

## *One Thing We Lack*

*Amos 5:6-7, 10-15; Mark 10:17-31*

Amos suggests that the prudent will keep silent. Ha! I don't know what that says about us...

We'll keep silent in this time. He's very specific about the time, not that it helps me much in this moment. Because when the prudent will keep silent is the time when the righteous are afflicted, when there are those who will take a bribe, when we push aside the needy at the gate. The time when we have bins full of grain and put levies on the poor. Well, Happy Thanksgiving, everybody. This supposedly is the day where we all come together to give thanks for all that we have, with which we have been blessed. And we know that we have been blessed with an abundance. And there's a certain movement among us to be generous. To share that abundance. To have an attitude of gratitude which means that it will all flow somehow through and out of us.

And then we get drawn up with the rich young ruler who comes to Jesus saying, "But master, I've done all that. I've followed every one of the commandments to the letter, so to speak. I've dedicated my life to the church, so to speak." And still, you can almost hear in him, you can almost hear his pleading as if he is well aware that someplace inside of him, he knows that something's missing. Otherwise, why would he be there? Why, if he's done everything that he knows his faith has called upon him to do. Why does he show up in front of Jesus and say, "What must I do to get into the kingdom?" Because one would assume he already had all that figured out. Somewhere deep in the soul of that man, there was a hole that he didn't know what to do about. And so he came to Jesus with the question. And Jesus, in true Jesus form, says, "Well, what did you come to me for? Why do you call me good? There's nobody that's good but God alone. And you know the commandments." The young man, not to be deterred, simply says, "Teacher, I've done all this. I've done all this." I almost have a sense of a kind of despair in him. "I just, I did it. Now what?" And Jesus says, there's one thing you lack. There's one thing you lack...

Well, don't look at me as if I'm going to tell you the one thing. I mean, Jesus doesn't, so...not on me! One thing. And I think we all have to figure it out. There is a movie, Billy Crystal was in it. City Slickers. He goes off, he has this mid-life crisis. Some of you don't know anything about that. It's okay, it's coming. And he takes off and he goes off on a cattle drive, and he meets up with a wise old cowboy, who's really kind of a pain in the butt. But that's okay. He takes the wisdom he can from him. And he says, "Life comes down to just one thing." And Billy Crystal says, "And that is...?" There's no answer. 47. Yeah, it's always 47. Mine's 186. At the end of the movie, after

he's done a whole lot of things that he never thought he could. He arrives back home and says to his buddies, "You know, he was right. Life does come down to just one thing." And his buddies: "Yeah?" And he says, "It's just one thing." And that's it. That's all we get.

Somewhere in the midst of it all, as we journey through our life, each of us discovers for ourselves what that one thing might be. And it will not be the same for everyone. This scripture, that movie, many encounters we have in our life, remind us that there is a single-minded kind of purpose for which each of us is here and it's different for all of us. For the rich young ruler – well, we could go through a list. Karen asked me on Tuesday, "So what's the one thing, Sally?" And I went through about five, and I don't remember them all now. But I know that trust was one. I know that, for me, justice-seeking and justice-making is one. I know that many of us would say the one thing we lack is faith. The rich young ruler, the one thing that he lacked was the ability to let it all go. To have tremendous abundance, overwhelming wealth, and still give it all away. A suggestion of the wise one. The suggestion of Jesus was to take it all and give it away and then see, then see how you feel. He's not talking about downsizing. He's not talking about how you take the sixteen pairs of pants that you haven't worn 'cause they're too big – well, okay, too small – and giving them to Goodwill. Jesus was talking about emptying your bank account, your stocks and bonds, selling the farm or the house or the business, just spreading it around. I haven't been able to get there. I don't know if I've met anyone who's been able to get there. But I've read stories. I've read stories about people who just kind of had had it with carrying all of this around on them like a burden and they just give it away. And the kind of release and gratitude and sense of new life that they feel is one that I have often aspired to but never quite had the courage. So maybe the one thing isn't faith; it's courage. It's courage to live that faith that we said we have. Whatever the one thing, on this day of Thanksgiving, we have had an opportunity to look at a number thus far of things for which we're thankful. And we might take a moment in the day ahead to think of the one thing for which we have been particularly gifted, and for which we give immense gratitude. Amen.