

RISKING EVERYTHING FOR GOD

Matt. 25:14-30

INTRODUCTION

-- A Parable of Risking.

A central theme here is: "How much are we willing to risk for God?"

The tragic lesson is that those who can afford least to do so are often the ones who are afraid to take any risk at all for the Lord.

Contrary to the worldly wisdom which advises people to risk nothing unless they can afford to lose it all, the Word of God here seems to imply that none of us can afford NOT to take risks for God; the one sure way to lose everything is to refuse to risk whatever we have for the Lord; and the less we have the more foolish it is to try to keep and preserve it.

The first rule for safety in investment is the preservation of capital.

That may be a wise policy for some financial investors during some economic times, but it is poor advice for Christians in spiritual things.

I. The Administration of a Trust

A. This parable is not just about handling money. It is more about the administration of a sacred trust.

B. Christians view life as a trust from God. God has entrusted us with certain gifts, talents, abilities, time, possessions, personalities, intellectual capacities, vocational skills, physical health, emotional and spiritual strengths, values and ideals inherited from our families or nations, and so forth.

The list could be extended almost indefinitely. Whatever makes up your total life, or whatever is good, and beautiful, and of any value in your total life, this is all a trust from God to you.

The question is, "What are you going to do with it?" Most people decide to make of it whatever they can, some for purely physical and earthly reasons, and some do so for the glory of God and the good of their fellow human beings.

Jesus spoke plainly about the risk of discipleship. In Luke 14:27, according to Phillips translation, Jesus said, "The man who will not take up his cross and follow in my footsteps cannot be my disciple.... Don't start to build something without first working out the cost of it, to see if you can afford to finish it."

There is no way we can meet and fulfill the demands of Christian discipleship without risk.

Jesus wanted no misunderstanding among the potential disciples. There is no guarantee of earthly joy, comfort, plenty, and riches for the Christian.

Christian discipleship has a calculated risk of involvement with others and with certain problems of our life together with others. We cannot be indifferent or uninvolved, and it may cost some of us a great deal, perhaps condemnation, poverty, or death.

Jesus rejected that jaunty discipleship or impulsive loyalty that was merely a quick response to the emotional inspiration of the moment.. He knew very well that there were those who were of the "fringe fellowship" who hung on at the edge of the crowd and "followed him from afar off." Jesus wanted full-hearted devotion, without any "if" clauses in the contract. His disciples must understand that if they chose to follow him there could be no returning.

~~Christians view life as a trust from God.~~

The first two investors in this parable were willing to risk everything for their master.

The third investor really didn't know the master very well, and he was afraid to take a risk, which brought him severe judgment.

II. The Confusion between Preserving and Risking.

A. The third servant has been criticized through the years, but he would have had many sympathizers in the audience as Jesus told this story, as I suspect he has today.

According to Rabbinic law, burying things was good, because it absolved one of responsibility in the event of loss.

In ancient times money was often hidden for safekeeping ("like a treasure hidden in a field," Mt. 13:44).

The earth was the first-century safe deposit box. Many would say the third servant did the right and sensible thing.

After all, the first two servants COULD have lost their investments.

Even banks can go bankrupt.

"Isn't it better," some would say, "to secure so great a trust against any risk at all, and to preserve it all intact to give back to the master?"

-- No, it isn't.

He was confusing PRESERVING and RISKING.

Let me explain.

You see, he not only did not know the master very well, but he had evidently failed to listen carefully to his instructions before he went away. He did not understand what his master wanted him to do in the interim while he was away.

In the parallel passage in Lk. 19, the master says, "Trade with these till I come."

One talent like this represented 15 years wages of a laborer. This was a large sum of money.

In that day the Jewish rabbis did not see their job as one of propogation but as one of preservation. They thought their main duty was to keep the law to pass on to the next generation of Jews until the Messiah came.

Christians after the time of Jesus and the Apostles do not see their job as keeping the Gospel, but as giving it away.

Jesus offered a new and radical alternative to the concept of preserving; he challenged his disciples to invest and increase and evangelize and spread the Gospel around, not to bury it in one spot.

