

**So Little Time, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 19091011**  
**Hebrews 4:12-16 and Mark 10:17-30**  
**Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 11 October, 2009**

As the time nears to conclude my ministry here, I realize how little time there is left. There are so many things I want to accomplish yet. I want to prepare a manual for the trustees and others who need to know how to do so many of the things I have been doing around the building, like setting the time on the carillon, turning switches on and off in the changeover from cooling season to heating season, and the wiring for the local area computer network and telephones. I want to share the details for planning special worship services like the Nine Lessons and Carols and the Easter procession.

There is so little time, and my time was made even shorter this past week as I suffered debilitating health issues that kept me close to home. There is so little time, and there are so many things to do as the minister of a church. I concern myself with newsletter articles, e-mail communications, counseling, worship planning, and preparation of sermons. Yet, at the end of a week I can say, I still haven't called on so-and-so. I still haven't read that book. I still haven't written those cards.

This is my second to last sermon at Elon Community Church, and I want to make sure that all the members of this church know in their hearts what is most important to believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Six and one half years have gone by so quickly. There is so little time, and what do we have to show for it? Our lives are so short and what do we have to show for them?

Mark tells the very poignant story of the exchange between a wealthy young man and Jesus. The man was hard-working and energetic. He must have been a good salesperson, because he knew how to establish good relationships. In his eyes and in the eyes of those around him, he was a success. He was a good man, because he earnestly followed God's commandments. He was concerned about the time he had left in this life. We can tell that because he *ran* up to Jesus and knelt before him. He wanted more time to accomplish his goals. For him, life was too short. He wanted to inherit eternal life.

There was definitely a bond, a respect between the man and Jesus. We are touched as we hear that Jesus, looking at him, *loved* him. That is an unusual statement regarding Jesus. No where else in the synoptic gospels is it written that Jesus loved any one. In John, we hear that Jesus loved the siblings Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and one disciple in particular, but no one else. Jesus loved the rich man probably because he was so earnest. He had compassion on him because he was trying so hard.

Jesus loved him because he lacked one thing. Success, you see, is measured by God. Jesus indicated that wealth gets in the way of our being part of God's kingdom. He said, "You lack one thing: sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."<sup>1</sup>

Suddenly, as I was reading this, I remembered that we have not planned a stewardship drive for this church for next year. There is so little time! This will have to be a stewardship sermon also! I could say, I don't need to worry about next year's giving, because I won't be here. Why should I care? But I do care. This congregation is important in this community. It represents a voice of reason, of welcome, of open dialogue, of being able to question the Bible and faith and

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<sup>1</sup>Mark 10:21

ultimately grow closer to one another and to God. This church is an important alternative to most of those in Elon and Burlington. It exists in this community because of the love and commitment that you share. It will continue only if God's kingdom matters more to you than your monetary wealth. Give a tithe, ten percent of your income, to support its important mission and ministries. We will dedicate our pledges to the 2010 year on Sunday, Nov. 8. There! That's the stewardship sermon.

But, no, it is all a stewardship sermon. Our lives as followers of Jesus are all about stewardship. We must deal with the stewardship of our time, for our lives are too soon over. Our relationships with one another end all too quickly. And yes, the polar ice caps are melting quickly, and we are still spewing coal ash out of our power plants and carbon monoxide out of our tail pipes all in the name of unregulated free market capitalism. We must deal with the stewardship of our planet. We must deal with the fact that people are more important than possessions, and that community is more important than rugged individualism.

The rich young man was shocked and went away from Jesus grieving, for he had many possessions. We all have many possessions. But, the love of our possessions has to be weighed against inclusion in the kingdom of God. "Sell what you own, and give the money to the poor..." That sounds like socialism.

And who is it that is decrying socialism so loudly today? Are they followers of Jesus Christ? Have they not heard this scripture? If so, how do they explain it away?

"Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing;'"<sup>2</sup> Jesus cared about the man's eternal life and knew it was connected to his temporal life. Where are our hearts here and now? Jesus loves you and Jesus cares about where your heart is. By telling the man that he was to give his money to the poor, Jesus was saying that he wanted to connect him with the other members of God's family.

The man was rich and yet, he was needy, and he knew of his need, because he ran to Jesus. The treasure he needed and hungered for is the one thing that matters most, the one thing that is secure in this life: God's grace.

As Paul Waddell wrote, "The young man may go away grieving, but he does not go away empty-handed. He finds what he is looking for— knowledge that leads to eternal life— and although he walks away sad, he does not walk away without hope. Who knows what may happen when he spends few days at home mulling over what Jesus has said? After all, as Jesus tells his astonished disciples, 'for God, all things are possible.'"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Mark 10:21

<sup>3</sup>Paul Waddell, "Living by the Word" *The Christian Century*, October 6, 2009, page 18