

No Turning Back- Living the surrendered life Lesson 12

The Rich Young Man

From pictures and movies and your everyday encounters, how do you picture Jesus?

- Is he like a cute little kitten or like a roaring lion?

Have you ever thought of Jesus as dangerous? Depending on who you are, many see Jesus as being pretty safe. Depending on how you see Jesus, it's easy to see him with a smile on his face... all the time!

That picture of Jesus can make it challenging to believe that Jesus ever really came to earth, because it seems almost like Jesus wasn't a real person dealing with real issues.

We're not the only ones who wondered what Jesus might look like? Who wondered what he was all about?

Read Lion, Witch, and the Wardrobe, CS Lewis (Chronicles of Narnia) Ch. 8 - "Is he a man? Is he safe?" pg. 146.

Is he safe? Once we deal with that first important question of who Jesus is--we aren't done. There's more. If we say that Jesus is the Savior, the Son of God, if we say that we're going to follow him, then we have to ask the question, what's Jesus like? Is Jesus safe? Is he dangerous? Is he both?

There's another story in the bible that really stands out and it helps us understand just what it means for Jesus to be dangerous.

Listen to this story from **Mark 10:17-27**

In some ways I'm impressed with this guy. Here's a very powerful guy who runs to Jesus, falls on his knees, and initiates a very serious talk with Jesus. This conversation is evidently important to this man. He treats Jesus respectfully and calls him **"good teacher."** At first blush it looks like Jesus is being modest as he says: **"No one is good – except God alone."**

However, I think it is better to understand Jesus to say "Do you realize who you are talking to."

...more than just a good man – or a good teacher. Jesus is THE one who is ULTIMATELY and COMPLETELY good. The One, who IS pure, undiluted goodness personified!

This guy really doesn't know what he is saying... I hate it when that happens to me!

This man runs up to Jesus and I get the feeling that he thinks Jesus is pretty safe. He wants a simple answer to his question, "what do I have to do to get eternal life?" He doesn't really want a relationship with Jesus; he's only interested in what Jesus can give to him. Relationships are messy and complicated and dangerous. No, this man is looking for something safer, something that won't

cost him anything. He wants Jesus to give him a formula--you know, if I do this, this, and this, THEN I'll get eternal life. This guy approaches Jesus and he's looking for something like a math equation.

But Jesus doesn't give him something nice and neat and tidy, does he? Or does he?

Mark 10:19-20 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'

20"Teacher," he declared, "All these I have kept since I was a boy."

Motivated by genuine love, Jesus doesn't tell the man what he wants to hear. Instead he says to the man, "One thing you lack, sell all you have, give it to the poor and follow me."

Here is where the story gets sad... 22 at this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

See, this man was worshipping his money, his stuff. If you had asked the guy, he probably wouldn't have realized it, but his possessions were the most important thing to him in this world--and whatever is the most important thing in the world to us, well, that thing is our god--it controls us, and we spend our lives serving it. (Can you relate!!!)?

When Jesus answered the man about what he should do, he lists some of the commandments. The man, with confidence, informs Jesus that he had obeyed these commands since he was a boy.

But was that true? Let's look at the first two commandments in **Exodus 20:3-6** "You shall have no other gods before me.

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments.

It was as if there was a cancer in the rich man's soul. The Great Physician had done an MRI and found the mass. Now he was working to remove it!

Jesus had identified the corruption in his heart- the greed and materialism that had laid hold of the man's soul. - He was bowing his knee to the false god of money and wealth.

For some people the most important thing to them is:

- wealth
- security
- prestige
- health
- family
- relationships
- sports
- career
- education

We will give up most everything else so that we can keep the one thing that's the MOST important thing to us.

Basically, what Jesus says to this man is:

- Stop worshipping your little tiny unimportant possessions

- Stop trusting in yourself and the stuff you have
- Make God the most important part of your life, trust only in Him.

This is a good story--but it's a sad story because the man goes back to his possessions. The man gives up the opportunity for real life and a real relationship with God.

This story reminds me that Jesus has a committed, fierce love for us.

- I'm reminded that Jesus is jealous (I know that many of us have been taught that it's wrong to be jealous- example)
- I'm reminded that Jesus wants us for himself.
- I'm reminded that He came to earth and offered himself for us by giving his life for us so that we could be called children of God.

That committed, fierce love is dangerous--because it won't let us worship anything but God--even though there's so much out there that we're tempted to worship--tempted to give more attention to other than God.

Listen, Jesus is dangerous not because he's mean or bad or scary. His love is dangerous because he won't let us come to him with any pretense.

Do you know what pretense is?

- It's like a plan on how we'll distort the situation so that we get the best out of it for ourselves.
- Pretense is make-believe.

Unfortunately, this is how most things work in the world. Sort of the "every man for himself." But that's not how Jesus works. Jesus says that the only way we'll really connect with God is if we will live our lives for Him and for other people.

For the rich man, his pretense was that he could keep his allegiance to himself by keeping his possessions. But Jesus strips away all pretenses when he says, "**sell it all, give to the poor, and come follow me.**"

Jesus is dangerous because he wants genuine relationship, not pretense, not make-believe. Jesus wants all of us, not just what we have leftover after we're done taking care of us. He wants all of who we are.

Relationships are dangerous, and messy! Having a relationship with someone may cost you something. There are risks in relationships. And this is exactly the story of God's working in the world. God reaches down to us and offers a genuine relationship built on love and trust--and we mess it up.

- We break God's heart, and God then goes into action to repair the brokenness and most remarkably, God reaches out to us again.

Here's something amazing... we just read this story about the rich man, but right before that in Mark 10 comes another story.

It goes like this: **Mark 10:13-16** People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the

little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Look at the difference in how the children interact with Jesus and how the rich guy interacts with him. One has arms wide open to receive a touch; the other has his jaw on the ground in absolute disbelief.

Jesus is dangerous because he doesn't just want a little piece of us--he's dangerous because he wants all of us. He wants our brokenness, our junk, and all the bad stuff--oh, he also wants our very best.

Relationship with Jesus is not determined by how hard we work to be good. The relationship Jesus wants is for you to come to him so that he can touch you. Jesus wants you to be near him. He wants us to come to him in trust and humility, as we desire to be blessed by him, held by him--like a good father holds his children.

And there are really two reasons why. First, he loves you, and the second is he loves everyone else around you. The life Jesus calls us to is Missional, it's a Kingdom-focused life.

This Missional or Kingdom-focused life:

- Is about lives that are poured out for the world.
- It's really about us seeping and leaking into the crevices of society
- It's about offering our lives for God's purposes of mercy and justice
- It's about being poured out like wine upon the altar.

Kitty's lesson- **That's Missional!**

John Gerstenlauer's lesson- **That's Missional!**

Jesus wants to bless people with this kind of Kingdom-focused life. Jesus wants to bless people through the blessings he gives to us. But we need to know that Jesus isn't about keeping people living in the land of make-believe. It isn't the way of Christ. Jesus is all about seeking first the Kingdom of God.

So back to the question we started out with--"Is Jesus safe?" Oh NO!!!! But, Remember Narnia's Mr, Beaver- "Who said anything about safe. But he's good."

Who would you rather have in your life, a Safe Jesus, or the Good Jesus?

Invitation:

Are you ready to let God do the impossible with you?