~~depersonalizing and~~ Some churches seem to have fallen into this ancient heresy of preservation; ~~they build a building, pay for it, maintain and preserve it.~~

They build a tradition, guard it, protect it and preserve it, and think they have done something very wonderful.

Jesus made a frontal assault on this mind-set.

Neither an individual, a business man, nor a church can ever build anything thriving, dynamic, vital, alive, or worthwhile, without a continual element of RISK!

~~If~~ Jesus was saying that these are the latter days; the Messiah has already come once, and our times call not for preservers but for risk-takers.

When Christians get it in their head that the preservation of the institutions and traditions of the church is the most important thing, then they will become almost paranoid and will do almost anything to see that everything is preserved and handed down intact to the next generation, even though this spirit will stifle any real growth in the church.

III. The Relation between Risking and Grace

A. The third servant saw no Grace in his Master.

1. He called the Master "a hard man."

When you think of your master like that you will likely proceed out of fear and caution.

2. If we live in fear of failure, we tend to bury our talents in the ground.

B. The Master was very displeased because the servant had not been willing to risk for him. (See vs. 27). The faithless servant was risking something anyway. He was risking the judgment of the master, because he was afraid to invest the master's property which was intrusted to him.

Story of Dr. Lee R. Scarborough, burden-bearer for God, and soul-winner and evangelist without comparison, told a story of how he was called to the side of a drunkard, Christ-rejecting poor man who had shot himself.

He told how the man called to his side each of his children to tell them goodbyes, and finally his wife came. He said:

"Molly, you have been a good wife. These 16 years you did all the praying. You studied the Bible and taught the Word of God to our children. You went to church and lived a godly life. I haven't helped you at all, Molly. For 16 years you have stood for me in religion. Now, I am dying and I want to know if you are going to stand for me at the judgment bar of God."

The pale woman with tear stained face turned to Dr. Scarborough for an answer. He said, "Old fellow, your faithful wife has done everything she could for you, but at the judgment bar of God you will have to stand in your own shoes."

The poor man died, and went out to meet God unprepared.

C. The question is not about the number of talents we have. In relation to God most of us are one-talent Christians, because his gift is salvation, and the trust is the gospel.

We are free to risk; we are commanded to risk. But we are not free to do nothing.

We are free from fear of "the hard man," for we should know our master as a gracious Lord, and our salvation comes through his grace.

Some have a negative morality which majors on "not doing evil" instead of on "doing righteousness."

Some churches concentrate on burying and funerals, rather than on clipping coupons of eternal dividends in the form of a steady stream of newborn souls for Jesus and developing mature believers for the Body of Christ.

CONCLUSION

The question Jesus will ask every Christian and every church when He comes again will not be "Did you preserve?" but "Did you risk?"

What have you risked for Jesus lately?

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RISKING EVERYTHING FOR GOD

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INTRODUCTION

Here we have a **Parable of Risking**. The central theme is, "How much are we willing to risk for God?"

The tragic lesson here is that those who can afford least to do so are often the ones who are afraid to take any risk at all for the Lord. Contrary to the worldly wisdom which advises people to risk nothing unless they can afford to lose it, the Word of God here implies that none of us can afford NOT to take risks for God.

The one sure way to lose everything is to refuse to risk whatever we have for the Lord.

And the less we have the more foolish it is to try to keep and preserve it, rather than to use it for the glory of God.

The first rule for safety in investment is the preservation of capital. That may be wise for financial investors during some economic times, but it is poor advice for Christians in SPIRITUAL things.

Some people listen only to their intellect in matters where they should allow their spiritual sensitivity to have more influence.

If we listened only to our intellect, we'd never have a love affair. We'd never have a true friendship. We'd never learn to appreciate the beauty of great art or music. We'd never go into business, because we'd be too cynical. And that's nonsense.

The best part of life is built on love, beauty, and wonder, not on intellectual principles. Love for God our Heavenly Father, and love for people, this is the basic stuff of life.

