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Our readings today end in Hebrews.

Hebrews 58:004:015 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 58:004:016 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus is empathetic to His flock, but the double negative used by the unattributed writer makes interpretation uncertain, at least by me. A few authorities believe Apostle Paul wrote, but scholarly findings about the author are divided and point to one of the Apostle's cadre.

Grace is a difficult subject. In the Old Testament, grace is favor by God or earthly authority. In my opinion the apostles and theologians have little guidance, since the word *grace* appears only four times in the King James Gospels. None of the handful of verses are uttered by the Savior, and only one includes modest guidance.

John 43:001:017 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

The epistles get at understanding of grace, but the argument raged for centuries about the relationship of faith to works

and their relationship. The argument about grace has been won, more or less, by the faith adherents.

Seeking righteousness is the road to grace for some authorities. The righteous person obeys the law, but he or she is unable to move toward perfection without faith. The immorality of so many of our fellow men and women greatly test any seeker of the righteous. The Christian cannot surmount the challenges of Society without faith.

No one save the Christ is obedient enough to avoid sin. Over the millennia one prays and fasts in response to sin. Thus, the path to grace surely includes works.

John Wesley identifies despair about the achievement of grace as a great sin. I see our founder's guidance especially important for the older congregation. The psychologist, almost philosopher, Erik Erikson, found the identifying attributes for old age to be wisdom and despair. I like the wisdom part.

Wesley's findings were enhanced a century later by Søren Kierkegaard, the founder of existentialism. I was taken by these ideas when I was young—it seemed an appealing hippy-dippy philosophy. Then, years later I found Kierkegaard to be an important theologian, a role I find more important than his

philosophy. My interests today relate to Kierkegaard's theology, especially his theory that despair itself is sin.

For many years, I refused to accept the idea that I might be suffering depression. I told myself I was discouraged. Today, I see discouragement as a precursor of despair and try harder to find contentment.

Despair greatly diminishes one's capacity to tread the hard road of Christian life.

The good life in Jesus' space-time proceeds only from the strict following of the law. Yet, the rich man's opening utterance violates Jewish custom.

Mark 10:17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

Mark 10:18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

Only God is typically called Good, although notions of "the good man" as derived from God appear in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Matthew. The "good teacher" is apple polishing, as the proverbial school children brought apples for the school master or mistress.

Then, Jesus takes his inquirer who keeps the law to the school of hard knocks.

Mark 10:21 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.

This verse is so hard that some authorities say Jesus does not mean what He says. One concept is the rich man lacked the self-sacrificing devotion demanded of the real follower of Jesus. A life of poverty for him was the answer.

The disciples in Acts of the Apostles were plenty devoted to the possession guidance when they put their property in common.

Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

Elimination of ownership of objects by the followers did not take. I would expect the Roman authorities to have been more alarmed about common ownership than any other teaching of Christ. Whatever the colonial masters thought, the Utopian ideal remains without successful test.

In the early days of the United States, the Rappites started their effort to create Utopia in Pennsylvania, then eventually moved to Indiana and founded New Harmony. The

Harmony Society earned a large profit when they sold the land in the Keystone state. They held all property in common.

Many groups in America and Europe tried common ownership and failed. Unsurprisingly, the grandest idea of Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* was hopeless, though Marxist-Leninism took seventy years to get an F on its test. The fact is property came to exist long before antiquity when a kid in a group of hunter and gatherers indicated "Mine". I say indicated because language did not yet exist.

Furthermore, it is easy to argue that birds and mammals make the ancestor of property by staking out and defending territory.

What did Jesus mean by Leave Your Possessions behind? For me, personally, the command means leaving behind the emotions that are tied to the goods and properties that I own.

When a youngster gets first automobile, he (sometimes she) is proud of the acquisition and emotionally involved. Does pride of ownership and concomitant emotion yield sin? How often does owner of the recent acquisition forgo a loving act elsewhere, encumbered by his relationship to inanimate object?

Consider the individual who purchases a vehicle and believes his or her feelings are unrelated. Imagine the car

is this year's model, and the owner looks upon the parked vehicle. Next, the owner of the jalopy parked adjacent carelessly gets in dinging our subjects the new possession. How many of us be unperturbed? How many of us would confront the guy who maimed my new vehicle.

Or, the chief executive who gets driven to work each day in a limousine. If all his or her peers have this fringe benefit, should the big guy give up his limo and drive to work? If the user of the fancy transport does not emote over the perk, political disadvantage associates taking the idea of Common Man to heart. If a Christian CEO is attached to his driver and car, I say he needs to find an alternative or divorce the emotional content. Separation is much harder.

My interpretation of the Lord's teaching is basically to promote love. Attachment to things encumbers our ability to engage in loving acts.

Hebrews 58:004:012 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The New Standard Revised Version uses the words Living and Active for the King James' quick and powerful.

My faith in the Scriptures living and active is the basis for my journey to discover how one can love always in a world tormented by egregious actions of other individuals and larger entities large and small.

After the grieving rich man departs, Jesus expounds on the rich in general. The implication of the metaphor of needle and camel is one gets rich (and stays rich) only through many gross violations of the Commandments. Is Jesus saying all the rich are highly immoral? The statistician would translate All to 95%.

I dunno the bounds for riches, but the last rich person I knowingly encountered was the father of the girlfriend of my brother. Decades ago, he surprised me with his objectivity.

Does Jesus mean no rich man?

Seems to me the only passage through the eye to grace is repentance and faith. The rich repenter must leave his (or her) relationships where money is the object. And leaving would take a while, given honor and, maybe righteousness, about ongoing and future commitments. Upon completion of downsizing, the penitent must be, with Love as the focus of life. Is salvation possible? Did Jesus mean 100%, a statistic, or the psychologist's All?

Raising the question Does Jesus Mean All the rich is quite different from questioning existence of the journeys of rich to transform as trips of imaginary camels. For those like me who question authority (probably too much, in my case) today's epistle reading provides guidance for us questioners.

Hebrews 58:004:013 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Jesus knowledge is complete.

