

THE GLORIOUS GAME  
[written oral form]

Mark 8:31-38  
Lent 2, Year B

February 28, 2021  
Gordon Allaby

A new amazing hockey player came into the light.

His name was Jay, but he called himself "Fils d'homme"  
(He was from Quebec.)

He came upon the scene later than most because he played university hockey and then coached that team for a couple of years.

The Toronto Maple Leafs had the option on him, and now he was ready to play in the NHL. However, there were issues.

Upper management was not happy with his conditions. Jay insisted he was to be a player coach and he would radically change the game. In addition, he would not submit to a contract, but would play for free.

He asked a lot, but he was a lot.

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The Leafs management said he could work out and practice with the team, as they would try to figure things out. It was still wintertime.

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Social media was going crazy over him. They said he was better than the Great One, better than Bobby Orr, better than McDavid and on & on.

Jay could do amazing things on the ice. Some claimed they were *miracles*.

The media suggested he was the Messiah who would finally bring the cup to Toronto.

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Jay ignored all that hype and focussed on working with his teammates and sharing his message of renewal.

Needless to say, they were astonished by his ability and his influence.

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Jay was showing them a new style of hockey. He was literally a game changer.

Jay proclaimed, "We will make this, we will make **all** this glorious."

He worked with his teammates on skating and stick-handling, but most of all on team work. It was to be a passing and skating game.

His new way was fast and beautiful. No longer would they dig out the puck against the boards. He said, "Scrums are for rugby."

Jay stressed, "Don't bother fighting for the puck or cycling in the corner." "We'll get it back and make the most of it."

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His fellow players loved what he was saying and showing. They could already see the improvement in their playing. The game became fun and glorious.

Even so, Jay did not stop there. He said the game is for everyone, and NOT just for the elite who were groomed through the system. Nor is it just for the affluent.

Jay told them we will go out to neighbourhood rinks. He said, "We will work with the children. We'll inspire and encourage them, and have fun playing with them."

He instructed them to go into the poorer areas and to provide the kids with sticks and equipment.

Jay commented, "And do not be surprised if you learn some things, too."

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The whole team became energized and enthusiastic. They enjoyed getting out and being real, hopeful-hockey-players.

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All these new and exciting activities did not go unnoticed.

Word of his achievements and inspiration was spreading all over, and that made those in control of the league very nervous. Yet, no one could deny his unbelievable skill as a player and his passion to make things better. He was awe inspiring.

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Finally, the season came to another disappointing end for the Leafs.

Management feared Jay was taking over the team, and they started putting more pressure on him to submit to their will. League officials, too, were adding their criticism.

Jay continued to confront them, which made them more angry.

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With the season over, he realized "his" team was not ready yet. So, he decided a retreat would be in order.

Jay invited some of the key players / his followers to go on a camping trip with him. The group went up north into the bush.

They went deep into the woods, and this made some of them uneasy. They felt they were in an unfamiliar and unsafe place.

Jay assured them that they were correct on both accounts.

He said, "If the forest feels safe, then you're in a controlled city park."  
Little did they know the symbolism in their experience.

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The last night, around the campfire, Jay asked them some interesting questions.  
In a methodical tone, he said, "200 years ago in the antebellum South, slaves were very spiritual with a deep faith in God.

The White plantation owners told them about God.  
Those in control-White-People prayed to the same God."

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Jay asked, "Who do you think God favoured?"  
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Many in the group concluded that God was blessing the Whites and ignoring the Black slaves, but were afraid to admit that.

One player did speak out and said, "The White people lived in privilege and luxury. The Black Slaves had nothing and were abused."

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After a long silence, Jay asked another question,  
"Why did the slaves continue to trust in God?"

Before anyone could respond, he put out another question,  
"What is wrong with our own expectations?"

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They were all baffled by his questions.

Jay stood up, and with a firmer voice declared,  
"I will be subject to a lot of abuse and ridicule by the authorities.  
They will 'cancel' me.  
Nevertheless, they cannot keep me down."

Peter, one of the better players, stood up and in front of everyone, pulled Jay aside.

Peter started to rebuke Jay...thinking he was going overboard.

Jay threw off Peter's hand from his arm, and yelled,  
"YOU Get Behind Me,.....You are talking like a Goon.  
Set you mind on glorious things and Not on the ways of greed, violence and injustice.

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There was no additional conversation until after they hiked out to their waiting bus, the next morning.  
Little did they realize they were still deep in the woods.

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To their surprise, there was a large crowd of fans waiting for them, and numerous media networks were there too with their cameras ready.

Lorenda Reddekopp of CBC pushed a microphone in front of Jay, and asked, "We love what you do;  
we love what you say;  
we love what you offer, how do we join in?  
How do we get it?"  
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Jay calmly, carefully said,  
"If **any** want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

These are **not** steps. All three are the One way of being."

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Everyone stood with a blank star.  
Even his teammates were dumbfounded and perplexed.

Jay continued, "You must reject your sense of entitlement.  
You must end your power over others.  
You must stop your lust for wealth and prestige.  
You must deny who you were conditioned to be.

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When you play the game, do not take advantage of an opponent's weakness.  
Do not insult them. Do not defeat them.  
Do not harass them and do not cheat when the ref is not looking.  
No longer is your motivation to dominate others.

Play the game gloriously.  
A win gains but 2 points and feeds your ego, but so much is lost in the process.  
Their defeat cannot be your gain.

When you play, the least will be first.

When you **release** everything for others, you will understand glory.

For what will it profit if you gain material things and temporal power, yet forfeit what is truly precious?  
What is truly precious is living in and surrounded by love.

Moreover, the consequence is your **cross** -- the condemnation by those in power who do NOT get it.

They will seek to destroy you, and knowing that IS your burden to carry..... with love.

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*Truth be told, we will not win the cup next season.  
Hey, we may not even win a game. Yet, it can be glorious.*

Then, Jay asked, Will you follow my way and follow what I teach?"

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The players peppered him with questions.

He gave a final response:

"What is Glorious is before you.

It is yours to choose and follow..... or you are not with me.

The Glorious way / God's way is Now."

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They began to realize that this was not a game.

What they heard was real. It was about being alive.

Glory be