

Pastor Roy's Sermon from Oct. 11, 2015

Amos 5:6-7, 10-15, Hebrews 4:12-16, Mark 10:17-31

Today's passages raise the topics of freedom, and communion, and eternity. The Reign of Christ is the life of eternity. It is life with eternity in mind. It is a life of intense freedom in communion. But freedom means many things to many people. What do people say freedom is? What does Jesus say freedom is? Christ's freedom is not freedom on our terms, but on God's terms, freedom in terms of what is most real, what is most alive, what is most true.

The man who approaches Jesus in today's reading is trying to have eternal happiness on his own terms. Convenience. Comfort. Little sacrifice. But happiness is not freedom. Happiness is not eternal life. Sometimes we think of eternal life as some kind of good life which lasts and is exactly what we want.

Jesus tells him he must sacrifice mightily to know the complete freedom of grace. Rules like the ten commandments point us in the direction of holiness, in the direction of freedom. But we will all pick and choose our rules to our own satisfaction. And we will still be in bondage. Sacrifice, humility, love—these bring freedom. These are freedom. There are no shortcuts. No substitutions. Either we release all or we will be controlled by all. Hence, the first will be last and the last will be first. Either I live for me, or I live for God and all of God's children and creatures.

What is the wealth which Jesus might tell each of us to give away? It might be money. It might not be money. What controls my heart? Something that is mine, all mine. Something that I have a hard time sharing for whatever reason. Maybe fear. It's so hard to share those things which we hold most dearly. Then we live our lives in defense against loss, rather than in great generosity. Can Freedom only be known in Generosity? The Reign of Christ is a life of generosity. This sharing opens us up to all kinds of neighbors. This is nothing new to you all. You do it all the time.

Prayer helps us make generous decisions. Not "asking" prayer, but "letting go" prayer, "waiting" prayer, "hoping" prayer, "listening" prayer.

Back to the man who asked for eternal life, Jesus replies--beyond the 10 commandments--that he must sell all. Now, selling all would have involved a lot of prayer and trust. Much prayer, much trust! Prayer is the backbone of generosity.

Jesus does not offer cheap answers about life. He is going deep. He is calling us to a profound life of faithful generosity. Everybody wins in the Reign of Christ. We win because we are set free by grace in prayer. The poor win because we are expanding the safety net, the justice of living in compassionate community. He is telling the man what it means that Jesus is Lord. Sell all. Be Generous. Be compassionate.

True faith refuses easy answers and quick fixes. True faith pulverizes falsehood and superficial conversions. True faith is radical openness to all. Simply saying "Yes" to the Spirit who calls us to release our life back to our True Source—back to God with no fears or reservations. That is freedom.

No faking if we want the real thing. Jesus is calling us to say yes moment by moment. The good news is that if we messed up yesterday, we can jump right back on the Gospel train now and say yes again. Pretty simple.

Back to Jesus and the man. What holds you and me back from freely living a life of faith in communion with our neighbor and all of God's creation? Jesus calls us to let go of it and to keep learning freedom in generosity. Freedom, community, eternity. This is the Good News. Thanks be to God.