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Grace and Holy Trinity Church  
October 14, 2018

**Mark 10:17-31**

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I come from a rich family. We are not wealthy, by any stretch of the imagination, but we are rich. I knew and loved all of my grandparents, I lost my paternal grandfather when I was 16 years old, but my maternal grandfather, Tobacco Jack, at 92 years young just danced at my sister's wedding last weekend. I can tell stories for days—there are so many inside jokes and even a family theme song, “American Pie” by Don Mclean. I have 20 first cousins and I know all of their names and most of their birthdays. I have almost been to more Baptisms, First Holy Communion, Confirmations, and Weddings in my immediate family than I have presided over in 6 years of ordained ministry, witnessed in 3 years of seminary and attended during 4 years in parish ministry as a parish administrator and youth ministry coordinator. I come from a rich family.

So today's Gospel message which includes the line “Look we have left everything and followed you,” is one that rings in my head often when I am wondering what on earth God may be doing in my life, and how I might best respond to God's call. In moving to Virginia, my husband Andrew and I left a lot behind. We left parents and grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers and sisters to follow the call to the priesthood, to serve the Church.

For me, this passage is especially challenging, not because I am extraordinarily wealthy, my student loans will attest to that, but because when Jesus says no one who has left \_\_\_ (fill in the blank here) \_\_\_ for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age...and in the age to come eternal life. It is what I actually believe to be the truth. It is what has brought me to The Episcopal Church, specifically to Grace and Holy Trinity Church in Richmond.

It takes a lot of faith in God's call to leave "home" and join the church, not just for ordained clergy but for all the baptized ministers of the Good News. To be a Christian means being a full member of the Body of Christ, the Church, which is more than thinking Jesus is a cool guy, who said some things that I agree with most days. Being a Christian means that in a very real sense we die to ourselves, to our families, and are born again into a new life and a community of faith that spreads the Good News through thought, word, and deed.

This past weekend I was at the wedding of my youngest sister, Michelle, to my new brother, Dusty. It was held at Christ Episcopal Church in Reading, PA. As we were on our way to the rehearsal, Andrew and I were telling our children Audrey and Owen that we were married there, and so was my sister Tracie and her husband Bryan, and so were Nana and Grandpa Randall, Andrew's mother and stepfather. Going through that litany of marriages made me think about how with each of those moments the family grew and

changed—which is true also for baptism, confirmation and holy communion. Sacraments change us, through every generation, through every stage of life, who we are changes and adapts based upon our relationships to one another.

When we are baptized as children and infants, (as many Episcopalians are) we are invited to be fully incorporated into the body of Christ at the request of our parents and sponsors.

In confirmation, reaffirmation and reception we take on those promises for ourselves and we adopt traditions which may be different than our family of origin.

In marriage, we join together individuals to form new families—bonded through the love of God and the love of one another and recognizing the growth of the community one to another.

In communion, we recognize and remember that at the center of this community is one God—in three persons—the creator, and redeemer, and sustainer of the world who was, and is, and is to come.

Through Jesus Christ we are freed from sin and death and are empowered to share freedom, justice, mercy, and peace with the world.

When Christians celebrate the sacraments together we recognize the extended reach of our family of choice. When baptized members of the communion of saints gather together, it is to expand the circle and gain glimpses of Kingdom of God.

What the Church looks like today is not what the Church looked like 100 years ago and it is not what the church will look like 100 years from now. And that is a good thing.

In 1900 when the chancel plaque was placed for William Newton Jones whose father erected this sacred space I doubt that anyone would have anticipated what who they would see standing here today: an ordained woman with two small children, pink hair, and a tattoo preaching the Good News and presiding over the Holy Table.

To be honest in 2000, when I moved to Philadelphia to attend Temple University and had stopped attending church altogether because I felt like God had killed my grandmother for no good reason, I wouldn't have believed it either.

In 2100, I imagine that God will challenge and have even more surprises in store for the Church. But that's what we sign on for in our Baptisms. We agree to be changed and to change the world.

That's what I agree to do when I call after Jesus asking how do I get eternal life, because it's not just about thinking it's a good idea. This "loving your neighbor as yourself" and loving God thing has consequences and it requires investment. To be a Christian means giving up my own desires and trusting God to do what God does best—creating a new heaven and a new earth. God asks us to sell all our possessions and leave home to do this.

I don't think any of us are in a position where we are 100% ready willing and able to do that, so I stand here with the man in today's Gospel saying, "I can't do it. I have too many worldly responsibilities, I've got kids to feed and shelter and clothe."

But what I can do is invest in this congregation and this diocese and this denomination—which I do by tithing, which the parish then also tithes to the Diocesan budget, and then invests not only in this parish but in The Episcopal Church at large. Because it is the investment in the Church which will provide a witness for all people to find a place where they can be recognized, respected, and honored as beloved children of God.

I come from a rich family. One filled with laughter and music and joy. But a long time ago—at St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church my parents and godparents invited me to abandon that family and then when I was confirmed at 13 years old at St Albans Episcopal Church I affirmed my adoption into an even richer family,

the Family of Christ. Today I stand before you as a member of the Body of Christ the Church—asking what are you giving to (my children) this child, your brothers (and sisters) in this communion of saints and their children and their children's children—how will you support them in their life in Christ?

How much is their spiritual journey worth?

This congregation has affirmed a call to support one another on our spiritual journeys. We do this through worship and music. We do this through programs for children, youth, students and young adults. We do this by feeding the hungry and breaking the cycle of poverty. We do this because we believe in following Jesus Christ and we can only do this together. Together with each other's spiritual capital as well as everyone's financial support.

I ask us to pray about it, and give generously to a church that I pray I will not recognize in 100 years.

I hope that the church will be more like the kingdom of God, recognizing the dignity of every human being and pursuing justice freedom and peace while remembering to extend the circle and grow the family of saints.

Give generously and graciously because it's not about me or you or where we come from.

It's about those who are yet to come those who are yet to be seen or imagined.

It's about the eternal life giving wealth of the love of God and about our faith in the future in the kin-dom God is creating.

That is where we will find true riches, in our family of choice, in God's beloved family an ever expanding circle of eternal love.

Amen