

When Our Lives Contradict Our Words by Carl McMurray

In Mark 10:17-27 there is an account of the kind that often takes me by surprise. It surprises me because it is simple and yet, when considered, it speaks deeply to the nature of us all and is applicable in any culture.

A man comes to Jesus (who we find in other accounts is a rich, young ruler) and very respectfully asks the Teacher what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Having been told to keep the law, he responds that he had done this from his youth. Verse 20 is moving as Mark records that first, Jesus looked at and loved this young man. And second, he told him what he needed to hear, i.e., go and sell his possessions come and follow Jesus. The scriptures record that He left disheartened and sorrowful because he had great possessions.

Jesus commented on how difficult it was for the wealthy to enter into the kingdom of God and Mark records that the disciples were amazed at this. When Jesus affirms the truth of His statement, they became “exceedingly astonished.” It appears that the disciples thought that the wealthy of the world had the kingdom’s doors opened wide for them. Surely if anyone was saved, it must be the rich and influential, they must have thought. It is easy to read this account and chide the disciples for such simplistic thinking. Why don’t we all teach our children from an early age that just because the world makes a big deal out of someone that doesn’t make them truly that way? Don’t we teach them that it’s what’s on the inside that really makes them worthwhile?

Unfortunately, my answer to the above two questions sometimes has to be, NO, we don’t teach them that. We may tell them these facts a few times in their lives, but I wonder if we don’t actually teach them quite the opposite by our actions.

For example, we tell them that the word of God is the THE most important book that has THE most important information they will ever learn. Then we show them something different. We show them that actually their secular education is more important because we will “raise the roof” if they don’t study math, and English, and social studies, we rarely even check to see if they have their Bible lessons, or if they’re doing well in Bible class. Which are we showing them is more important? And then after emphasizing with our actions how important “school” is over the Bible, we are shocked that they go off to college and listen to their atheistic, immoral, un-American, and often ungodly professors and end up shelving their faith. Didn’t they understand what was really important? Not if we didn’t show them.

If our children see favoritism or envy toward those with money, they will learn that this is what is important. If they see home time put in second place behind second jobs and overtime, then they will learn that money is most important. If they see us choose our friends and associates from among the world then they will learn that Christians are really not that special and not worth the effort of spending time with.

It matters little what we say when our lives contradict our words. They will grow up getting the “real” message we are sending. Let’s not chide the disciples for having the wrong idea about riches and God, until we make sure that we ourselves have the right idea about godliness and where our priorities should lie.