

(14th Sunday after Pentecost)

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Mark 10:17-31

As he **was setting out** on a journey, a man **ran up** and **knelt before** him, and **asked** him, "Good Teacher, **what must I do to inherit** eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You **know** the commandments: 'You **shall not** murder; You **shall not** commit adultery; You **shall not** steal; You **shall not** bear false witness; You **shall not** defraud; **Honor** your father and mother.'" He said to him, "Teacher, I **have kept** all these since my youth." Jesus, **looking at** him, **loved** him and said, "You **lack** one thing; **go, sell** what you own, and **give** the money **to** the poor, and you **will have** treasure in heaven; then **come, follow** me." When he **heard** this, he **was shocked** and **went away grieving**, for he **had many** possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "**How hard** it will be for those who have wealth **to enter** the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were **perplexed** at these words. But Jesus **said** to them 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 someone who is rich **to enter** the kingdom of God." They were **greatly astounded** and said to one another, "Then who **can be** saved?" Jesus **looked** at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things **are** possible."

Peter began to say to him, "Look, we **have left** everything and **followed** you." Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who **has left** house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But *many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.*"

How many of you remember watching School House Rock?

Many of us learned about our United States Government (We the People of the United States, in Order **to form** a more perfect Union, **establish** Justice, **insure** domestic Tranquility, **provide for** the common defense, **promote** the general Welfare, and **secure** the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, **do ordain** and **establish** this Constitution for the United State of America).

Many children also had their first grammar lessons via School House Rock. (Lolly, Lolly, Lolly get your adverbs here or Conjunction what's your function).

Thanks to Youtube, we can still watch School House Rock today.

I wish I had the ability to show it to you this morning, because I would have you watch both the one on Nouns (a person, place or thing) and Verbs (expresses action).

Why? Well, they would help us understand how we read and interpret Scripture a bit better.

I had not really thought about the impact of nouns and verbs on how we read Scripture until hearing the Rev. Dr. Anna Carter Florence, the Peter Marshall Professor of Preaching at Columbia Presbyterian Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, speak at this year's Washington Island Theological Forum.

Her presentations were titled: "Reading the Verbs: Finding the Script in Scripture".

She told us that as she was preparing for a sermon one day, she started paying attention to the nouns, verbs and adjectives. In doing so, she discovered that there are an equal number of nouns and verbs, which was a startling revelation to her. What she discovered was that by paying attention not just to the nouns (a person, place or thing) but to the verbs (action) the language of Scripture moves.

With that, each day she had us read a story from the Bible, paying attention to the action in the story and not just the characters.

The "nouns (a person, place or thing) in the biblical text are just so distractingly not of our world." Biblical nouns are from a "galaxy, far, far way". They are not every day encounters.

She is had a point. Who of us use Biblical nouns like: "cubits, archangels, manna and mandrakes, pharaohs and fleshpots, cherubim and Nephilim, Pharisees and Philistines, Samaritians and Syrophoenicians, let alone a sever-horned, seven-eyed, blood soaked lamb" in our every day language?

"Nouns," she says, "are the parts of speech that allow us to isolate ourselves, draw boundaries, designate an 'other', and even avert our eyes, as if we didn't want to look at what happens next."

On the other hand, "verbs are different." She suggests, "You and I share the same verbs as Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam...Mary and Joseph, Peter and Paul, and yes, even Jesus."

By focusing on the verbs, we are brought into the story in a way that makes it relevant to us today. By focusing on the verbs, we will see ourselves everywhere in the action that is taking place.

In the afternoon talk back time, Anna Carter Florence, had us up and moving, rehearsing the script that came alive through our focusing on the verbs in the text.

With that in mind, let's revisit our reader's theatre script from Mark 10:17-22.

First, let's identify the nouns (persons, places or things). Two people: A man and Jesus. Do we know the location? No, just that Jesus was about to go (verb) on a journey. There is one other noun: possessions.

Now let's focus on the verbs in this story, and how they help us read and understand what is taking place in Mark's story.

Would anyone like to help us make a list of the verbs (actions)?

Setting out (journey), ran up, knelt before, asked, do, know, shall not (5), honor, have kept, looking at, loved, lack, go, sell, give, will have, come, follow, heard, shocked, went away, (grieving), had many.

Now let me ask you, who gets these verbs?

What verbs are Jesus'? Setting out, said to, know, shall not, looking at, loved, lack, go, sell, give to, will have, come, and follow.

What verbs are the man's? Ran up, knelt before, asked, what must (I) do, inherit, have kept, heard, shocked, went away grieving (adjective).

Thinking about the verbs, how are Jesus' verbs different from the man's?

Did any surprise you? Why did they surprise you? What were you expecting?

As I read through this text, the verbs that jumped out at me were "what must I do, lack, go, sell all, give to, come, follow, went away (grieving), had many."

What about you? Okay, this is new to you, as it was to me. And it helped me to begin to read and reflect on the scripture stories in some new ways.

As followers of Jesus, our lives really are "verbs" - going forth, sending, flowing, dancing, moving, filled with, empty of, giving, sharing, receiving, forgiving, reconciling, compassionate towards, reaching out, touching, healing, praising, blessing, following, living and loving (God and others).

I wonder if we pay attention to the "verbs" as we insert them into our own everyday faith story, how our relationship with God and others who we encounter would change?

Go! Do! Give! Come! Follow Jesus!