This is the teaching of all major Christian bodies, regardless of denomination or theology.

This reminds me of the story of some Presbyterians who were having a convention in Scotland. After a couple of days of sitting on hard pews, a group decided to relax and stretch their legs in the countryside. Soon they approached a rickety old bridge over a river, but were so busy talking they missed a sign warning, "Keep Off the Bridge."

A local villager saw them step onto the dangerous span and yelled for them to stop. "That's all right," one of the ministers responded. "We're here from the Presbyterian convention."

"I dinna care about that," came the reply, "but if ye go much further, ye'll all be Baptists!"

Whether Presbyterians or Baptists, we all agree that love, the love of God and our fellow human beings, is the central thrust of the Bible and of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that love cannot be restricted by purely intellectual or physical concepts.

I. First, we see in this parable, **The Administration of a Trust.**

A. This parable is not just about handling money.

It is about the administration of a sacred trust.

B. Christians view life as a trust from God.

God has entrusted us with certain gifts, talents, abilities, possessions, personalities, capacities, vocational skills, physical health, emotional and spiritual strengths, values and ideals inherited from our families or nation, etc.

The list could be extended almost indefinitely.

Whatever makes up your total life, or whatever is good, beautiful, and of any value in your total life, this is all a trust from God to you. It is not because of your own native superiority.

1. The question is, "What are you going to do with it all?" Most people decide to make of it whatever they can, but some do it for purely physical and earthly reasons.

2. However, some do so for the glory of God and the good of their fellow human beings.

C. The first two investors in this parable were willing to risk everything for their master.

The third investor really didn't know the master very well, and he was afraid to take a risk, which brought him severe judgment.

D. Elsewhere Jesus spoke plainly about the risk of discipleship. In Luke 14:27, according to Phillips' translation, Jesus said, "The man who will not take up his cross and follow in my footsteps cannot be my disciple....Don't start to build something without first working out the cost of it, to see if you can afford to finish it."

1. There is no way we can meet and fulfill the demands of Christian discipleship without some risk.

2. Jesus wanted no misunderstanding among the potential disciples. There is no guarantee of earthly joy, comfort, and happiness for the christian, whether young or old.

✓ People of all ages need to find the comfort level in the risks of life, like the 62 year old widow who started dating again. Once she was sitting in a golf cart when her escort reached over, patted her leg and said, "Now I suppose you're going to tell me I can **look** but **don't touch**." "Robert," she replied without hesitation, "**at my age** you can **touch**--but **don't look**!!"

3. Christian discipleship has a calculated risk of involvement with others and with certain problems of our life together with others.

The greatest joys in life lie not in looking back in nostalgia, not looking forward in dread or anticipation, but in making the most of present relationships and opportunities and in accepting life as God has given it to us **today**.

We cannot be indifferent or uninvolved in our spiritual commitment, and it may cost some of us a great deal, perhaps condemnation, poverty, or even death.

4. Jesus rejected that jaunty discipleship or impulsive loyalty that was merely a quick knee-jerk response to the emotional surge of the moment. He knew very well that there were those who were on the "fringe fellowship" who hung on at the edge of the crowd and "followed him from afar off."

5. Jesus wanted full-hearted commitment and devotion, without any "if" clauses in the contract.

His disciples must understand that if they choose to follow him there can be no returning.

II. If we are to Understand this Parable, we must notice the Confusion between PRESERVING and RISKING.

A. The third servant has been criticized through the years, but he would have had many sympathizers in the audience as Jesus told the story, and as I suspect also in some modern crowds.

1. According to Rabbinic Law, burying things was good, because it absolved one of responsibility in the event of loss.

In ancient times Money was often hidden for safekeeping ("like a treasure hidden in a field," Mt. 13:44).

The earth was the first-century safe deposit box, since they didn't have a Barnett Bank, or some other bank, on every corner!

Many people back then would say the third servant did the right and sensible thing. After all, the first two servants COULD have LOST all of their investments.

Even **banks** can go bankrupt .

