I would like to talk about the Good News today. What is the Gospel message? Sometimes we just get into church and the lesson and what each text is about, and in the whole process we don’t really stop and consider what the basic message is that’s called the Good News or the Gospel.

Now of course this is always in process, it’s never settled. It’s like your computer, always updating. If that’s not happening, then you have problems I think. If you are farming like you did 50 years ago, you’re done. The Good News is exactly the same. Our man in our lesson today has his problems with the Jesus because he thought it was all settled. I’ve done all this since I was a kid he says. He learned his particular faith as a child, and as a young person and he had never really wrestled with it since I guess. This is what I was taught and I’ve always done it. Today, this would be the person who says, “this is what I’ was taught and I always believed it.

Well, Jesus is going to take care of that today isn’t he? Yup. It’s time for this young man to grow up a little bit and face a more difficult reality. I think this is the only place in the Matthew, Mark, or Luke where Jesus is described as loving an individual this directly and warmly and personally. Jesus looked at him and loved him. We know what this is. Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so. Softly and tenderly. There it is, in our text today. Jesus loves you. But what does that mean? What I learned as a child? What you learned as a kid? What you have always believed?

Well, Jesus loves you, doesn’t mean that here today does it? Jesus loves you here means, It’s time to grow up. When you love someone you want what is best for them. If you love your children you want them to grow up I hope. And how does that happen. At the very least it’s facing adversity, dealing with difficulty. That’s how Jesus brought the message. By taking up the cross. I think that’s what Jesus loves you means here. You need to face something really tough, in order to grow up. And this of course is a huge part of what we mean I think, by the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Like any seed planted, it’s meant to grow into what it was meant to be. But you can’t do that by trying to go back to your childhood when it comes to faith.

Unfortunately, the young man walks away from Good News. Because he didn’t see his faith that way. He didn’t see that the Good News of Jesus included wresting with very difficult issues. Perhaps he wanted something like comfort, instead of truth. Answers instead of adversity. And I’m sure you probably experienced this as we read the text. This puts each one of us today in a pretty tough bind. Sell all you have and give to the poor and come and follow me. This is the Wizard of Oz telling Dorothy to get the broom of the wicked witch. This is the fine print, that they say really fast on TV so you can’t really understand it. Jesus loves you, you’re sins are forgiven. Always believed that. Always knew that. Then down by the bottom where you can’t quite see it. O by the way, sell all you have and give it to the poor, and come and follow me. Ungg. The challenge I have is to help you see this twist, or bind, as core to what we mean by the Good News.

Unfortunately, the church has often walked away from Jesus teachings as well. Presenting the Good News as if it’s simply free and easy. All you have to do is believe, or pray the sinner prayers and that’s it. You’ve got it. I remember on my internship in Modesto California, the pastor I was serving under told me that when I preached to people that I should imagine that they were all in the 5th grade. Well, let’s just say we didn’t get along very well. I found that and find that now to be incredibly condescending. Just keep things simple and easy and not too hard, and avoid those moments that might confuse people. Don’t make people think too hard. Give them a nice easy answer. He was basically saying that he didn’t want his congregation to grow up at all. Maybe he didn’t want to either.

But my guess is that somewhere in your life, there are issues that simply don’t resolve. Many of them revolve around money I bet as well. It’s a silly example maybe, but I just wrestle with going to Walmart. And buying all this stuff made in China. I wanted to buy pair Justin ropers recently. Made in China. Nope, ain’t doing that. But what do you do? It’s like this issue that I wrestle with all the time. I pick up the box and look at it, yup made in China. Eghh. The same twist. I’ve heard people wrestling with a declining rural population. And it just keep happening, it just this issue that never seems to resolve. It’s one the truest thing about what it means to be married. The best data we have says that about 60% of the “issues” that you have in your marriage can never be solved. That’s in a healthy marriage. You just have learn to live these issues for ever that you have with your partner. There’s no resolution, there is just no way to change it. No therapy will work. You just have to learn to live with whatever annoyance that might be. There are probably people in your life, that you just can’t work it out with. You live in that twist. That bind. The church might want to give out easy answers, make it free and easy, but after the service its often not so easy for example to “just do the right thing”. You want to buy locally, but it’s way cheaper on Amazon. I want to be involved in everything, but it’s driving me crazy. How do I let something go? I’ll bet some of you wrestle with that, and there’s no simple answer.

Well, this is where Jesus is taking this young man today. Into the twist. Into the bind. Into that issue that just doesn’t resolve. Sell all you have and give it to the poor, and come and follow me. This issue is exactly the same for us as it was for the young man. Because there is no resolution to this. Anyone going to do that today? No. I won’t either. I think that deep down we know there is something about thit, that is really important. I’ve wrestled with this all week and it’s like there’s something enticing about it. Just giving it all away, huge generosity. Just sign it over. But at the same time it just doesn’t work. It’s just a real twist. And then all the teaching about wealth. In our society wealth is associated with being blessed by God. Bumper crops are blessing right? Not so much here. And the disciples know it. “Who can be saved now?”. It’s not so easy now. They are perplexed. That’s the twist.

There are resolutions. You can try to resolve it by saying, well God is giving him something impossible so the young man will just give up and rest on the Grace of God. We like that verse about all things are possible with God. We pull it out of context, and use to it dream about things we want. But if it’s true that all things are possible with God, then it means that with God I can sell all I have and give it to the poor. So maybe I don’t want God’s possibility. This hits the spot, and it always has and probably always will. And again, I think it’s just like an issue in a marriage that doesn’t resolve. We’re just going to have to learn to live with God while having this issue. Most of the time, I think we’re like the young man. We just walk away, and go back to a simpler Good news. Back to when I was kid. No, I just think this a twist. A real dilemma, a real issue that this young man had the possibility to live and wrestle with. But he didn’t want to do it. Didn’t want to grow up. Didn’t want to think that hard. Didn’t want Jesus teaching to upset his day. Didn’t want that adversity. So he walked away from a much deeper understanding of the Good News.

This week I subbed in Crosswalk. And we were dealing with the issue of revenge. What are we going to do if we get hit at school? If someone is mean to us? Pushes us. Are we just going to give it back in the same way? Hit back, push back? And the lesson wanted me to teach the kids that we shouldn’t be like that. I asked the kids if they hit Jesus, would Jesus hit them back? And they all just “No, Jesus wouldn’t be like that”. Childhood is so easy. And so is Jesus. So comforting. And maybe you have to teach kids that way. Don’t hit back. But is that issue really that easy? Do you never hit back, never push back, just always sit there and take it and be nice? At some point they’ll grow up and learn how to face that twist. Learn how to live that. And grow up and have some wisdom.

Because maybe these issues that don’t resolve hold a gift for us. Maybe they can be good news for us. Maybe they can even begin to be understood as gifts from God. Maybe that issue in my marriage that just never resolves might teach me a few things. Open me up to possibilities that I hadn’t up until that point considered. Maybe I can learn to pray the most famous prayer in the world, the Serenity Prayer. God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. That’s growing up. Maybe wrestling today with Jesus call to sell all we have and give it to poor might begin to help me get out a small faith. Maybe even open me up to what it means to say that Jesus loves me. And loves you. Adversity has great potential. Some tough issues to think through. I think that’s the message today. Instead of easy answers, can we wrestle with these things. With God all things are possible. Amen.