

LORD OF ALL

By Jeannette Haley

Once in a rare while, our normal every day lives are punctuated with an extraordinary event or person. These extraordinary moments are usually tucked away in our memory like hidden treasure—treasure that we retrieve from time to time, especially when we need encouragement or inspiration.

It was back in the 80's that I met one such unforgettable gentleman. I can't recall his name, but I will never forget him. At the time I was struggling to survive in Phoenix, Arizona. Besides teaching painting, trying to procure art commissions, and working evenings doing home art shows for a new business, I also worked part-time for a temporary job agency. The unforgettable moment happened while temping for about three days for a certain Christian businessman. He shared with me his concern for a dear friend of his who attended his church. This friend had been diagnosed with cancer and he desperately wanted to go to a health clinic in Mexico but he lacked the necessary funds. I will never forget the words of this kind, humble man as he pondered his friend's plight. He said, in effect, "I have enough money saved to be able to send [this man] to Mexico. It is my life savings and it is all I have." He hesitated only a moment, "But I know what the Bible says—if someone has a need, and you can supply that need, then you must do it." And that was that. I remember him also telling me that if I ever needed help, to look him up. Many a time, when things were rough, I remembered this Christ-like man and was encouraged to not give up. I have to admit I've never met another man who was willing to give every cent he had for a brother in need. Jesus was truly Lord of all in his life.

Mark 12:41-44 records the amazing story of another person who gave everything: "*And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.*" To say that this short account is sobering is an understatement. Here we learn that not only does Jesus have His eye on people who give, but on how much they give in proportion to their wealth, and whether they give out of a pure heart of love and faith or not. It is interesting to note that when a person gives what they cannot afford to give—when it becomes a sacrifice—then that is what is commendable to God.

Another interesting point to this story is the fact that this selfless woman was a widow (widows were not required to pay tithes, Deuteronomy 14:28-29). Throughout both the Old and New Testaments God gave special instructions for the treatment of widows (as well as the poor, the fatherless and strangers). Every third and sixth year the tithe (grain, produce) was distributed to the destitute of the land, including widows and the Levites, Deuteronomy 26:12. Recently we read a testimony of a Christian woman whose husband left her for a younger woman. She found herself with nothing, nothing that is, except for a burning desire to serve her Lord. Today she is using the only funds she has (from a

small inheritance) to proclaim the truth all around the world to the apostate church through her publication. She has made a determination to serve her Lord and Savior until her funds run out. And when they do, you can rest assured that her faith will remain in the One who will never leave her or forsake her. What a contrast to those who, like the foolish man in scripture who built bigger barns to contain his abundance never lived to enjoy it, depend upon their savings, retirement pensions and many worldly possessions.

Rayola likes to recount the time when, years ago in Washington State, we visited *Richard Michalski of Impact Ministries—a powerful man of God. He is an evangelist who, with his wife, Sara, has made way over a hundred trips into Russia and Siberia. Through their faithfulness, and at great risk and peril to their own lives, countless thousands of souls have been won to Christ. They provide Bibles and other supplies that the poor are in need of. We simply wanted him to pray for us—and pray he did! As he fell to his knees and lifted his arms toward God, heaven came down. It was an experience neither of us will ever forget. As we prepared to leave after our brief meeting, he reached into his pocket and pulled out \$26.00 and handed it to us with the apology that that was all the cash he had on hand. It was so hard to receive this gift of love when with all of our hearts we longed to support his ministry. But God knew that we needed gas money, and He used this truly godly man to provide for us. It is when a person encounters this type of selfless love and giving that Christ is made real to their heart in a powerful way.

Jesus recounted an interesting story in Luke 12:16-21. It reads as follows, *“And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods, And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”* The indictment against this man is not necessarily because he was rich in goods, but because he was poor towards God. He never took into account that his overflow was due to God’s goodness and blessing nor did he consider that God blesses so that we are enabled to bless others. God calls him a “fool” and we call him (and others like him) “clueless”. 1 Timothy 6:17-18 admonishes, *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate [give]; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”*

Recently we received an email that was supposedly from a rich widow in Africa. She wrote that she was dying of cancer and had prayed over our ministry (on the Internet) and was told by God to give us twenty million dollars. Initially this was shocking to read and we suspected it was a scam, but we weren’t positive about that for about 24 hours. We laughed about how much money we could give away to needy friends, certain bona-fide ministries (most assuredly not to the rich wolves in fancy sheep’s clothing who prance

around in the spotlight). We discussed how wonderful it would be to pay off the house, get out of debt, publish all of our books and purchase a new station wagon for GSM. But by the time this great “offer” was exposed as a scam, we were both crushed under a heavy weight of fear because of the awesome test that such an amount would put us to. We Christians may convince ourselves that we wouldn’t be tempted to put our trust in such wealth, but when the rubber meets the road one discovers just how weak they really are. We breathed a great sigh of relief when our suspicions were confirmed, and we used the incident to witness to the perpetrators the reality of God’s judgment. During this little “test” Psalm 62:10b was foremost on our minds, “...if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.”

