

## The New Testament

A conversation with my 86-year-old mother.

GR: “Mamma, tell me about a memorable gift you received.”

Mamma: “My daddy gave me a birthstone ring.”

GR: “How old were you?”

Mamma: “I was in high school.”

GR: “What happened to that ring?”

Mamma: “It was stolen.”

GR: “Do you know who took it?”

Mamma: “Yes. My friend Olivia saw another girl wearing it. That girl was from a family that couldn’t afford such a ring. Olivia asked her where she got that ring, and she eventually admitted that it wasn’t hers. She must have taken it from a hook where I hung it in my locker for basketball practice.”

GR: “Did you get the ring back?”

Mamma: “Yes.”

GR: “What happened to that girl? Did she get in trouble? Did she get punished? Was your Daddy upset when he found out?”

Mamma: Daddy went to town and bought that girl a ring and gave it to her.

GR: .....speechless.

It occurs to me that this story is the essence of the New Testament: a person who does wrong, acknowledges that wrong and is truly remorseful receives grace (unmerited mercy and favor) instead of condemnation and punishment.

Full disclosure: Mamma’s dementia is challenging her ability to distinguish historical facts from dreams and her imagination. She has told my sister a different story involving a missing ring. Since all those who might be witnesses have long since passed away, we have no way to verify which, if any, version is accurate. Even so, it is clear from what she told me that she believes her father, a devout Christian, a genuinely good man and a regular reader of his Bible, may have actually gifted the thief a ring. Faulty memory notwithstanding, Mamma knows what the Gospel calls for in this situation.