against someone? Ever feel that you'd like to get up out of your pew and come forward but pride is keeping you back? What this guy wanted was eternal life. He didn't mind crashing Jesus' party just to ask him that question. What he found was that he was holding tightly to his riches. He had the fundamental beliefs down pat. He seemed to be doing all the right things. He certainly seemed a likely candidate for eternal life. He kept God's law, at least the ones dealing with his fellow man, you know he hadn't killed anyone, nor did he steal or lie. He was faithful in his marriage. Loved and cared for his parents and all that. I'm sure when Jesus looked him in the eye he could see that something was still missing. Though he was doing all the right things something was stopping him from being totally dedicated to the goal he was after. So Jesus calmly said, "Well, you seem to be doing all the right things, but if you want to walk the road to eternal life then go sell all you have and give the money to the poor and come join

me and my disciples on the road to life.” This startled the Rich Young Ruler for he had lots of money. And as Matthew said, *“That was the last thing the young man expected to hear. And so he walked away.”*

There is nothing wrong with money or having money. I don't think Jesus was saying that to the Rich Young Ruler. What he was saying was that was the barrier that was keeping him from getting what he wanted. You see, if you have everything, if you can get everything when you want it, where is the trust? The widow who put her last coin in the offering box was praised more than the one who came and put a couple of bucks in the plate but had a nice checking account in the bank. She gave it all trusting that God would supply all her needs. She trusted somehow there would be milk on the table today for her kids. She trusted in her God that her bills would be paid and she would make it one day at a time. Jesus praised her for that trust. When she released that last coin she had she could have thought with this coin I can get a loaf of bread. With this coin I can buy some milk. With this coin I can have one last fling, by a Lotto ticket. But that was not her thought. She cheerfully put that coin in the offering plate maybe singing “Because He lives I can face tomorrow. Because he lives all fear is gone. Because I know who holds the future and life is worth the living just because He lives.” Plop! In goes the coin and she smiles as she brushes past the other guy as she takes her seat with a heart full of love and trust for her God, while the other guy seems to call attention to others about how generous he is today.

Even the disciples were amazed at what happened. They listened to Jesus as he spoke to the rich man. When the rich man turned and walked away they might have wanted to chase after him to come back. But no way would Jesus let that happen. He had a barrier and only he could remove it. It was his wealth. He's got lots of money. He's got lots of toys. He's got lots of homes in town and some beach front property. He's got a fleet of yachts on the Sea of Galilee he rents out. He spends some, saves lots. He has so much money he has it in a couple banks around the area. He has fancy clothes, fitted, made by the best tailors in town from the finest silk he could find throughout the world. How could he give all that up? Could you?

What if Jesus said to you to sell all the stuff you have and follow him. Could YOU do it? Now let's say you don't have that kind of money. But let's say Jesus tells you to come and follow him but first get rid of some of those barriers that seem to block your full devotion to him. Could you do that? What kind of barriers? I don't know. Your shallow faith? When I was called by God to ministry some of my barriers were that I wasn't educated enough. Then there was the fact that we didn't have a place to live in Kentucky. Then another was that Carole didn't have a job as yet. Then one of the most important was that the kids, David and Karen didn't want to leave their friends in Mass. It was when I surrendered all to Jesus and by faith took that step, that doors opened for us. It was scary. It took prayer and trust in order for me to answer God's call.

There are those who think God wouldn't accept them just as they are or forgive them. Just check out his 12 disciples and you find they weren't the smartest, nor richest, nor cleverest of men. What Jesus saw in them was what they could become. 11 made the grade, one failed completely. One man denied him 3 times. 10 men ran off when times got tough and hid in an upper room for a few days in panic. One man, the one who failed, betrayed him for some money that he never did get to enjoy. Since Jesus reached out to these guys and others, don't you think he reaches out to us today to come follow me? He says "I will transform you. I will make you fishers of men."

So let me say it again. What stuff in your lives become a barrier that you can't surrender it all to Jesus? What gets in the way? What are your road blocks that keep you from surrendering all?

I have changed our closing hymn this morning to fit what this message is all about. It's a challenge. It's a challenge from God to remove those barriers that keep you from being totally his. It's a challenge to think about your life today and your future. It's a challenge to lay aside those barriers and completely trust in him no matter what they are. Maybe you have doubts...he can handle them. Maybe it's some secret sin...he can forgive that. Maybe it's your anger...again he can help you turn that around. Maybe it's...whatever...he can handle all your whatever's. He wants none to perish but all receive eternal life. He wants all to have an abundant life now, filled with joy and peace not just waiting till one dies.

So in a moment we will sing our closing hymn and I invite anyone here who wants to be serious about their commitment to Jesus to come forward and either receive Jesus for the first time, or come and surrender all of the stuff that has kept you from being totally his.

Listen to the words of our final hymn. Think about them. Think about your life and what is keeping you from being totally his.

“All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give; I will ever love and trust him, in his presence daily live. I surrender all, I surrender all... All to Jesus I surrender, humbly at his feet I bow. Worldly pleasures all forsaken take me Jesus, take me now. I surrender all. I surrender all..... All to Jesus I surrender make me Savior wholly thine. Let me feel the Holy Spirit truly know that thou art mine. I surrender all. I surrender all..... All to Jesus I surrender Lord, I give myself to thee. Fill me with thy love and power, let thy blessings fall on me. I surrender all. I surrender all..... All to Jesus I surrender now I feel the sacred flame. O the joy of full salvation! Glory, glory to his name! I surrender all. I surrender all. All to thee my blessed Savior, I surrender all.”

Don't be like the Rich Young Ruler who walked away with nothing. Listen again to his story, for his story is our story. His challenge is our challenge.

"Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" [17] Jesus said, "Why do you question me about what's good? God is the One who is good. If you want to enter the life of God, just do what he tells

you." [18] The man asked, "What in particular?" Jesus said, "Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, [19] honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as you do yourself." [20] The young man said, "I've done all that. What's left?" [21] "If you want to give it all you've got," Jesus replied, "go sell your possessions; give everything to the poor. All your wealth will then be in heaven. Then come follow me." [22] That was the last thing the young man expected to hear. And so, crestfallen, he walked away. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and he couldn't bear to let go."

I hope you won't walk away, but walk toward Jesus in full surrender. I hope you will loosen the grip on the things that have kept you from full surrender.....Let Jesus have then today.