

The Little Big Things #8  
The Look  
July 21, 2024

Last week I shared this:

**The enemy fools us into believing he has the power to** collect a debt that we no longer owe. We who are free, now willingly put ourselves into a debt we do not owe.

Debt: something owed : obligation : a state of being under obligation to pay or repay someone or something in return for something received : a state of owing.

I want you to realize this. Once you are indebted to the evil one, you will lose your voice. And lose your freedom. Here's the rub. Most of us do not even realize that we are indebted.

Theologian G.K. Chesterton thought that everyone ought to get drunk once a year because if that didn't do you any good, the repentance in the morning would. There's nothing like waking up to what you've done, whether it's having too much to drink or eat, or letting your anger fly. The remorse after a flagrant sin often brings a sense of clarity and resolution."

What G.K. Chesterton was trying to illustrate for us is this. Most of us don't overdo it. We keep our indulgence at a more moderate level. We manage our idols. And in managing them...such clarity never comes. We never see the black and white of them because we are always under their influence.

We never stop to think about what is subtly influencing our thoughts and thereby influencing our actions. We become numb and distracted as to the depth that the world and its idols have on our hearts. And that hold on us is subtle. And that hold makes us indebted.

So, what is the pattern for freedom, to stay out of debt and have a great faith that defeats the evil one? It's a little big thing that I noticed in an encounter with Jesus. It's little...but it's big.

I found it in the encounter between Jesus and the rich young lawyer / ruler. This encounter so impacted the disciples that it is found in three of the gospels.

In the book of Luke **16 Luke 18:15-17**, Luke tells us that the women are bring their children to be blessed. It was customary for mothers to bring their year-old babies to a distinguished Rabbi to be blessed, and Jesus uses this opportunity to reveal that the kingdom is reserved for those who accept God with a childlike faith. It is at this moment that a man approaches Jesus.

According to Matthew, he is a "young man", and Mark says that he runs up and kneels before Jesus. On these two things all three writers agree. This man was rich. He was a ruler. A man of means...title...land. Prestige...he is wealthy.

Wealthy: very affluent: characterized by abundance

Rich: having abundant possessions and especially material wealth: magnificently impressive

**Turn with me to Mark 10:17**

**(Read)**

The rich ruler runs up to Jesus and falls at His feet and kneels before Him. This reveals the urgency of his quest and he asks the Rabbi a question.

**"Good teacher...what must I do to inherit eternal life?"**

If you look at this young man, you don't really see someone who looks like he's suffering. And yet he comes and seeking something that his lifestyle can't give him.

If we just gloss over him because he is rich, we can miss the significance of the young ruler's actual question.

Question: What does he want?

He wants eternal life.

In the Hebrew tradition, the word translated "eternal" was not a measurement of time. It was a word used to describe the form or quality of life that you can experience.

To have eternal life was to have life with God. A life that was joy-filled and meaningful and deep. Not shallow.

But shallow is how we live on this planet.

This "shallow self" will redefine love. Shield us from love. This shallow self keeps God at bay...and others as well.

The shallow self is that old life, the life, if you can call it that, based on the fallen paradigm of "Pain, shame and fear".

The shallow self is afraid to be loved. Afraid to reach out and be disappointed. Afraid of hope being rekindled.

The love of God found in Christ Jesus will challenge the shallow self's existence. The love of God, will destroy the shallow self.

The reason is this: The shallow self is chained to the past.

The past pain shame and fear is all that it sees and knows.

The shallow self has no faith, no hope and does not know love.

The shallow self is blind. It cannot see a view to the future. The shallow self is mute. It is also deaf to Love's call. The call to hope, the call to have faith.

The shallow self tries to drown out the call of Jesus, the call to be the beloved.

The shallow self teaches us the art of hiding.

**The definition of the word "hide" is this:**

**To cover, to keep out of sight; to conceal. To conceal from the knowledge of others; to keep from being seen.**

I want you to see that this young ruler has assumed something about God. He believes that he is responsible to prove that he is worthy of receiving this eternal life, and the love of God.

Notice what he asks Jesus:

## Vs 17

**"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life."**

"What must I do...?"

It is inconceivable to this young man, that simply because he was alive, Jesus wishes to offer him the life that he really wants.

Here's the problem with this line of thinking. As long as I believe that in order for you to love me, I first must work to make myself worthy of your love, worthy of you, I immediately become indebted.

No matter how desperately I long to be seen, safe and secure in your presence, if I primarily believe that my behavior at any time might permanently cut off my connection to you, my anxiety about this very real possibility will make it almost impossible for me to be open to receiving what I desperately long for.

This is what has driven this young ruler to the feet of God.

**Jesus responds in verses 18-19.**

**(Read)**

I want you to see what Jesus is doing here. He is exploring how serious this young man is about moving into a real relationship with God. Testing with hopeful kindness, to see how far into intimacy, how deeply into eternal life this young man is willing to go.

The young man's response reveals how he thinks about the world.

He tells the Rabbi that he has for his entire life checked all the boxes, working hard to guarantee success in following Torah.

His wealth is the evidence that he is a hard worker...and he works hard at everything.

Could it be that he is striving to be enough. Good enough, rich enough, and even carrying that work ethic into his relationship with God. If I work hard enough, that will ensure that God will be happy with him and that he will be loved.

And yet, there is that nagging anxiety that at any given moment, should he not check the right box, his life will fall apart before his very eyes.

Jesus asks him, "You know the commandments...implying, have you worked hard enough to prove yourself worthy?"

I want you to see something here. It's little...but it's big.

Jesus is actually inviting the young man to take the risk of allowing Jesus to love him.

Let me show you.

The text that Mark records is life shaking. This is a small moment where everything changes. In fact, we often miss it in our relationship with Jesus and with others who are trying to love us, just as the young man missed it.

Nowhere else do we read what Mark records:

"Jesus looked at him and loved him" vs 21

I want you to know that the book of Mark is a very fast paced gospel. His gospel provides us with the most important things the writer wanted to say. It is brief and to the point without unnecessary details and yet Mark records this:

"Jesus looked at him and loved him" vs 21

There is something about Jesus' look that Peter saw. And I want you to know that the love that the young man saw undid him.

It was the look of love. In fact it is that look that we are all watching for.

But know this, that look, when we see it, is able to touch the parts of us that we have been trying our entire lives to bury, to hide.

This look reveals the shame that we have been hiding...that we are not good enough to be loved. Not worthy of being noticed or recognized. Not good enough to be heard or even seen.

I want you to know that "the look" from Jesus is the look of being wanted, of being desired without being consumed.

Jesus gently answers:

**Jesus said to him, "if you wish to be complete (perfect), go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, and follow Me."**

Mark says that **"at these words his face fell"**. (Mk. 10:22)

Come and follow me. Jesus points out that the rich young ruler lacks something. But how is this even possible...he has everything.

He has everything, but the one thing, a relationship for which he didn't have to work for.

Jesus didn't need the man's hard work. He didn't need his money. It's not about wealth.

Look again at this encounter.

There are two rich young rulers. One runs up and begs a question...what must I do. The other says, give up all your wealth and operate without a net, and the control.

You see, selling all he has would be an act of great vulnerability, and in giving it all away, he would find the love of God.

Why does Jesus tell that young ruler that? Because He is the young ruler of the universe.

At one time in all eternity, the Father asked the Son, to give it all up to find the one's He loved...

I wonder what happened to that young ruler? I wonder, what he did with his days after meeting Jesus.

Selah.