



*Jesus
wants you
to get off
your
donkey!*
(Luke 10:25-37)

followers of Christ 

16 Morrell Street
T.B. Costain/SC Johnson Community Centre
Brantford, Ontario N3T 4J2
519-758-5673
info@followers.ca ~ www.followers.ca

~ SUMMER HOURS for July and August: Sunday Worship at 10:00 am ~

suspension and added six months to her existing sentence. "The heart transplant is off the table," said McCloud's lawyer. "It's not the judge's fault. He was kind by giving her an opportunity to get a heart transplant.

Though we shake our heads at the dying woman's unwillingness to change, we act no better with our own Judge. Each of us stands before God with a lengthy rap sheet and heart trouble lies at the root of it all. Our hearts are distant, divided or deceitful. They're calloused or uncaring. Few of us share the confidence of David, "a man after God's own heart, who said, "Put me on trial, Lord, and cross-examine me. Test my motives and my heart." (Psalm 26:2)

Yet the truth is, God sees everything. "People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Sam. 16:7). The heart is the sum of our desires, the seat of our humanity, and the source of all that flows from our lives. All of us would be utterly condemned if our Judge were harsh and unloving.

Thankfully, he's not. Even though we stand before him time-after-time, guilty of the same sins and ungrateful for his mercy, he doesn't punish us as we deserve. Instead, he frees us with grace and forgiveness and qualifies us for a new heart. All we need do is respond as David did when adultery and murder shattered him. "Don't keep looking at my sins," he pleaded. "Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me." (Psalm. 51:9,10)

Fair and compassionate, our Judge is also patient. Though he demands accountability when we break his laws, he gives lots of opportunity for a change of heart leading to an abundant life here and eternity in heaven. But make no mistake. There is a limit to his mercy. If we ignore the need for inner purity and a healthy heart, focussing instead on the sinful and superficial, we'll one day stand before the Judge with the spiritual equivalent of diet pills and teeth whiteners. He'll have no choice but to punish us.

That notion angers those who feel entitled to forgiveness no matter what, but God's mercy must be mingled with justice. So our Lawyer, too, hopes we get the new heart we so desperately need.



RICK GAMBLE

~ sharing Jesus and the journey ~



Cross Current real help for real life

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Heart Disease

A New York woman is facing a death sentence for stealing from a drug store, but that's not what the court had in mind.

Earlier this year, 47-year-old Diane McCloud was serving 15 months in jail for two separate thefts, which took place while she was on parole for another crime. But while in jail, the woman was diagnosed with late stage congestive heart failure. Doctors said she'd be dead in less than six months without a transplant.

In an unprecedented move, Judge Francis Ricigliano showed compassion and suspended McCloud's sentence so she could get on a transplant waiting list. Though the ailing woman was less than halfway through her sentence, she was released from jail.

The judge's decision was a matter of life and death because prisoners are not usually placed on organ waiting lists, anti-rejection treatment is hard for prisoners to get, and the county wouldn't have picked up the costs of a transplant had McCloud stayed behind bars. Upon release, the woman was eligible for Medicaid to cover the operation.

Despite McCloud's long rap sheet, she was to have the transplant then probation instead of finishing her jail sentence. "I'm hoping she gets the heart she so desperately needs," said McCloud's lawyer, Leonard Isaacs.

But things hit a snag when Judge Ricigliano learned McCloud was still smoking despite a pledge to quit in light of the transplant. He threatened to send her back to jail. By the time McCloud appeared before him with an affidavit saying she was smoke-free, the judge had another priority. The woman had stolen \$500 worth of drug store merchandise, including diet pills and teeth whitening strips.

Taking no joy in his duty, Judge Ricigliano rescinded the original

