

Jesus Gives More!

Michael J. Nielsen / General

Stewardship; Law; Jesus / Mark 10:17–22

That the hearers would be comforted to know that Jesus Gives them more than they could ever imagine!

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

What's in it for me? That's a question that we toss around in our minds and even out of our mouths and various points in our lives. It seems like that is where we are today in Gospel reading. Mark continues his account of Jesus' journey to the cross and we meet this man:

I was running to the teacher! I knew what I wanted to ask him. I wanted to know if I was doing everything right. I get to the Good Teacher, winded, kneeling before him in a token of humility and appreciation of what he would tell me...or what I thought he would tell me, I asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" I was looking for some sage advice from this wise teacher...this good teacher. I thought for a moment that he was giving me what I wanted to hear. He said to me, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." Let's pause for a moment...obviously now that I know what happened, Jesus was trying to tell me something here, but I didn't get it. He continued: "You know the commandment: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness against your neighbor, Do not defraud, Honor your Father and Mother.'" In my mind I was thinking...not haven't killed anyone, haven't stolen anything, the only person I have ever slept with is my wife, I haven't spread false rumors about anyone else. I haven't defrauded anyone...and I obey my parents." So I told Jesus: "Teacher, all this I have done from my youth!" I've done it all. Good I'm in!

As I'm riding high on what Jesus just told me, he comes back and he looks at me. I'll never forget that look. His face was stern. His face though was full of love. He looked me in the eyes and said, "You lack one thing...(and I'm thinking what is it?) go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me." I knew my wealth. There was no way I was parting with that. Give everything away.

I left...downtrodden, disheartened, and very sorrowful. The law struck me. The one thing that I didn't get is that God is good. Jesus demanded more of me than I ever expected, and I wasn't willing to give it up. I wasn't ready for the diagnosis of my heart. It was painful.

What's in it for me? We want to think Jesus has something for me. Something that reassures me of Jesus and life. But something that I can do! In this account of the rich young man, Jesus uses the law for the individual to his needs. He's not telling each and everything Christian to go out and sell all that he has and give it away. He's not calling you to live a life of poverty.

This text is usually a good stewardship text. Yes, it does talk about money and possessions, but yet Jesus isn't teaching about money and possession, he's teaching about the heart. He is individualizing the law for this man. This man, the thing that is in the place of God is his money and possessions. That's his idol. That prevents him from fearing, loving, and trusting in the Good Teacher above all things! The Law that Jesus preached to him crashed into the darkest part of his heart.

The thing is the same thing happens to us. Have you ever been reading the scriptures or sitting in church and thinking that no one knows about the sins that lie in your heart, that you are well aware of and then boom, you here it...that one sin... "How did Pastor know I was struggling with this?" You might think.

It's clear though, it's not me that knows your heart, it's God! He even says through the prophet Amos:

English Standard Version Chapter 5

12 For I know how many are your transgressions
and how great are your sins—
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,
and turn aside the needy in the gate.

Nothing escapes God! He knows your deepest and darkest secrets. He knows what lies in your heart! He knows more than even you do!

Perhaps you are someone that does community service, maybe you serve in the school or on the boosters or on church leadership or volunteer some other way. Perhaps you would love to have Jesus affirm that behavior. Instead of affirming your willingness to help, he says to you out of love, "You lack one thing, stop talking about others behind their backs, stop holding the grudge you have had for 10 years, I know what's in your heart, the gossip and hate that you speak...you aren't building up the community, you are actually hurting it!"

You've been faithful to your spouse and family...we wish Jesus would affirm us of that! Yes, Good job...yet, he knows what's brewing in your heart. He knows! So he tells you out of love, "You lack one thing, you've been spending secret time on the internet looking at images and reading things that you shouldn't be. You aren't as faithful as you think. I know what's in your heart, you really destroying your family from the inside of your heart."

You've been blessed...each of you has been blessed with the many good gifts of life. We wish Jesus would give us those gifts and then let us use them as we please. Yet he looks at you in love and says, "You lack one thing, you haven't thanked me for your blessings. You live as if I did not matter in your life. You aren't grateful. You live as if you are God and I am not!"

Jesus slices with the law. And that law hurts. You saw the rich man walk away from Jesus downtrodden. Yet as Jesus slices with the law...he's coming in with even more. He's coming in right after to bind up the bloodiness of sin. You see he doesn't want to enlighten your life. He wants to save it. He wanted to save the Rich Young Man. Do we ever know what happened to him? No!

We know about us. We know the law will always demand more of us! Thanks be to God Jesus Christ gives immensely more than you can imagine! He gives you his love!

Despite our human arrogance thinking we can assume success based on the law, Jesus takes the burden of the law upon himself. He does this because the demands of the law are far more than our own ability.

Jesus loved this rich young man, and he loves you too. That's why he looks at you in love. Jesus was hoping to be more than just a wise teacher to him...that's why He said, God alone is good. He is saying, I am God. I am good. Jesus is on a journey Mark tells us and his journey is going to take him to the cross. Jesus is willing to take the burden off this young man, but he doesn't see it.

In Mark, Jesus is on the journey to the cross...he's already predicted his death twice and once more is coming. At the cross of Jesus, we see the demands of the law. Give up everything for Jesus. And the thing is the rich young man couldn't and neither can we. We aren't able to do it. Jesus is able and he did it. He gave up everything up you...including his very life! He gave up his life for you on the cross on Calvary's Holy Mountain!

He gave up his life for you so that He could take it up again. And in His own resurrection, He gives to you superabundant life!

So also today, Jesus still comes to you with life! He looks at you in love today! He comes to you with grace to heal the wounds caused by the law cutting at your sin. He comes with water to cleanse the wounds to wash them of the dirt and grime of sins. He comes to you through Body and Blood, in, with, and under the Bread and Wine and he gives to you medicine of immortality that heals and prevents infection. He comes to you through Absolution, in words spoken to you...words of forgiveness that heal you of sins dread disease. Jesus gives you so much more in these precious healing gifts. And his grace overflows in you as you are joined to him in his death and resurrection.

It is at the cross where Jesus gives up so much more...everything, and he shows the man that he is willing to do this, because He is good, but he doesn't see it...but the thing is you do. You see

how much Jesus is willing to give up to save you. He has saved you, He is currently saving from the disease of sin and death, that entangles you and hurts you.

It's on the cross where he again looks at you in love and says, "Father, forgive them." It's out of the Empty Tomb that he looks at you in love and says, "I'm alive for you!"

And for you eternal life is a gift...you can't do anything to earn it...it's yours...it's a gift! It's more than you can ever imagine! it's more, because Jesus gives more!

In Jesus Name. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.