

## MORTALLY WOUNDED

As Jesus was setting out on his journey, a presumptuous man ran up to the front of the group,.... got in front of Jesus,.... and knelt down, blocking his way – blocking THE WAY.

He quickly asked, “**Good Teacher**, what must **I** do to **inherit** eternal life?”

A big assuming.....“I” ..... I can control my destiny..... I can get immortality.

– Inherit..... suggests a family entitlement ...and something that is NOT earned.

Obviously, Jesus is not impressed by this brash, achievement oriented man, ..... and replies in way to brush him off.

His was a banal question, and Jesus gives him a banal response, prefaced with a probing jab – a trick question. This was like a polygraph trick question that everyone lies in response to it, such as, “have you ever called in sick when you weren’t really sick?”

Jesus responds, “Why do you call me good? NO ONE is good but God alone. No ONE but God.....

Anyways,.....You know the commandments....”

*Everyone knew the commandments, they are just common sense guidelines for living.*

Jesus begins listing them, but again is interrupted by the man.

“Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth”.

I’ve done all the right things; I go to church every Sunday; I obey the rules; I contribute to charities, and my nose is clean.....

Jesus looked at him. Jesus looked at him.

Jesus looked at him,.....AND LOVED HIM!

*Arrogant, Confidence that is so far off the mark, often draws sympathy, pity and even a carrying and concerned love.*

We can only guess what Jesus was thinking.

Perhaps, he was thinking, “I hate to pop his bubble, his illusions. I’d rather Not cut him to the core, ..... but ....it is the truth he needs to hear.

The Truth Needs to be heard!!

And Jesus said, “You lack on thing– [there is only “one” thing missing]; Go Sell what you own, and give it all to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven,..... THEN, .....THEN, come FOLLOW ME.

The man was SHOCKED! .....terrified and..... **mortally stricken.**

Job 23:16 –

“God has made my heart faint; The Almighty has terrified me....”

Hebrews 4: 12 – “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow.....”

The man heard the word of God, and it hit him hard!

The word / the call ....is to let go/ to surrender.. and follow Jesus, .. and the word for this man meant letting go of **all his possessions**, and he was a very rich man,...and give it to those who DO NOT deserve it/ to those who do NOT inherit from their parents / to those who were NOT born lucky.

The word from Christ—the message that cut this man to the core— presented a complete opposite perspective to the man’s philosophy of life and his religion.

We could conclude that the rich man believed that he earned his riches, and that the poor were poor because they deserved their lot in life.

He believed he had money because he deserved it by his hard work and intelligence; however this is a common misconception.... made by those who are rich.

Malcolm Gladwell in his recent book, *Outliers*, pops that myth by proving the rich and famous were mostly lucky. They worked hard, but the poor work hard, very hard indeed.

... We the affluent desperately want to believe that we earned our lot in life, and that we can earn God’s blessings too, including a place in heaven— **immortality**.

And,..... such a pitiful and arrogant assumption is also a cruel condemnation to those who were not born into such good families, who were not so lucky, or who struggle just to get through the day.

However, to discover otherwise... is well.... to be shocked like this rich man was.

People in power, in control will do most anything to prevent change.

We the keepers of the faith, have learned to mute the Word of God / to dilute Christ’s message that can lay us low..... because who wants to be terrified as Job was and who wants to be sliced and diced by a double edged sword, as the Hebrews passage describes God’s word?

Much of popular Christianity has altered the way of Christ; we’ve formed a merit based system that has Jesus picking up the tab at the end of the day for those who bought stock in him.

Instead of following Christ, we have Christ dancing for us.

*I recently had a discussion with someone who asserted that pacifism was naive, and he noted that the Old Testament was full of citations about God supporting war.*

The Old Testament is also full of justice, peace and hospitality messages, yet most only think of the war passages, interesting; I wonder why.

*Noting the Old Testament was a theology in development, I asked him if he thought Jesus would take up a gun and shoot people.*

*He agreed that Jesus wouldn’t do such a thing, and added that we are not Jesus.*

*But, of course..... since we are not Jesus, then our path must be simplified / altered to fit our lusts and desires and limitations.*

Because:

Who wants to be in a relationship of constant failure?

Who wants to follow, but never choose the path?

Who really wants to surrender control of one’s own destiny,.... as if we ever had control?

*Pacifism is a constant choice, just as following Christ’s way.*

*I think it is much like learning a new language.*

*A student learning a new language must feel constantly ignorant and comfortable with making endless gaffes.... in order to learn new words and phrases. That the journey to acquiring a new language, and I think it is*

*similar to following Christ – each day we stumble and fall, yet get up and keep going, never knowing when it is over.*

*That experience hurts; it is painful,..... and it is especially painful for those who proclaim such a journey. It is especially painful for the messenger.....*

*So, in order to avoid the rich man's terror, we've learned to frame and worship what we call the word of God,..... we even sing about following Christ, then go home and do as we please.*

There are churches who boldly declare that they “Preach God’s word”, yet don’t even read the scripture during their worship service – puzzling.

Yet, it is understandable.... because.....Who really want to hear the word of God? Do we really want to be cut by a double edged sword?

I wonder how many churches are just shelters from the outside world?  
–Clubs of Christianity.

I wonder how many churches are merely social comfort zones, instead of being sanctuaries to worship God and centres of confrontation by the word of God where the smashing of bondage chains reverberate beyond the altar of pretense?

Mock-faith is nothing new. In the time of Jesus, the “Religious” were skilled at putting on a good show. The pompously pious were careful about following the rules and behaving in *the proper religious* fashion.