"Isn't it better," some would say, "to secure so great a trust against any risk at all, and to preserve it all intact to give back to the master?"

2. Well, No, it ISN'T. That really is not better. That's precisely the point.

He was confusing **PRESERVING** and **RISKING**.

Let me explain.

You see, he not only did not know the master very well, but he had evidently failed to listen carefully to his instructions before the boss went away. He didn't understand what his master wanted him to do in the interim while he was away.

In the parallel passage in Lk. 19, the master says, "Trade with these till I come."

One talent like this represented 15 years wages of a common laborer in those days. This was a very large sum of money.

B. In that day the Jewish rabbis didn't see their job as one of propogation, but as one of **PRESERVATION**.

They thought their main duty was to keep the law to pass on to the next generation of Jews until the Messiah came.

1. This is one of the principal differences between the Jewish religion and the Christian religion.

You see, Christians after the time of Jesus and the Apostles didn't see their job as KEEPING the Gospel, but as GIVING IT AWAY.

2. Jesus Christ offered a new and radical alternative to the concept of **PRESERVING** religious institutions and traditions.

He challenged his disciples to invest and increase and evangelize and spread the Gospel around the world, not to bury it in one spot.

C. Some denominations and churches seem to have fallen into this ancient heresy of PRESERVATION at any cost.

They build their institutions, guard them, protect them and preserve them, and then think they have done something very wonderful.

1. Jesus made a frontal assault on this mind-set.

Neither an individual, a business man, nor a church can ever build anything thriving, dynamic, vital, alive, or worthwhile, without a continual element of RISK!

2. When Christian leaders get it in their head that the **preservation** of the institutions of the church or denomination is the most important thing, then they will become almost paranoid and will do almost anything to see that everything is preserved and handed down intact to the next generation, even though this spirit will stifle any real spiritual growth in the church or denomination.

D. Beloved, this is what so greatly concerns me in the fundamentalist takeover of several churches, denominations, and political coalitions in our day.

1. I am thinking in particular of some seminary presidents who at first spoke out boldly and courageously about the unchristian tactics of those who launched blatant crusades to "go for the jugular" and grab control of many fine academic institutions. However, under unbelievable threats and intimidation, and in the face of many unfair attacks, with their jobs and retirement benefits threatened, and their careers jeopardized, many of these leaders allowed themselves to be "muzzled" and stopped speaking out for the truth. Some of them admitted that they eventually came to feel that the battle was hopeless, and that they were trying to do only "damage control," and save their seminaries. That is their own words according to the records. Translated, it means that they sacrificed their integrity on the altar of expediency, compromise, and surrender, all under the flimsy claim that they were just trying to "Preserve" their institution.

Many of us seriously question whether, in the long run, any Christian institution or church, where there is no academic freedom, no real freedom of conscience, and where there is no atmosphere for the unfettered use of the best tools of scholarship,

and where only a very narrow fundamentalist and literalistic interpretation is allowed, is really WORTH PRESERVING!

As Walter Shurden expresses it so well in the "Address to the Public, from the Steering Committee of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," in 1991, "to spend our time trying to reclaim a human institution is to make more of that institution than we ought to make." (You can read all about this and the moderate movement in the book, The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC, published by Mercer University Press.)

Many of us feel it is better to give up control of the old institutions which have served and outlived their usefulness.

It is better to spend our time, efforts, and resources in developing and building new institutions and churches where the new wine of the Spirit can be poured into New Wineskins as new vessels made fully available for God to use in these days of our century.

CONCLUSION: That's **exactly what we are doing here at Heritage!**

If you agree with us come along with us, and let's walk this pathway together!

We aren't afraid of the judgment of the men of our time.

We fear only the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is not a "hard" Master to serve; he is a gracious Master, and we look forward to answering to Him at His great Judgment Seat.

We as Christian believers are free to risk;

we are COMMANDED TO RISK.

But we are NOT FREE TO DO NOTHING!

When we meet Jesus he will ask us, not "did you preserve what I entrusted to you?" He will ask, "What did you risk for me?"

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