

**LET GO**  
Randall Tremba  
October 11, 2015  
28th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church

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A reading from the gospel according to Mark although it may sound like the gospel according to Bernie Sanders.

**Mark 10:17-31**

*Once upon a time a rich man ran up and knelt before Jesus. "Good Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus looked 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."*

Last Sunday evening this place was full from the front pew to the back of the balcony, from one side to the other. Many of us and many of our friends gathered for PeaceFest, held every year in the spirit of St. Francis and this year in honor of our late, dear friend Greg Lloyd.

Last Sunday night, with tears and smiles, sorrow and joy, we echoed Greg's passion for peace and justice. That night the Peace of Christ soothed many a broken heart. It was a moment of deep and abiding grace. And you can breathe in that grace this morning.

PeaceFest began with a bang. It began good and loud over the new sound system officially dedicated that night in Greg's memory. It began with the house band belting out what some of us consider Greg's personal anthem. It wasn't his favorite song. But whenever he sang it that little dude's soul caught on fire.

*As I walk on through this wicked world,  
Searching for light in the darkness of insanity,  
I ask myself,  
Is all hope lost?  
Is there only pain, and hatred, and misery?  
And each time I feel like this inside,  
There's one thing I wanna know,  
What's so funny 'bout peace, love, and understanding?*

Greg died on November 13, just 12 days after last year's PeaceFest on November 1. It was a PeaceFest Greg helped shape and one song in particular that night was to be his song.

He rehearsed that song with the band that afternoon and nearly collapsed. He went home to rest, but it wasn't enough. He just couldn't get up and get back here that night to raise his voice for justice one more time.

But that night last year this place was packed. Standing room only. The word was out. Many had come knowing it would be Greg's last public performance.

And that night, though absent, Greg was here more than ever. His spirit and music filled the air. That night his song was sung and it was sung again last Sunday night.

*I hear the crying of the hungry  
In the deserts where they're wandering  
I hear them all. I hear them all.  
I hear them all.*

And then came this sing-along refrain  
*This land is your land this land is my land*  
*From California to the New York island*  
*From the redwood forest*  
*To the gulf streams waters*  
*This land was made for you and me.*

At the beginning of the summer of 2014, Greg was seething about economic inequality in this country. He was hot and he was bothered. At our planning sessions he kept bringing it up and bringing it up, week after week after week. But the issue seemed so enormous and pernicious that the PeaceFest planning team hardly knew where to begin to address it in practical ways. Greg would not relent.

"This land belongs to everyone," he yelled. "It belongs to all, DAMMIT. Not the few!"  
He fussed and fumed and I got frustrated.

"Greg, what do you want us to do? Start a revolution; blow up Wall Street; kill the 1%?"  
To which he replied, "That would be a good start."

And he meant it. Sort of.

Of course, he knew better. Revolution has to come out of love not hate. And I'm sure you know it's not easy loving certain kinds of people. We all may be one, but there are always a few we'd like to exclude from the circle of love and unity.

Greg would have loved today's gospel lesson. *Give away all your wealth to the poor, said Jesus to the rich man. Let it all go and then come, walk with me.*

Greg would have loved that because Jesus sounds like a socialist which Greg, I think, considered just another name for Christian. Of course, labeling Jesus with modern categories is silly. Jesus was a first century Jewish rabbi, a prophet and a mystic—not a Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Socialist, liberal or conservative.

Jesus' admonition in this case was to a specific person for whom wealth had become an obstacle. *How can I inherit eternal life*, asked the man, meaning in part, how can I experience the eternal, that is to say, the divine quality of life or union with the divine, oneness with the One. I want to be completely happy and blessed.

Well, said Jesus, live right. Walk the path of righteousness and goodness. Don't murder. Don't cheat. Don't lie. Honor your parents. That's the way.

I've done all that but I still don't feel at peace, said the rich man. I don't feel at one with the Eternal. I want more.

Jesus looked at him and the lesson says: Jesus loved him. He did not despise him. He loved him. He had compassion for him.

Yes, he was rich, maybe filthy rich, maybe part of the 1%. But Jesus loved him because Jesus knows that all people suffer. Not just the poor. Not just the sick and starving.

And Jesus knows if all you're doing is looking out for yourself, trying to get yourself saved, trying to get yourself to heaven, then you're suffering too. You're already in hell.

It wasn't the riches that were killing the man. It was his blind obsession with looking out for himself to the neglect of others. *What can I do to inherit eternal life for myself?*

Let go of your anxiety, says Jesus. Let go of your quest to have it all for yourself. Let go of your quest for security, comfort, power, privilege, innocence, certainty, respect, fame

and righteousness. Let go of your yearning to be guilt-free, to be right, to be perfect, pious, whole and holy. Stop being religious like that.

Let go of meditation, medication, fitness and diets. Let go of yoga. Let go of breathing in and breathing out. Let go of Buddha, Jesus, Hare Krishna and Fox News.

Let go and let love have its way with you.

Let go and let love show you the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, the broken, the wounded, the lonely and the oppressed in your world and then, as the gospel lesson concludes: and then you will have countless brothers and sisters, mothers and children, houses and fields—a whole new community—along with, if we must be honest—along with criticism, resistance and persecution. But so what? It's not about you anyway.

Let go and let love have its way and you will experience heaven on earth. Love is your inheritance. Let go of everything else and you'll have everything and more.

It's not riches that prevent us from living. It's living only for ourselves that prevents us from living.

This conversation with Jesus is not merely in the past. It's not just a Bible story. If you listen carefully the Beloved may be speaking to you even now, inviting you to let go of your anxiety to be saved, your quest to have it all for yourself. Let go and let love has its way.

There are two more things to be said. This particular rich man looking for a way to have it all could stand for a wealthy church doing everything right except the one thing that will save it.

And this particular rich man looking for a way to have it all could stand for a wealthy nation doing everything right except the one thing that will save it.

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HYMN  
When the Poor Ones