

Naked Generosity

If anyone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

MATTHEW 5:40

Written by Bill Perkins

I've known people who lost lawsuits—
some losses small,
others devastating.
But I've never known anyone who,
after losing,
offered the victor everything—
even the shirt on his back.

This is Jesus' picture.
He describes the legal aggressor—
one who uses power
to diminish the weak—
and the disciple's response.
In Jesus' world,
a person wore two garments:
a tunic and a cloak.
The tunic was the inner garment.
The cloak was a coat and blanket—
essential for the poor.

That is why Jewish law protected it.
If taken as a pledge,
it had to be returned by sunset
so its owner would not freeze
(Ex 22:26–27;
Deut 24:12–13).

When Jesus says,
“Give him your cloak also,”
He describes something radical:

a disciple surrendering
even the garment
the law protected.

Jesus is not teaching passivity
or retaliation.

He is forming His likeness
in the disciple—
a son of the King
who refuses to mirror
the aggressor's grasp.

In Scripture, nakedness exposes
the one who causes it,
not the one exposed.
It reveals the taker's callousness
and the injustice
hidden behind power
(Gn 9:20–27; Is 20:1–4).

Yet the point is not
to shame the taker
or glorify the giver's loss.
It is formation.
The disciple stands in loss
and lets Jesus' life
be seen in him.

Jesus Himself lived this.
Stripped at the cross,
He gave everything.
His suffering exposed injustice,
yet His forgiveness
opened the way
to repentance and blessing.

This does not mean
calling evil good,
staying in danger,
or refusing wise help.

Today, the garments may be
a home, wages, or a reputation.
It means refusing to let
another person's injustice

decide who I become.

I can tell the truth,
seek what is right,
and entrust my heart
to the Father.

Where is Jesus inviting me
to reveal truth through generosity
rather than retaliation?

I can resist retaliation,
seek what is right,
and trust God to steady me.

Father, keep me from retaliation.
Give me courage to tell the truth,
wisdom to seek protection,
and love for those who harm me.
In Jesus' name, amen.