

Risk

by Richard Lawler

To laugh, is to risk playing the fool. To weep, is to risk appearing sentimental.

To reach out to another, is to risk involvement. To expose feelings, is to risk exposing our true selves.

To put your ideas, your dreams, before the crowd is to risk loss.

To love, is to risk not being loved in return. To live, is to risk dying.

To hope, is to risk despair. To try at all, is to risk failure.

But risks must be taken, Because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.

The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing.

They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they simply cannot learn, change, feel, grow, love, live...

Chained by their attitudes they are slaves. ONLY THE PERSON WHO RISKS IS FREE.

Risk is everywhere. The fear of feeling foolish and the risk of failing can be intense. Chuck Swindoll describes the experience of a man called Robert Wise he said,

"I had a friend who used to call me on the phone on Monday mornings. I'd pick up the phone and this minister would say 'Hello, this is God. I have a gift for you today. I want to give you the gift of failing. Today you do not have to succeed. I grant that to you.' Then he would hang up. I would sit there for ten minutes staring at the wall. The first time I couldn't believe it. It was really the gospel. God's love means it's even OK to fail...You just have to be you."

The third servant's fear prevented him from taking any risks and thereby hindered him being able to live life to the full. Following Jesus necessitates taking risks, being prepared to follow Jesus no matter what lies ahead. Our churches will face challenging times ahead. There will be concerns regarding finances, resources, and how to best engage with our community. We have all changed as a result of this pandemic, our community has changed. Discerning the path forward needs wisdom, creativity, openness and no doubt risk taking. Richard Baukham stated, ***"God's gifts are to be risked in new ventures in God's service. Every new step in living for God is a risk."***²

I was reading about a survey that was taken of a group of people who were 95 years old or older. They were asked, "If you could live your life over again what would you do differently?" Many answers were given but the most common were, "I would reflect more", "I would risk more" and "I would do more things that would live on after I am dead".

We have received amazing blessings from God and we have been given gifts to use in His service. God asks only that we use them, don't hide them, ignore them or allow them to lie dormant, but use these gifts. Invest these gifts in the lives of others.

So we are challenged to consider: Is our approach to faith more about safety, reassurance and security or is it about risk-taking, openness and courage? Are we involved in "letting the gospel loose" in our communities? How will we monitor that we are not neglecting the gifts God has given us? How will we respond when fear and a desire for security threaten to inhibit us from pursuing what God is calling us towards?

Perhaps this week we could take some time to prayerfully consider the gifts God has given us and how we have been using them. We could be open to any ways in which our fears or desires for security may have hindered us in using our gifts. We can be open to the promptings of God's Spirit regarding the opportunities we now have and trust God to enable us to be courageous enough to take up a risky path.

*Rev Joy Blamires
15th November, 2020*

² Richard Baukham, cited in Roger van Han, *The Lectionary Commentary: The Gospels*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001) accessed through https://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_november_15_2020

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE



Lord God, our guide and our goal, today we bring before You our thanks and praise for the many goodnesses and gifts we find in this world from You and others around us. We also offer our prayers for those around us who are suffering or troubled.

We give thanks for lifting of restrictions placed on us for the common good.

We give thanks for the dedication and commitment of the health professionals who have worked hard through the recent months to keep our community safe and well - doctors nurses, hospital staff, paramedics and all those involved in the health sector.

We ask that those who have suffered mental health issues during the lockdown may find Your peace and serenity

We rejoice in the reconnection with families and loved ones.

We pray for small businesses trying to pick up the threads and keep afloat in still uncertain times. For those who have lost jobs or are in financial hardship, we ask for them to be given a sense of your strength and purpose.

We pray for VCE students at this time of the year, always stressful but made more so by their interrupted schooling

Lord, through You all things are possible. May your wisdom and purpose continue to inspire those who have sought a vaccine for the Covid 19 virus, and may our leaders have the wisdom to see the benefits shared fairly around our Commonwealth

Lord, we look forward to again coming together in person and seeing each other face to face as we worship You. May this day be sooner rather than later and may those who have been put in positions of authority over us have the good sense to let us resume our services without delay.

