

This message is based on the story of the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-31. Ed Kruse (ELCA Director for Stewardship, Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission) applies the story in a meaningful way.

GOD WANTS YOUR CAR KEYS

Mark 10:17-31, Matthew and Luke also

A rich young man ran up to Jesus and wanted to put in an application to be a follower of Christ. He asked, "What do I need to do to have eternal life?" Jesus answered, "You know." The rich young man recited the commandments, plus, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and with your entire mind," and, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus says, "Good answer. Standing ovation. Do that."

The rich young man retorts, "I think I have done that ever since I was a kid. I give ten percent of my gross income. I worship regularly. I study the Bible and pray often." Jesus doesn't not put him down,, "Good job!" Then, like Columbo, (with a smile?), "Just one more thing – go sell everything you have and give it away." That was more than the rich young man could take, the Bible says, because he had "many possessions," or "much goods." That's a way of saying he had a good income, a nice house, stock portfolio, retirement plan, maybe even a pension. What happened? The rich young man went away! That was asking too much, he felt. As far as we know, he never came back to Jesus the rest of his life. His "stuff" got in the way.

Now, if I had experienced what that rich young man did, I might have responded something like this, "Jesus, I heard what you said to that rich young man about selling what I have and giving it to the poor." As I pull out my checkbook and ball point pen, I ask Jesus, "To whom should I make out the check?" Jesus says, "Ed, that won't be necessary. Just give me your checkbook."

"You want my whole checkbook?" With a deep love in his eyes, Jesus responds, "I care about how you use all your money, not just the ten percent, more or less, that you put in the offering plate." Then Jesus asks, "Do you have anything else in your pocket?"

"I've got some cash," I nervously fish around. Jesus holds out His hand. I lay the cash on him and Jesus asks, "What's that plastic?" I say, "That's a credit card." Jesus asks in mock surprise, "You've got a credit card?"

I explain, "That's what I depend on when someone just got my cash and checkbook." Jesus looks again and asks, "What's that card with your picture on it?" "That's my driver's license." Jesus asks in mock surprise again, "You've got a driver's license?"

I say, "Yes, it's required if I am going to drive my car." Jesus asks with more enthusiasm, "You have a car?" I get my keys from my pocket and begin to take one off, "I guess I won't need this any more." Jesus asks, "What's that other key?" Now I know I'm in trouble. I say, "That's my house key." Jesus asks enthusiastically, "You've got a house?"

I say, "Wait till my wife finds out about this." You can guess what Jesus asked. That's right, "You've got a wife?"

I say to Jesus, "You win. I'm yours, with all my heart. What else do you want?" Then an amazing thing happens. Jesus says, "That's all I wanted all along, your heart. So take your house key back. Just let me live there with you. Treat your wife like she belongs to me instead of to you. Here's your car key. Just drive with me in the passenger seat... and please slow down. Here is your money and credit card. I have a whole lot more of all this to give you. I want to bless you even more. All I want is for you to use it all to my Father's glory and to build up my body, the Church.

I finally start to get it. Everything I have is God's. It's all on loan to give glory to God and to build up the body of Christ. And I realize one other thing. Even if I gave all my stuff to God, it wouldn't be nearly as much as Jesus gave me when he laid down his life for my sins and gave me new life in all its fullness and even everlasting life. What else can I do but live in gratitude for all God gives me and grow all life-long in giving generously as God has given to me?

– Adapted from Jeff Black, by Ed Kruse, November 2005