There are many interesting lessons to be gleaned from Jesus’ encounter with the rich young ruler. We read this story in Matthew 19:16-22 and Mark 10:17-22. This eager young man ran after Jesus and when he caught up with Him, he knelt and asked, “*Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*” Jesus answered, “*Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.*” Right up front Jesus challenged this man’s perspective. He was saying, in essence, that if He was ‘good’, then He was God. He was also making it clear that no human being was ‘good’ for He knew that this rich young ruler considered himself to be just that—good.

This reminds me of a certain woman who described her teenage daughter as a “good person”. This is a deceptive and dangerous line of thought for any of us to indulge in for God declares that none are good, no not one, Romans 3:10-12. If there was any such thing as even one “good” person in this world, then Jesus came and died in vain. But the truth is, “*all have sinned*”, Romans 5:12b. Then Jesus goes on to list the six commandments that have to do with conduct. To which the man replied that he had observed them from his youth. This reminds me of people we frequently meet whom, when asked to share their testimony, say, “Oh, I have always known God.” They give the impression that they have been buddy-buddy with God their entire lives and therefore they have no need to repent. The problem is, if a person never comes to the point of recognizing that they are a sinner in need of a savior, they will perish in their delusion.

Finally, we come to one of the saddest statements in the New Testament. Verses 21-22 tell us, “*Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.*” Here was a young man who earnestly desired to obtain eternal life and who had kept the commandments that pertained to upright conduct with others. But the commandments that he had neglected were those concerning his relationship with God. And Jesus knew it. That is why He put him to the test—and it quickly revealed just where the young man’s heart and trust rested. Clearly, his faith was in his great wealth and not in God. He could not bear the thought of impoverishing himself by giving to the poor in order to gain Christ and the riches of heaven! In spite of a religious life, he was unwilling to die to self. If he had truly trusted the Lord, he would have rejoiced at Jesus’ promise to have treasure in heaven, but heavenly treasure was not the kind of riches that held his heart captive. His affections

were wrapped up in this temporary life and Jesus knew it, just as He knows today who is totally committed to Him and who isn't. Greediness and godliness cannot co-exist in a believer's life.

It is also interesting to note that Jesus did not pursue after this sorrowful young man. We need to learn a valuable lesson here. If Jesus did not chase down this young man who "*went away grieved*" then why do we insist on pursuing friends, relatives, and co-workers (sometimes for years) who have plainly heard the gospel, yet rejected it? Jesus stated that if He were lifted up, then He would draw all men to Himself. We are to be the salt and the light. Salt and light *draw*.

This reminds me of a natural salt lick in the Glacier Park area in Montana. The highway cuts through a steep mountainside. Far above the road one can usually spot white, shaggy mountain goats. On the other side of the highway, the steep cliffs containing the salt lick plunge down to a beautiful, clear river. One can stop and watch the goats as they make their way down from the dizzying heights to the highway. Then, as everyone stands in hushed awe, the majestic goats jump from the cover of the trees, cross the highway, and make their way down the cliff face to the salt lick. If we are the salt of the earth, then thirsty people will be drawn to us; if we reflect the Light of the world, then those lost in darkness will likewise be drawn to us.

Why is it so hard for the rich to enter heaven? The answer to this question is simple: only those who know Jesus Christ as LORD of their lives enter heaven. Jesus taught that no man can serve two masters; therefore, a person either loves the LORD, or loves their money (which is idolatry). Their heart will either be centered on God and His will, or it will be held captive by riches. When idolatry comes in through the front door, love for God, and others goes out the back door. If Jesus is not LORD of all, (including our time, energy and money) he is not LORD at all!

The fruit of idolatry is pride and self-righteousness, which results in hard-heartedness. People in idolatry are deluded and blind to reality—to what is transpiring outside of their own little world. While they may sometimes "throw a bone" in the area of giving, what they do give is for selfish purposes, either to be seen of men, or to appease their religious conscience. And while it may be possible to con people some of the time, God is never conned any of the time. "*I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings*" Jeremiah 17:10.

