

“Renouncing all we have,” Luke 14:25-34  
Tom Johnson, September 5, 2010

Many years ago there lived a king named Midas. King Midas had one little daughter, whose name was Marigold. King Midas was very, very rich. It was said that he had more gold than any other king in the world.

One room of his great castle was almost filled with yellow gold pieces. The King grew so fond of his gold that he loved it better than anything else. He loved it even more than his own little daughter, dear little rosy-cheeked Marigold.

His one great wish was for more and more gold. One day he got his wish. A fairy appeared to him. "Midas," said the fairy. "If I should grant you one wish, would it be for more gold?"

"No," said the King, "I would ask that everything I touch to be turned into gold."

"Your wish shall be granted," said the fairy. "At sunrise to-morrow morning your slightest touch will turn everything into gold."

The next day King Midas awoke very early. He was eager to see if the fairy's promise had come true. As soon as the sun arose he tried the gift by touching the bed lightly with his hand.

The bed turned to gold. He touched the chair and table. Upon the instant they were turned to solid gold. The King was wild with joy. He ran around the room, touching everything he could see. His magic gift turned everything to shining, yellow gold.

The King soon felt hungry and went down to eat his breakfast. Now a strange thing happened. When he raised a glass of clear cold water to drink, it became solid gold. Not a drop of water could pass his lips. The bread turned to gold under his fingers. The meat was hard, and yellow, and shiny. He could not eat a thing. All was gold, gold, gold.

His little daughter came running in from the garden. Without thinking, he greeted her with a kiss. At once, the little girl was changed to a golden statue.

A great fear crept into the King's heart, sweeping all the joy out of his life. In his grief, he called and called upon the fairy who had given him the gift of the golden touch. "O fairy," he begged, "take away this horrible golden gift!"

In a moment, the beautiful fairy was standing before him. "Do you still want gold more than anything in the world?" asked the fairy. "No! no!" cried the King. "I hate it! I hate the very sight of the yellow stuff."

"Very well," said the fairy, "take this pitcher to the spring in the garden and fill it with water. Then sprinkle those things which you have touched and turned to gold."

The King took the pitcher and rushed to the spring. Running back, he sprinkled the head of his dear little girl first. Instantly, she became his own darling Marigold again, and she gave him a kiss. He blessed the sight of her rosy cheeks.

The King sprinkled the golden food, and to his great joy it turned back to real bread and real butter. Then he and his little daughter sat down to breakfast. How good the cold water tasted! How good the bread and butter, meat, and all the food!

The King hated his golden touch so much that he even sprinkled the chairs and the tables and the bed and all the things that had been turned to gold.

(<http://childstoryhour.com/story22.htm>)

We too can live our lives in a golden prison. When we put our fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, children and grandchildren, brothers and sisters, yes, even our own selves first—we are making them into false idols, gods and goddesses.

It may seem like the right thing to do—to prioritize our family, friends, and ourselves first. It may look beautiful—like marble floors, limestone walls, vaulted ceilings, and golden bars—but it is still a prison—a golden prison.

We put too much faith, too much stock, and too much self-worth in those relationships. And when they disappoint us, our world seems to unravel. They cannot live up to our expectations. We cannot fill the void in our hearts with our parents, spouses, children, friends, or self-love.

When we see what our love for them first is really doing to us, we begin to hate our love for turning everything and everyone around us to gold. To love them and ourselves before we love Jesus is to not truly love at all.

To follow Jesus is to escape this golden prison. He sets the captives free. He opens wide the golden door and introduces us to a path where his love is the center of our lives—a love that is true—selfless—unconditional.

For God is our true heavenly Father, Christ is our true Husband and brother, and we are his royal, beloved Children.

He loves the variety of his creatures—our silly laughs, our quirky personalities. We are—all of us—fearfully, wonderfully, and uniquely made. He loves us when we fail. He loves us when we fall short of his glory.

He died and rose again to tear down the golden bars around us. And when we live in the reality of this love first—when we make Christ our highest priority and love him more than all things, we realize we are his precious possession washed and adopted through baptismal waters. And everything around us is transformed.

We drink that cool water with gratitude knowing that it is a gift. We eat bread and butter and meat knowing that every mouthful is a blessing. Even the squeaky wooden chairs we are sitting on are music to our ears.

We begin to love our parents, spouses, and children even when they do not meet our expectations. They are not pure, shiny gold—they are vessels of clay. But we love them through Christ's love. We love their rosy cheeks, we love them even they fail and disappoint us—just as Christ loves them and us.

To prioritize Christ's love for us and our love for him first is the beginning of all true love.