

I'd like to tell you a story about a man named Jed,  
 A poor mountaineer, barely kept his family fed.  
 Then one day, he was shootin' at some food,  
 And up through the ground come a'bubblin' crude--  
 Oil, that is. Black gold. Texas tea.

Well, the first thing you know ol' Jed's a millionaire.  
 The kinfolk said, "Jed, move away from there"  
 They said, "Californy is the place you oughta be."  
 So they loaded up the truck and they moved to Beverly--  
 Hills, that is. Swimming pools. Movie stars.

Perhaps you recognized that song. Note the response of Jed and his family. They don't sit around – they git up and move! They're excited about their good news and life changes radically and quickly.

I'd like to suggest that it's the same kind of reaction people had when they heard Jesus teaching. They noticed right off that this fellow is different, not like other teachers who simply quote other teachers. In the Gospels several times it is written, "and the people were spellbound by his authority." Or, "The people saw that he was not like their religious leaders when he taught them."

He obviously had a great appeal and drew large crowds. So people walked great distances to hear him. When we consider what people went through just to hear his words, do we give it the same kind of importance in our own lives today? Would you pack up the kids and a picnic lunch and walk to Augusta just to hear Jesus preach? Or be so excited that you would forget to pack the lunch? If he called you to be his follower while you were working on the line at Kellogg or Stryker, would you say yes and leave your job? Does the teaching of Jesus get ahold of you in such a dramatic way that it's like no other or author or teacher you've ever read or heard? Or is it just a collection of quaint children's stories, or an old philosophy that's impractical for today's modern world?

The question that comes to my mind is, "Does Jesus' teaching really grab me?" Is it changing my life? We have catechumens sitting with us every week whose life is changing because they have heard the Good News and they are acting on it.

Jesus' teaching really is Good News. And we're fortunate to be able to come together and listen to him speak to us every week. The fact is, Jesus himself IS the Good News. And we have an advantage not to listen to him once, but to be able to read about him and read what he taught every day, to receive his words of consolation and challenge and healing and mercy and salvation. As we continue to listen and pray to him, he will lead us to the same excitement as the hillbillies who struck oil, and the same commitment as those first disciples.

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One of the reasons that I support Catholic schools is because it becomes a sort of living laboratory of the Church. It is a chance to put together adults of faith, willing to witness that publicly, and put them together with children, and let them LIVE the words that Jesus taught. It's a chance to do it--and see that it works. Then when they face the challenges of the world around them, they already know that Jesus' teaching is special, because they have experienced it themselves.