Consider the example left to us by Judas Iscariot. Here was one of the chosen, called by the Savior to be with Him and learn of Him for over three years. Jesus knew Judas' heart—that is why He allowed him to carry the moneybag, which contained offerings given to Jesus. Judas is a picture of the institutionalized religious system that has an outward form of godliness (religion) and/or individuals in so-called "ministry" who "play the game for personal gain". In the end they will always scorn the needs of others and betray Christ. Judas' heart was centered on monetary gain. He was infuriated when Mary broke the costly alabaster box and poured out the rare and precious ointment on Jesus, anointing Him for His burial. The Bible says he was a thief, and even though Judas had

ample time to come clean and repent, his covetousness brought him to the point of betraying Christ. How many people today claim to be followers of the Savior but when forced to decide (like the rich young ruler) will betray Him because of their selfishness and greed?

A good example of a rich man who failed to enter heaven is that given by Jesus in Luke 16:19-31. Note that this is not a parable, but an actual happening. This particular rich man had the most expensive clothing that money could buy, and all the food that one could wish for. In other words, he had over and above his basic, daily needs. While he was living it up inside, a dirty, disease-ridden, starving beggar named Lazarus lay outside at the rich man's gate. This poor man was so hungry he desired to receive the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, but no one cared for him and he died. Now picture this—as his soul left his body, glorious angels from God gently carried him to Paradise. He no longer lay suffering outside the gate of the rich man, but while Lazarus was being comforted, the rich man also died, was buried and found himself in hell where he was tormented in flames (vs. 22-24). You can read the rest of this story in your Bible. The point I am trying to make is this: There are many Christians who have far and above what they need, but their gate (heart) is shut fast to those in need around them. Some have bought the lie that “gain is godliness” while others refuse to consider that if they call Jesus “Lord”, then ALL that they have belongs to Him. You may argue that the rich man in this story was not a “Christian” and that is why he went to hell. May I say to you, if this man was supposedly a religious man who ignored the plight of the poor beggar, then he was a hypocrite as well as a fool. If he was a godless person who ignored Moses and the Prophets (which this story indicates) he was still a selfish fool who was rich to the things of this world and poor towards God and who allowed his great wealth to blind him to the reality of heaven and hell.

This story takes me back to when God put Rayola and I together in ministry in 1989. We were in Arizona at the time, driving a ¾ ton, gas and oil guzzling Chevy pickup and pulling a 25' trailer. We knew two couples in the Phoenix area that were very wealthy (averaging a monthly income of \$42,000) although they would never owe up to that fact. The first couple allowed us to park our trailer in their dog run beside their luxurious home because I had some unfinished business there (with my former partner of which they were a part). These “Christians” locked us out of their home much of the time which meant we had to drive a few blocks to a Denny's to use their bathroom facilities (our holding tanks were full in the trailer). We had dwindling resources, and when hunger overtook us we went to Denny's and ordered something inexpensive and split it. Meanwhile, these rich people where we were parked, would take my former partner out to buffets and eating-places while we sat in their hot, dry dog run.

Nothing was being resolved in a Christ-like manner, so Rayola and I hooked up and pulled out. Our other wealthy Christian friends kindly volunteered to let us park in their place next to their beautiful home, which we did. These people owned large Christian bookstores and conducted a home Bible study. We thought for sure that they would be sensitive to our plight, but again, it never occurred to them to look past their opulence to our desperate situation. It is only by the grace of God that we survived. The sad thing is,

these wealthy people, as well as you and me, will all stand before God Almighty and be judged for our benevolence, or lack of it. If you have been faithful in all that God has entrusted to you, your reward will be great!

Rayola and I have found that it is usually the financially secure Christians who are ready to advise God's servants with financial challenges to "go do some tent making" referring to the Apostle Paul who worked with his own hands so as to not put burdens on new believers who either could not, or would not, support him. Paul knew that he was entitled to his support for the "*laborer is worth of his hire*" Luke 10:7. Through the years we have done whatever our "hands have found to do" but sometimes that is not physically possible. In 1995 we found ourselves laid out with overwhelming physical problems—myself fighting for my life due to chemical poisoning, and Rayola fighting to not become an insulin-dependent diabetic. Basically, we were about as helpless as the pauper who lay outside the rich man's gate. That was one the lowest points of this ministry. I completely identified with Job in his sufferings. It is only by the grace of God that we survived for no one came to our rescue. It would have been so easy to just give up and die.

Sometimes Christians are very willing to give, but it is in order that they may receive. Are we not to give as God gave? He gave His all—His very best for the entire world, knowing that only a remnant would respond. How can we do less? It takes integrity, godliness, and a great love for Christ for a person to give expecting nothing in return! Rayola and I have experienced some interesting scenarios in this respect. We have had people "give" to us if we somehow earned it. Incredible demands have been made upon us through the years that have added additional burdens to an already overwhelming ministry workload, which has depleted us physically and robbed us of valuable time.

