

More Perfect
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Sunday April 19th, 2026

Here Jesus is, just minding his own business being a miracle worker. No big deal just making the blind see, that's right in the Savior's job description. But here come the Pharisees with their fingers waving and their tongues tisk tisk pointing out all the things Jesus did wrong. Trying to find every way Jesus came up short of perfect. Since we're talking of Earth Day, the Pharisees must have been great arborists, always planting giant forests but never seeing the trees.

Jesus heals the blind man and they can't refute that, but they still can't admit that it is a miracle. By being so focused on finding the shortcomings of the act they miss it's [very importance](#).

As Doctor Roger Keller said on Palm Sunday so many of the people that interacted with Jesus were looking for the perfect savior, or at least perfect to fit their needs. Yet they literally miss the Messiah, my kids love to say, staring them in the face.

It's easy to get caught up looking for perfect or for setting someone up on a perfect pedestal.

The first person I thought was perfect was my Grandfather Roy Rulseh. Over 80 years ago he became Sgt. Roy Rulseh of the Army Corp of Engineers. And along with millions of his fellow Americans he risked his life disarming land mines and laying pontoon bridges to make the way safe for the tanks, guns, soldiers and supplies needed to liberate Western Europe and put an end to one of the greatest atrocities humans have ever inflicted upon each other. Oh and while he was at it, he still had time to propose to Army Nurse 2nd Lieutenant Phyllis Watt. She accepted, even though he was her subordinate.

Now when I knew them I didn't know much about that, they were just Grandma and Grandpa. But they were perfect. I never saw either of them out of a collared shirt or blouse. Ever. After coming inside they would take off their shoes... and put on different shoes...house shoes! Just like Mister Rogers. The only time I would see my Grandpa in any sort of undress was when we were working on the cabin up North that he built himself. Then he'd at least get down to a v-neck t-shirt but in my memory, he still wore slacks. Often I would tag along to help him with the various projects that were always a constant. I remember a time I was helping hold a board that he was about to screw tight. My mind wandered just a bit and the board slipped as he started the drill and he cut his hand. In a flash he shouted out a name for the Father we use a lot around here followed by a word that means the opposite of salvation... followed by my name. Uh-oh...

Now did I stand there and shout out SHAME grandfather, thou hast taken thy lord's name in vain, be gone from my sight! like a pharisee might? Did I condemn him for being a sinner and me for being descended from him doomed to spend eternity in torment? NO, of course not. I simply whimpered out sorry Grandpa. After taking a deep sigh Grandpa said, it's alright Teddy, just pay attention next time. Ok grandpa, maybe grandma should look at your hand. And there it ended. I'd learned that my Grandpa wasn't perfect and that was ok. What's more I was able to forgive him and he me. Sometimes grace can be that simple.

Sometimes though it isn't. As I grew I eventually became a teenager and began to think that maybe I was perfect. Seems to be a rather common attitude when you reach that age. My perfection however would come under challenge when my mother would step in and point out, just like those Pharisees, all the small little things that I was not perfect at. Speaking of not seeing the forest for the trees what importance does having a clean bedroom or neatly folded laundry really have? I was going places, couldn't she see the big picture? This would lead to fights. If opposites attract then likes repel I guess? My mother and I shared a very similar temperament and when we got mad at each other we really got mad. Usually my perfect solution to win each argument was to stomp out of the house and once I could drive, head down the road with the radio blasting to let off some steam. By the time I'd come back the argument would be forgotten. At least from my point of view. Years later my Mom shared with me how much this hurt her. In my youthful ignorance I never knew. Here my Mother was forgiving me of my falling short of being perfect and I wasn't even aware. I was being given grace that I didn't deserve but in the long run helped to repair our relationship later in life. In her small way, performing a miracle. These interactions that each of us have, if we're so blessed with loved one's; may seem small but Jesus makes the point that we have to make the best of the time we have. It is day now he tells the disciples but the night is coming.

Now we're going to zoom out a bit. As I became an adult trying to find my way in the larger world outside of my family a phrase I'd learned in history books always stuck with me and it's something I've always considered perfect. It goes like this "Government of the People, by the People, for the People shall not perish from the Earth. What could be more perfect than that. For a long time I held the belief that The United States of America was as close to perfection as anyone could find. I was a true believer of those words Abraham Lincoln spoke. But with experience, especially very recent experience, it becomes harder to not once again become a pharisee and can point out all the ways even our own country comes up woefully short of perfec

But maybe it's always been like this. It is so easy to point out all of the hateful things we humans have done to harm one another both as individuals and as Nations. In fact one could choose to say it's the thing we're best at. Coming up with more interesting and cruel ways to kill and maim each other even to the point that we humans have the capacity to end all life on Earth. It seems that the only thing left to do is to lie down and give in to despair.

But that's not what Jesus did. When he is in his agony on the cross, I believe Jesus saw all of humanity's tortured history past and present pass before his eyes. From the brutal treatment the Romans inflicted on Jesus' own people to the terror of the church with it's own inquisitions and burning of quote unquote heathens who dared to say that the Earth revolves around the Sun. Even to the industrialization of mass murder in the Nazi death camps and the unending violence that carries on still to this very day in the Middle East. Even to the underreported sorrow and pain of children and their families in detention centers here in the United States and finally to the state sponsored murder that occurred on the very streets of Minneapolis only a few months ago. Of course Jesus should cry out as he does in Luke 23 "Father forgive them, they know not what theydo." And yet he still goes through with it. He still gives himself up as a sacrifice for all of humanity's sins. He dies so that the weight of sin is cast off and we can finally see.

What a wonderful story if it ends here. Jesus dies to save us. Thanks Jesus! Now we can do whatever we want and we'll just grab the get out of jail free card on our way out. Yet that isn't quite it, is it?. Jesus sacrificed so we could be saved but he's also asking something more of us or maybe I should say his death gives us an opportunity.

What is this opportunity?

While mulling over the theme of perfection for this talk; something came to me. Another one of those phrases that comes out of the history books. This phrase is from a document that is quite short of perfect. Written primarily by a human that owned other humans and this document codified that practice. This is how it starts: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a More Perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity (that's us), do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." Here it is. not a perfect Union, or a great Union, or an Awesome Union... a more perfect Union. Now I don't know how conscious James Madison was of the power his phrase grants us here, but regardless, with this phrase he opens up a universe of opportunities. To be more Perfect, I think this is what Jesus is trying to tell us.

When he heals the blind man does that finally make him perfect? Or does Jesus give him the chance to be more perfect. A chance to see the world and then make something of that. Will the man who once was blind not slip up or sin again. Of course he will. By our very nature humans are not perfect. If we were, we never would've needed the sacrifice that Christ gave us. Yet with his sight Jesus sends the man on his way to be more perfect.

When I let the board slip with my grandpa, was I being perfect?. Nope but with forgiveness, we could try again to be more perfect. Did I Still fight with my Mom? Yep. Do I now fight with my daughter? Yep, there's that ancestor thing again. .But again I need to work on being more perfect.

Even with our nation, way back in the day James Madison understood that the Constitution itself wouldn't be perfect so he puts in a little thing called amendments. The thirteenth of which freed the slaves and tried to make the United States a little more perfect. Next time someone asks if you're working on life goals say, no just writing a few more amendments to my constitution ... 17th amendment make sure to eat more fiber.. .

And so I close telling you, as Jesus did, that there is still much work to be done while it is still day, so make the best of it before night comes and by the grace of God, maybe, just maybe you can become a bit more perfect. Amen.

