

**28 OTB.18;** Wisdom 7:7-11; Hebs 4:12-13; Mark 10:17-30; ***Learning to be Human.***

Not so long ago, I saw a little Peanuts cartoon that offered a surprising bit of insight into the human condition. Linus is philosophizing with Lucy.

**“Life is peculiar,” he says.**

“Wouldn’t you like to have your life to live over, if you knew what you know now?” **Lucy stares out blankly and then asks, “What do I know now?”**

*(Sunday Mornings, Clark, 28 OTB)*

**Good question!**

I think we have all been there: **“If only I had known then, what I know now.”**

**Yet**, after all this living what do we know now? What have we learned about life?

**Here are some things real people have learned:**

I’ve learned that when I wave to people in the country,

they stop what they are doing and wave back. – age 9

**I’ve learned that if you laugh and drink soda pop at the same time,**

**...it will come out your nose. –age 7**

I’ve learned that if you want to cheer yourself up,

you should try to cheer someone else up. – age 14

**I’ve learned that if someone says something unkind about me,**

**... I must live so that no one will believe it. – age 39**

I’ve learned that regardless of color or age,

...we all need about the same amount of love. – age 37

I’ve learned that no matter what happens, or how bad it seems today,

...life does go on, and it will be better tomorrow. –age 53

**I’ve learned that making a living is not the same as making a life. –age 58**

I’ve learned that successful living is like playing a violin,

... it must be practiced daily – age 70

**I’ve learned that even when I have pains, I don’t have to be one. –age 81**

I’ve learned that every day you should reach out & touch someone.

People love that human touch: holding hands, a warm hug,

... or just a friendly pat on the back. –age 85

I’ve learned that it doesn’t cost anything to be nice. –age 66

I’ve learned that we grow only when we push ourselves

... beyond what we already know. –age 53

**I’ve learned never to underestimate the potential of the human spirit. –age 82**

*(Things I Have Learned About Life, source: unk)*

Hear again the gospel question,

**“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”**

I suspect that most of us are like ***the rich young man*** in the Gospel: gradually we’ve learned that *living by the rules*, and following the commandments,

... makes sense - don’t lie, cheat, or steal; don’t murder; and so on.

**2** We’ve learned that the alternative to living by those rules **is chaos** or as the British philosopher put it, *“the war of all against all,”* perpetual fear, daring to trust no one, being always on guard, never relaxing, hoarding all possessions.

**That’s a living nightmare.**

So most of the time we work fairly hard at *living by the rules* like the young man today:

***Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth.*** And when we succeed, everybody

wins. So *living by the rules* **is a giant step in the right direction**, but as Jesus explained to the young man, it’s not enough! Staying out of trouble and causing no one any harm are

very good things, but it doesn't take us to the core of life. **It brings us to the doorstep, but it does not take us ... inside.**

As Jesus keeps telling us, if we want our lives to be happy and fulfilling right now, we have to think big: ***"You are lacking in one thing. Go and sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."*** Imagine the shock the young man felt. Jesus knocks the wind out of his sails! Jesus is calling him (and us) to trust more deeply, to sacrifice and be transformed. Jesus did this himself. He is on the road to Jerusalem, never to return.

His own commitment to us was probably very much on his mind

... and that prompted *this invitation*. And here we have it.

We have to think *like God*, and that starts with knowing ourselves and our gifts very well, and then asking, **"Who needs the gifts I have to give,**

**... and what's the best way to bring my gifts to them?"**

Now we know from experience, that when we let go and think big and start seeing ourselves realistically as *God's gift bearers*, real joy comes:

we know we're needed, we know we've got a purpose, we know inside

... what it means *to be made in* ... the image and likeness of God.

Thomas Merton put it this way, *"To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is MY name."*

**So why do we pull back so often?**

The reason, and the barrier to all the joy we ought to have is ... **fear**: fear that I may have no gift to share, fear that my gift is not needed, fear that in sharing my gift I will lose it & have nothing left for myself. Those fears are very real & often very powerful inside us, but they are lies that needlessly stifle and shrink our spirits

**... and cut us off from the best parts of our lives.**

***At this Liturgy of God's Reality***, Jesus is calling us to let him stretch our hearts and minds, telling us to be good camels, reshaping us for what is to come. He's inviting us to *redefine ourselves* from the inside out and to remember that, like Jesus himself, we are God's gift bearers. **My friends, the time has come to learn**

**... and to step into who we are destined to be: God's own love & truly Human.**

**Life is that peculiar!**