The same happens today.

It is common place; we accept it – a if a person “believes in Jesus”, joins a church, does good things, quotes the Bibles, acts pure and holy,.....then “Bingo” that person must be a good Christian.

For example, NFL Football players loudly give thanks to God, bow and pray after they score a touchdown or point to the heavens, ..... And,.... I’M NOT IMPRESSED!

If their faith is that important to merit national T.V. attention, then why are they not hearing God’s living word that told the Rich man to Go and sell all you have and give it to the poor,..... and they have millions of dollars. Flashy public prayers and showy displays of being religious should impress NO ONE!

The kingdom of God is not full of those who “STOP” Jesus on his journey and audaciously bow down in front of Christ and proclaim their virtues and holiness.

NO, the kingdom is found by letting go and following Christ!

The rich man had to sell everything he had and he was very rich, .....and he was very rich for a reason – he couldn’t let go of it.

And, Jesus’ demand shocked him. God’s call shocked him, ..... but he rejected the call and chose to go away grieving! ..... grieving, ....grieving.

Here we have the Image of HELL.

Toss away Dante’s image of Hell as a fiery Inferno.

This is a better image for Hell. It is the picture of a man refusing to follow Christ and....choosing to walk away from his salvation.

There are the flames of frustration, grief and regret as he continues, continues to walk away.

He is mortally wounded, and knows it,... and accepts it even though the answer and his redemption is before him. He is lost–doomed.

Christ is before him, and he walks another way.

\*That is Hell, knowing you could have, should have and still won't.

*Jesus' words, methodology and technique are not exactly from the text books for church growth.* He sure isn't making this easy.

Chasing people away will not fill the pews, and we are people who count numbers and are uncomfortable with empty pews.

But, I don't think that is what Jesus is about.

Perhaps, Jesus is trying to show us something? Maybe there is something to this journey of his?

Maybe there is more to life than lofty words and the accumulating security and things–wealth.

???????

Jesus could tell that his disciples were dumbfounded by the ordeal, and so he spoke to them, explaining, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.”

He goes on and uses the well known metaphor of a camel going through the eye of a needle.

What do we do with this passage, for we are wealthy?

Does it cut us to the core?

How do we assess the common acceptance that we must pursue riches, that our province should develop, extract and exploit nature, expand, get rich for the good of us all.

Will making a few people rich help everyone?

Is that what Jesus is saying?..... Or what is being said??

How can we rephrase this to make it easier?

Camel through the eye of a needle..... ???

Turning away rich people,.... boy that will hurt the offering....

This astounded the disciples even more, and they concluded, “Well then who can be saved?”

Jesus' next statement is critical for understanding.

Verse 27, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

“For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

Like it or not, we are mortals. We are made of flesh and blood, and we are destined to die. That is the way things are.

Being human means being **mortally wounded** we will die; we are dying!

Beyond youth's naivety, most of us mortals struggle with the reality of our finitude.

Too many people limit themselves to their own natural 'MORTAL' abilities striving to delay and conceal the inevitable.

So much precious time is wasted by trying to take control, by working too much for wealth and trying to avoid mortality, that the true essence of life and joy are lost.

They are the mortally wounded who are lost trying to heal themselves with their own powers.

Our own journey will lead us to hell, and some find it sooner than others.

The rich man in the story, found his hell in the shadows of Christ.

This is the time of year we pause to give thanks..... for what?

Do we thank God for what we have accumulated, for our financial security for our comfortable lives?

Or, can we thank God for what we can give away, for what we don't have holding us down and for the clear view we have of love and destiny? ??????

At first reading, this passage felt very inappropriate for homecoming Sunday and Thanksgiving.

Then I realized that this message is as appropriate as a snow covered thanksgiving..... because it is just the way it is –the truth.

Well then who can be saved?"

“For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.

We are all faced with the choice: continue as mortally wounded, doing what only we have the power to do..... or let go/ surrender and give it all away and leap to the divine.

The awakening word of God / the illumination cuts like a double edged sword because it forces us to see / to confront / to deal with the lie / the charade that we can overcome being mortally wounded.

We are not in control. We did NOT earn our station in life.

We do not deserve our comfortable life, and we can not inherit immortality.

We are helpless..... and we are going to die, ....helplessly, and accepting that truth can be very painful.

Nevertheless, we must realize, God's "living word", the message for each of us, ..... does Not cause the wound, but rather forces us to FEEL the wound, to feel our peril/ to feel our separation from God. God's message is the truth, and the truth will set us free.

God's word to you and me may NOT be to sell everything we have? Wealth may not be the tether,..... but it might be, and what if it is???

Regardless of what we desire most, each of us are challenged to let go of it, to totally let go..... of what is holding us back, of what is keeping us on the pathways of the dying, ...and preventing us from actually / honestly following the way of Christ.

And, .... there is a hook,..... the way of Christ is for the broken/ those who are last. And, good luck to the rich.

The gospel writers reveal that Jesus was not real fond of the affluent.  
His bias was toward the weak, powerless, the children... and the broken.

The hook is that our journey of following Christ begins by being mortally wounded / **by ACCEPTING the fact that we are mortally wounded.**

The rich man refused to accept that truth, so he held on to what he didn't need. He chose and lie, and went another way.

WE are all mortally wounded,..... so..... shall we take control and try to save ourselves, defying our own mortality..... or ....surrender and trust God for the next step?

It sure seems obvious, but facing this choice can be really painful.  
??? IT all comes down to is God trustworthy and what fear is controlling us.