



WEEK TWO RELEASE

FINDING RELEASE

BY LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

INSPIRED BY MATTHEW 19:16-22 (*A wealthy man seeks eternal life*)

ACRYLIC, INK, & WATERCOLOR ON CANVAS

As I write this in the midst of a global pandemic,¹ we are collectively grieving countless losses and desperately seeking answers to quell our fears of what's to come. The economy is nosediving and many face grave illness or even death. Some can't see past the fog of new living restrictions and are calling to reopen the economy because they believe it will save us. Others are choosing to stay home, risking economic fallout, to protect the lives of the vulnerable.

When afraid, we turn inward. I see fear and loneliness in the rich man. He's focused on an individual path, leading to his personal salvation, while missing the full picture. The man's wealth may cause him comfort, but it does not exist in a vacuum. His wealth affects the lives of others—particularly those at the margins of society.

Jesus offers the rich man spiritual grounding that completely threatens his financial stability, but it's good news just the same. Jesus reveals to the rich man the truth that we are all connected. Jesus chooses to name commandments concerning interpersonal relationships and community (v. 18-19). Jesus offers the rich man freedom from his entanglement with wealth, and gifts him belonging and a way forward (v. 21). The rich man feels the weight of this truth. To “enter this life” he must recognize his responsibility for his neighbor, because our lives are interwoven.

Instead of grasping to Jesus' lifeline, the rich man turns away because he cannot fathom losing everything. His grief feels palpable in this time of upheaval. I meditated on his grief, layering dusty purples, muted greens, and chalky blacks. I imagine the rich man isn't turning away from Jesus altogether. Perhaps he's taking space to feel his grief, processing all he will lose so he can truly find release.

—LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

¹ Written in April 2020, in the surge of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19.