BUSTED!
Sermon series: “Dear and Glorious Physician Stories”
Luke 18: 18-27
The Church of the Covenant

The Great Physician is also the Great Diagnostician. Jesus knows immediately what is up with someone; what their issues are; what’s ailing them; what’s keeping them from a close encounter with God. Great doctors are great diagnosticians; mine is. He can pretty much look at me and know what ails me. Sure, he takes my temperature and looks at my throat with a stethoscope. But I really think he figures me out in about the first ten seconds. That’s because doctors have a lot of practice looking at people and figuring out what’s wrong with them. Same with Jesus. Except Jesus also has the advantage of being the Son of God into whose ear the Holy Spirit whispers. He knows that when the Spirit leads Him to have a conversation with someone that God is up to something greater than the conversation itself. This is a sermon series on “Dear and Glorious Physician Stories”, from the perspective of the Gospel writer Luke who was himself a doctor. When I am visiting someone in the hospital sometimes I will say, “I’m not a doctor but I play one on television.” Or sometimes I will say, “I’m not a medical doctor; I’m a SOUL doctor!”. Jesus is the greatest SOUL doctor ever!

So the rich young ruler in our scripture story comes up to the Great Physician, Jesus Christ. He has an appointment with destiny but he probably doesn’t know that quite yet. He has come to ask a simple question; he is about to have his heart and soul diagnosed by the Great Diagnostician. The Bible is filled with stories of Jesus’ encounters with people and how instantaneously the Lord knows them better than they know themselves. So Jesus has an encounter with a rich young man. The young man comes asking a question: “What thing must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18:18) If we were to hold up the story as it is recorded in Luke versus that as recorded in Matthew what would the differences be? As a doctor, why does Luke pick up on certain details and Matthew does not? Why does Matthew record it with differences that Luke does not? Matthew has a concern for the law, so there is much greater detail and banter about “goodness” and “keeping the commandments” in Matthew’s version than in Luke’s (c.f. Matthew. Luke is a doctor and a Hellenized Jew, which is to say that he is more Greek than he is Jewish. The listing of the commandments slightly differs in order: Matthew lists murder first; Luke lists adultery; both of them list only commandments from the second tablet of the law, those which pertain to our relationship with others. Both avoid the first tablet of the law that is focused on our relationship with God. Doctor Luke isn’t about banter, he is into diagnosing why the rich young ruler REALLY came to speak to him that day. Matthew focuses in on the word “perfect” whereas Luke, forever the doctor, rivets Jesus’ attention on the sickness in the young man’s soul. Slightly different perspectives from different Gospel writers. But all ultimately with the same point.

So Jesus cuts to the essence of the matter; he drills deeply into the heart of the rich young man. Like a skilled physician armed with a sharpened scalpel he is about to do open heart surgery there on the dusty road. It is clear the young man is in denial. He says rather glibly, “All these (commandments) I have kept from my youth.” (v. 21) No, Jesus, I’m not an adulterer, nor a
murderer, I have never stolen, I don’t bear false witness about folks and talk about them in the Commons Area after church. I’ve always sought to honor my Father and Mother, like every adolescent does. You can almost see Jesus thinking, “O REALLY??????” Now the first commandment of the Ten Commandments is that “you shall have no other gods before me”, saith the Lord. (Exodus 20: 4) So you’re saying, rich young man, you have no issues with the commandments and your relationship with God is perfect? No problema. You’re leading a pretty good life, you think; you’re basically a good person. You got this all figured out. You already know how to get into heaven and you’re going to get into heaven by being a basically good person. “O REALLY?” You’re not sick at all. You’re not into denial. You’re seeing reality exactly as it is. You are seeing yourself exactly as the Lord God sees you. “You got this.” You don’t need me, thinks Jesus. You don’t need to follow me. Why did you even bother to come to me to ask the question if you already knew the answer? If you’re not sick then you don’t need a doctor. If you’re got this religion stuff all figured out you don’t need a Lord. If you can cure yourself, young man, you don’t need the Great Physician, do you? Oh, by the way, Jesus is talking to all of us.

So the Great Physician says to the rich young man –“If you’ve got no problem with the Ten Commandments then the first one ought to be easy-peasy. “You shall have no other gods before me.” So I diagnose that the root of your spiritual problem and the way you will inherit eternal life is to give up all the idols in your life, renounce idolatry most foul, chuck everything you own and that you REALLY WORSHIP in your life and come and follow me. Cast the idols down in your life, says Jesus, and come and follow me and that’s how you get to heaven. O Jesus, I guess I do have a problem. And I’m really sorry, Lord, but I won’t give up the idols I worship in my life. No, if that’s the price I can’t come and follow you. Now I do not believe Jesus is raising up some new rule and legalism that you have to give away everything in order to follow Him. I think he was trying to point out to the young man that the young man really was sick, and really did need a physician, and to inherit eternal life you have to let the Great Physician into your life and heart and readjust your priorities and things you really worship in life. Following Jesus gets you to heaven.

Friends, please get out your cell phones and hold them up. None of you have any problems with idolatry; you all are strong Christians following Jesus, right? Then you ought to be able to chuck this cellphone and not use it for six months. Turn it off; give it up. No more Facebooking, tweeting, no more Messaging, no more emails, no more cellphone calls in the church parking lot when you’re dodging about to hit little children in your SUV. No more texting when you drive. No more checking your messages during the prayer in church meetings –focus on HIM not that text message. No problem. I don’t have a problem with idolatry. I got this God stuff all figured out. I’m a basically good person. I’m too stressed to do anything for the Lord in my life. I don’t have any time to volunteer to serve at church. Chuck your cellphone and stop worshipping it and it will free up hours every day that you can use to follow Jesus. And you’re going to be a great deal less stressed; pray more and have peace; give up texting and give up stress. Talk to God, not your cellphone. Have a vital encounter with HIM not your Facebook Page. Unfriend everyone on Facebook, so you can experience indeed, “What a Friend we have in Jesus.” You couldn’t do it for 6 hours let along 6 months. And neither could I.
Idolatry is what we spend our time on. Idolatry is what we fill our minds and our hearts with that is not God. Idolatry is what we consume our life with in order to ease God out of the equation of life. Idolatry is what we really worship when we say we have no other gods before Jesus. It may not be your cellphone. But it may be something else. Rich young ruler, you have to be willing to give up your cellphone, whatever else you worship instead of God, and come and follow me, says Jesus. On that day in his encounter with the Great Physician, Jesus Christ, the young man got “BUSTED!” The GREAT DIAGNOSTICIAN focused in on the very thing that was needful in the young man’s life, in order to follow Jesus, in order for Jesus to lead him into eternal life. On some level we all got busted today. We all can see the places where we are in denial. And we have all figured out why we need our doctor Jesus, desperately, every day, an appointment every day, we need to follow HIM! Only the Great Physician can heal us of our idolatry. The young man turned away that day and refused to follow Jesus. How sad. Will you? Amen and Amen.

By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg

IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!