

An Old Man's Story

The following is my response to the story told in Mark 10:17-27 of the rich man who, when he asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life, was told to give everything away.

I am an old man now. I was born into a religious and wealthy family. When I look over my life, one incident stands out more than any other. I was a young man. I had been following that Rabbi, Jesus. He was so charismatic, so exciting! And everything that He said made so much sense. More than that, He made me FEEL so peaceful and good and holy. So I asked Him "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He gave me answer that felt like it was designed to just make me go away. There was no discussion, just a Sunday School answer to follow the Ten Commandments. I wanted something more, something deeper!

He offered me nothing, literally NOTHING! "Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." How could I do that? I had been raised with wealth. Being rich was basic to who I was. Indeed, wealth defined me as a good person. (Most Rabbi's taught that the good people were rich and the sinful ones were punished by being poor.) And poor people are so...poor! Then He said the most remarkable thing. "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Not a day goes by that I do not think about those words. At first they made no sense. But over the years, I have come to have an appreciation of what the Teacher was saying. Rich people on wealth. We define ourselves by what we are fortunate enough to have. Yet that is NOT who we are. We forget that all we have is a gift from God. So, you ask, have I given away all that I have? No. I have not been able to bring myself to do that. But over time I am giving away more. There are so many needs in the world, so

many people that have not been as blessed materially as I have been. So I give more and more to the Hem, to the United Fund, and to my Synagogue. I am getting close to tithing. And the most extraordinary things have been happening since I have begun to give more to God! I seem to have enough. And, most certainly, I have a deeper relationship with God! I no longer define myself a rich man. I am a child of God, blessed with wealth

Why am I telling you all this? I am dying. My wealth means nothing to me. I am not worried about eternal life. Jesus' death and resurrection have assured me of that. But I wish for you a better life than I had, I wish for you a closer walk with God. That is why I tell you my story.

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