

You don't have to keep running on empty.

God wants you to live in abundance not scarcity. What would life look like if you dwelt fully in the abundance of his grace? We are afraid to look into the eyes of Jesus and simply be loved and accept that nothing we have ever done, good or bad, makes him love us any less. Jesus looks at the rich man in our reading and loves him. When we dare to believe that God wants the best for us we will trust Him. If we trust Him we will be loyal, committed, reliant, and dependent on Him.

The snag with wealth financial or spiritual is that we can keep spending from our account and never rely on anyone, least of all God. The Pharisee who thanks God for how righteous he is, is not the sick for whom Jesus abandoned his own glory and came to dwell among. Jesus gave up heaven to win souls but

then was rewarded a hundredfold with billions of disciples.

The rich man in his castle is distanced from relationship with others, drawing up the bridge and paying troops to scout the walls looking out for marauding invaders. The rich are used to getting what they want, making things happen by their own power and not needing the gifts skills and talents of others to be offered out of love or grace - everything has its price and money speaks.

To be told there's nothing you can do to earn eternal life is disempowering its humbling it requires faith in God and his saving power. We only inherit when we are, not because we do.

Jesus gave up everything out of love for humanity and trusted that in losing his life he would gain treasure in heaven. But, the promise is for possessions both in eternity and in the here and now.

The rich man's view of God was that keeping the commandments got him some way to pleasing or appeasing God but his question to Jesus shows that he suspected there was something more. The rich man was humble as he knelt before the good teacher and was keen to know the answer - he ran up to Jesus. But the rich man is too fearful, he dare not risk engaging with the poor and cannot engage with God.

What perception do we have of God when calls us to embrace change? To be a disciple is to accept that change is here to stay and that we will be transformed if we bring what we can to Jesus, then step out of the way and watch Him bless others abundantly with it.

The rich man was shocked, the disciples were perplexed, all the time Jesus alters our view of the kingdom of God. What are treasures in heaven after all?

In first century culture, keeping the commandments led to blessing and God's favour would bring wealth. How then can Jesus say those blessed with wealth will find it almost impossible to enter the kingdom of God? How can those whom God has favoured with possessions not find favour with God?

Do you live in fear of passages like this that you should give up all your possessions and live a life of poverty? Read on - Jesus says those who depend on God, who live for Jesus and not for self, who take up their cross and follow him, those who are prepared to lose their life for his sake will find it. You will receive a hundredfold now in this age....

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Jesus grew up learning a trade wore clothes ate food. St Paul made tents to avoid burdening the churches. Lydia a seller of fine purple cloth supported the apostles. The material world is not intrinsically bad, it's what we do with it that counts.

All things come from you and of your own do we give you.

At its core, it wasn't the wealth itself that was the problem for the man, it was the lack of heavenly treasure, such treasure is found in relationship with the poor and with God. It is the love of money that is a root of many kinds of evil.

The rich man was afraid of what Jesus asked of him. The rich man couldn't find the courage to trust Jesus.

*[Epictetus] People are not disturbed by things, but by the view they take of them*

The rich man must have thought this is too hard, I'm unable or unwilling to trust. I have a view of what my life would look like that is infused with my past, my limited information, my experience, I don't know the love of God well enough to do this, to fulfil this request. I haven't the relationship to know the grace of God or of his abundance. If only he'd known the experiences of some poor people, he might have heard tales of God's provision.

As I neared the end of my ordination training in London I had to look for a curate's job. It was obvious I shouldn't be more than an hour's commute from my other daughters, Grace and Evelyn, who live in Hertfordshire. Month after month and several applications in, nothing materialised and I knew I'd soon

be out of college with nothing to do and nowhere to go. In the space of a week three people told me I had to look further afield. In fact my spiritual director said you seem to want God to fit in with your plans and he won't be put on the back burner.

Perhaps the hardest choice of my life was to put God before my children but I knew He was trustworthy and faithful. I was fearful of the future but my knowledge of His grace and provision kept me going, I'd heard of it before. Immediately the job came up in Bristol and I knew it was the one. Talking through with fellow ordinands over supper at a residential weekend I mentioned how I'd have no furniture to put in my Brislington semi. They asked if I was serious, only they'd secured a position that came with a show home full of brand new furniture: mirrors, lamps, beds, coffee tables, exercise bikes, pictures. What's more, do you want it all, we've got more than we

want anyway? Well sure enough, house removal day arrived and my meagre assortment of things were packed into the front of the van and we drove via Reading where we filled up the rest of the van with brand new things. Well that's God's provision for you in response to putting Him first. Since moving to Bristol I think you can tell the rest, a beautiful wife and another daughter, a lovely home and a great job. And now all of you brothers and sisters in Christ.

But notice, it says, verse 30 says there will be persecutions too. I deeply miss my Grace and Evelyn and being 150 miles away from them still hurts. Just lately some people have accused me of stirring up trouble even being manipulative and uncaring. These are the types of resistance we can expect when we try to do God's bidding.

It's essential we lock onto the Why of being a disciple. Sometimes the What

and the How are clear, but if we overlook the reason for it all when things get tough our resilience, our grit our perseverance will fail us. But I believe in transformation of self and society as the driving force for God's call on all our lives. To be clear that we must face change and transformation is vital if we are to cope with the courage that's required to be a true disciple.

Courage is sometimes about doing things whilst scared. The true path to heavenly treasure lies in being vulnerable with one another and with God. We must create an environment in which daring crazy ideas are welcomed, where failure is a part of the creative process, where reaching our lost generation we have to change what we do and the way we do it.

Einstein said this,

*We can't solve a problem by  
using the same kind of thinking  
that created it*

When it comes to change and transformation, we need the courage to fail, the bravery to love, the vulnerability to grow, the grit to persevere, the humility to learn from everyone. When we do, when we bring our small offering to Jesus feel him love us for it, when we then step out of the way and watch his mighty abundant blessing we will know and bask in the presence of the living God and not have keep having to live on empty. That heavenly treasure will be yours to spend.

You don't have to keep running on empty, God wants to bless you today fulfil your calling give you the desire of your heart. Let Jesus love you for who you are, and you will inherit eternal life, not because you kept most of his laws

but because you trusted His provision in good times and in bad. Amen