

*17As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 18Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’” 20He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” 21Jesus, looking 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.” 22When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.*

*23Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” 24And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” 26They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” 27Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”*

*28Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” 29Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”*

The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus’ word cut him open. Just a word and what had been hidden from everyone – even himself – suddenly was visible to all. “You lack one thing; go, sell what you have own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven and come, follow me.” When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Only seconds before he was asking a question he thought he knew the answer to. “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He was on his knees when he asked this question, kneeling before Jesus. Try talking to someone from you knees – you will be looking up as children look up. All the power will belong to the one above. Jesus said, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.” How strange a response from

Jesus – we believe Jesus is good; Jesus is the Son of God. But Jesus seems to be saying that buttering up Jesus will not get you there.

Jesus continued: “You know the commandments: You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not defraud, honor your father and your mother.”

“Teacher, I have kept all of these from my youth,” he responded. Now here was a man who was listening. Obeying. No longer did he call Jesus good as he had at first. And he was listening to God, keeping God’s commandments each day.

Surely Jesus’ next words would be: Well done, good and faithful servant.

But instead Jesus spoke the word that showed what this man loved most, trusted most, needed most. “Sell what you have, give the money to the poor, and come follow me.” And the man was shocked and went away grieving.

There is a detail in this story that no observer could have seen. Mark tells us that Jesus loved this man. Mark never tells us this about anyone else. Right before Jesus spoke the word that cut him open, Mark tells us that Jesus looked at this man and loved him.

When Jesus looks at you in love, what word does he speak? Does he say, “It is all right that you put other things before me? It is all right that when I command you to forgive you hold grudges? It is all right when you let your mind wander in worship? It is all right with me that you would measure yourself and your neighbors by how much wealth you have – possessions, clothing, cars? It is all right with me that you are too busy to take time for prayer, too lazy to read God’s word, so in the habit of fearing and worrying that there is no space for faith? Is that what Jesus says when he looks at you in love?

Or does he say, “:Come, follow me - take up your cross and follow me?” Is Jesus content when you just drift through life? No. Jesus wants the very best for you – that he would be your life, your hope, your all.

There was nothing wrong with that man who came to Jesus. He was a good man. He got his wealth in honest ways for he told Jesus he kept the commandments. But Jesus wanted more for him.

Is Jesus finished working on you? Sometimes when we talk about forgiveness and grace it may seem so. Jesus took care of everything. He must be happy with us.

But when Jesus looks at you in love, is there joy in his heart over what he sees? If his word to cut you open this day, would faith and hope and joy in Christ be revealed? Or something else.

I know this: If there is something that is keeping you from following Jesus, it must go. Jesus word to that rich man was not a test – Jesus' word was love. As long as his arms were all wrapped around his wealth, there was no room in his arms for Jesus and for the people Jesus would bring to him. As long as his hands were clinging to stuff they were not free for Jesus to use. As long as his heart was hoping in what he owned, there would be no room in his heart for trusting the one who owned him.

Dare you trust the one who let go of everything for you – not just possessions and wealth but life itself for you? Dare you trust the one who loved you more than his own life, who endured cross and grave for you? Dare you trust the one whom God made rich beyond all imagining – giving him the life that no money can buy?

He knows you, knows you better than you know yourself. He knows you as well as he knew that man who came to him. Today he calls to you: Come follow me. You will never be sorry when you do.