This brings up the subject of benevolence to others whether they be the destitute or those struggling in ministry. I remember years ago I put forth a call for people to donate clothes for the Indians in Central Mexico. A woman who attended the same church I did brought a carload of clothes to my house. But as I sorted through them, my heart broke. They were soiled, stained, torn and some were no more than useless rags! Is this how we present the Gospel to the lost for whom Jesus died? Another time a businesswoman whom I had led to Christ decided to give some clothes to a Christian woman struggling to serve Christ who had practically nothing to wear. I will never forget the wounded look on this poor woman's face as she pulled clothes out of the bag that were faded, stained and worn thin. I often wondered if that rich woman would have donated such worthless garments to the King of kings.

Being in a front-line ministry that works in the trenches with all kinds of people is not only interesting, but it is very educational. Sometimes people refuse to support you (or withdraw or diminish their support) if your ministry doesn't appear to be "growing" or to be "successful". In other words, you are measured and judged according to appearance and popularity with the world by worldly standards. If you live in a dump, drive a beater (or have no vehicle at all) and can barely afford groceries, many well-to-do Christians refuse to support you because you do not have the glamorous "appearance" that the

“gain-is-godliness” people have. Their warped thinking is, “If you were truly of God, then you’d be prosperous.” This attitude is wickedness. And God will judge it as such.

On the other hand, many Christians overlook ministries that God may wish for them to support because they don’t live in a shack and drive a beater. Like the businesswoman who gave used clothing to the poor woman, they have a mindset (and it is a mindset) that if you are serving God, then you must look and live like a pauper, so even though they have the means to lift burdens and help in God’s kingdom, they withhold their hand. This also is wickedness and God will judge it as such.

Often Christians give because they know it is the right thing to do, but they do so with heavy hearts. Forgetting Jesus’ question, “*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*” Mark 8:36. Like the rich young ruler, they want to inherit eternal life, but they are not willing to lay everything down at Jesus’ feet. They live in fear that perhaps Jesus will snatch up everything they have and leave them penniless. This attitude reveals that they do not love God with a perfect heart because “*perfect love casts out fear.*” Unless you can give with a heart of joy, then do not give at all because giving is a part of *worship*. Meditate upon 2 Corinthians 9:6-9, “*But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.)*” Proverbs 21:13, “*Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.*”

Money given with the wrong heart and motivation is “filthy lucre”. Hudson Taylor, that great man of God who founded the China Inland Mission in the 1800’s, wrote, “We might indeed have had a guarantee fund if we had wished it; but we felt that it was unnecessary and would do harm. Money wrongly placed and money given from wrong motives are both greatly to be dreaded. We can afford to have as little as the Lord chooses to give, but we cannot afford to have unconsecrated money, or to have money placed in the wrong position. Far better have no money, even to buy bread with. There are plenty of ravens in China, and the Lord could send them again with bread and flesh... He sustained three million Israelites in the wilderness for forty years. We do not expect Him to send three million missionaries to China, but if He did He would have ample means to sustain them all.” (From HUDSON TAYLOR’S SPIRITUAL SECRET, pg. 210.)

America as a nation has been applauded for being a giving nation. Statistically, however, this materialistic society gives less than 1% to charity! Did you know that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for more than just their immorality? Ezekiel 16:49-50 tells us, “*Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.*” Where does this leave us as a nation? We

all witnessed the wonderful outpouring of love, sympathy and giving when the September 11 tragedy occurred, but behind the scenes many small charities had to close their doors because people withheld their support from them and re-routed it to New York City. This is not right! When a small charity or ministry depends upon your support from month to month, remain faithful to it as you would unto the Lord.

Fortunately for us we have met people with the love of Christ, like the widow whom Jesus commended, who sacrificially give to this ministry. Many people have obeyed the Lord concerning GSM, even when they could barely afford to do so, and we thank God for them. They are indeed partners with us in the harvest field and have experienced Jesus' words, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" Acts 20:35,b.

There is a simple key to the issue of giving, and that is to simply *go before the Lord in your prayer closet and ASK HIM who to give to and how much!* (And then obey—do it!) Christians must stop taking for granted who to give to and how much to give based on their years of habit, sense of religious duty, false teachings, preconceived ideas, and prejudices. It is time to be honest and face up to the fact that tithing to a church does not absolve a person from godly responsibilities. It's time to get back to what the Bible *really says* and to discover God's heart and the *principles* behind giving.

Is Jesus truly Lord of all of you and of all you possess? If not, I pray that He will give you a fresh vision of the cross and the price that He paid to redeem your soul.