

^{17:11} On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers,^[a] who stood at a distance ¹³ and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴ When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶ and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?"¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

The year was 1937. Joey's father died last year, leaving Joey, his brother, and his stay-at-home mother, without a financial plan. There was no Social Security yet, so no death benefits for children and widows. Just that little Woodmen of the World Mutual policy to pay for the funeral. That, pride, and fierce independence.

Each night, after school, Joey walked to his little job at the filling station. Then he'd walk home for a late dinner, left on the stove, and give his mother his earnings. Before he went to bed, he would go into the bathroom and close the door. He would look into his own eyes, through the mirror, trying to see into the depths of his own soul. And he would ask: ***"Mirror, mirror, on the wall; what's my worth, and what's my call?"***

Each night he hoped for a different answer, but it was always the same: ***"Not good enough, unless you do it on your own. Not good enough, to ever succeed on your own. Not good enough; you'll always BE alone."***

The year was 1968. The love of Mary's life had gone to fight the war in that far off southeastern country, to protect their homeland

from a domino fall to communism. He gave Mary a child his last night home on leave. He promised to be home before the child was born. But like lot's of young soldier promises, he didn't keep his. He died in a helicopter crash two months later.

Her parents had never liked him, Mary knew. She believed that they could never love his child. Alone and frightened, she went into the nearby big city. Alone and frightened she did what she believed was her own choice. From then on, whenever she combed her hair or brushed her teeth, she heard a tiny little voice say: ***“Mirror, mirror, on the wall; what’s my worth, and what’s my call?”*** And each time, the answer slapped her in the face: ***You are a murderer. You don’t deserve to live, let alone be loved.***

It was 1987. Harvey and Brenda were in love and there was no doubt in it. They stayed in school until both graduated before getting married. They waited until they both had good jobs and their own home before having a baby. They did not decorat the baby’s room pink or blue, until Sherry was born and they knew the right color. Even though Brenda’s parents implored them to get Sherry baptized, they waited. They wanted to get their lives organized enough to go to church regularly. They wanted to say the parental vows of baptism with integrity.

But before that time came, a violent flu epidemic swept through

their area, seizing the very old and the very young. Now whenever Harvey or Brenda look into the mirror, they don't need to ask, ***“Mirror, mirror, on the wall; what's my worth, and what's my call?”*** For before they can ask, they hear the voice of the priest who told them before doing Sherry's funeral: ***“What a shame you never got her baptized so she would go to heaven. What a shame.”***

The year was 1999. Andrew kept trying to succeed. He was never fired from a job. He always left on his own terms, and he always left to go to a better job, with more money, more prestige, more authority. He just kept moving up in the world.

Each morning, he stood before the mirror and asked, ***“Mirror, mirror, on the wall; what's my worth, and what's my call?”*** And each morning, he heard the echoes of his father's voice from the last conversation they ever had: ***“You'll never amount to anything, kid. You just don't have what it takes.”***

Year after year, in town after town, children, teenagers, young adults, older adults, blacks, whites, gays, straights, democrats, republicans – you name it: all the categories – all God's children have this ***mirror, mirror on the wall experience***. And it keeps saying the very same thing, in one version or another: ***NOT GOOD***

ENOUGH!!

Many grew up in a church that repeated the same message regularly: ***We are not worthy so as to gather up the crumbs from under your table, O Lord. NOT GOOD ENOUGH!! NOT GOOD ENOUGH!!***

Over and over, through teenage peer pressure, parents tapes running again and again in their heads, the echoes of coaches, teachers, preachers, priests. Over and over again: ***NOT GOOD ENOUGH!!***

One day, along walked Jesus and He came upon ten of the “not good enoughs.” And he said, ***“You are healed. You are whole. You ARE good enough. You are a beloved child of God, precious and beautiful to behold.”***

The ten kept on walking. Then one of them came back and said to Jesus, ***“Thank you.”***

Jesus said, ***“What about the other nine? Where are their thank yous?”***

And the one who returned said, ***“They just couldn’t accept it. They couldn’t get past all of the Mirror, Mirror, on the wall stuff. You have have healed them but they just can’t believe it.”***

And Jesus said, ***“Fine! I’ll keep after them until they understand and believe. I have more healing and potential than they can ask or even imagine. And I’ll not stop until there’s not a single lost sheep.”***

The healed one said, ***“You rock, Jesus!”***

And Jesus turned and looked into his eyes. ***“Do you really believe that you are a beloved child of God, precious and beautiful to behold?”***

“I do.”

“How did you get that way?”

“You gave it to me. I received it.”

“Period. That’s it?”

“No, exclamation point!”

“Then give me some help, would you? So many people, so many moralists, so many people only pointing out people’s flaws and mistakes, that can never separate them from God’s love. So many Pharisees today like Pharisees of old, who try to convert people and then make their lives twice the children of hell as before. Spread the word, would you, please.”

“You betcha, Jesus!”

“You’re from Minnesota, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, how did you know?”

“Never mind. Just spread the word.”