We offer up to Your caring love those in special need of our thoughts and prayers - those named in the pew sheet and those others known to us whom we mention in our hearts

Thank You for the members of our Church Council and others in our congregation who have continued to lead our Church

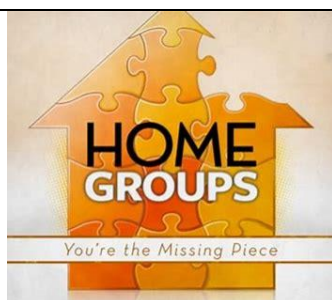
May your light shine on our home groups when they meet to explore your word and share their faith journeys

We receive with gladness the ministry of Joy Blamires among us: we give You our thanks for her sharing of her faith, and her commitment to us, to our faith and to our spiritual wellbeing.

We pray for the well being and safety of Your Church throughout the world. We pray for fellow Christians in danger or suffering for holding to the faith we share in You and especially today we put before you the Christian communities in the province of Aceh in Indonesia

Lord God, you light our pathways through good times and bad alike. We rejoice in your faithfulness to us and for your manifold gifts to us; and especially for the life and example of Your Son Jesus, who taught us to pray to You in these words

Peter Hume



Home Group Notes

Anyone is welcome to join with us in this time of relaxed sharing of our ideas and responses to the theme we are exploring.

A Risky Path

Read Matthew 25:14-30.

Have a look at the parables recorded in Matthew 24:36-25:12. What common themes can you see in these stories?

The Parable that we are looking at is linked to these parables also.

What themes does it share with these parables?

In Matthew's gospel this is the final parable. In the next chapter we begin to read about the plot to kill Jesus.

What significance and emphasis may the placement of this parable bring to its meaning?

There is always a risk in looking at a parable if we treat it as an allegory. A parable has a primary focus, the details are not necessarily meant to be extrapolated in an allegorical way.

What do you see as the main message of this parable?

This parable seems to give an emphasis on duty, hard work and responsibility. We also know that our acceptability in the sight of God is not based on "our deeds". So how does the gospel of the grace and love of God relate to this parable?

The third servant took what he perceived to be a safe pathway, despite the fact that he describes the master as a shrewd and successful businessman. His passivity was his downfall. R. T. France has said, "Risk is at the heart of discipleship"³.

Passivity often seems to afflict the church. In what ways could we be being challenged to become more "risk takers" as followers of Jesus?

These parables are parables of the kingdom of God. There are consequences, rewards or punishments for the servants in this parable. These parables were addressed to the disciples, how do you think they may have interpreted this parable and its consequences? Vs 23 is often quoted when someone has died who had an obvious strong faith in God.

What sort of characteristics do you think may apply to a "good and trustworthy" servant of God? This verse also states that this servant may "enter into the joy of the master", what do you understand by this phrase? The third servant was rebuked for his inactivity. The punishment for him is to be "thrown into outer darkness" what may this refer to?

³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Raids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007) 956

There was a popular saying in days gone by “If God seems far away guess who moved?” It can be useful in some situations, but sometimes people have certainly not intentionally moved away from God. Could this saying help our understanding of “outer darkness”?

R. T. France in his commentary asks the question: “Is it reading too much into the parable to envisage heaven as a state not of indolent pleasure but of active cooperation with the purposes of God as well as enjoyment of his favour?”⁴

What do you think?

The use of the word “talent” as in a gift or skill may have evolved from interpretations of this parable.⁵ God has given us significant resources in various forms. Some Christians have sought to use this passage to justify profound accumulation of wealth based particularly on vs 29. How do you think we should understand this verse? (The same saying is used in Matthew 13:12 referring there to progress in spiritual enlightenment).

Joy Blamires is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Home Group Nov 19 2020 Time: 02:00 PM Melbourne Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/91441661378?pwd=UHp0Q1pxdlorbEZYSUxpL2FzS0lLQT09>

Meeting ID: 914 4166 1378. Passcode: 138201

One tap mobile +61731853730,,91441661378#,,,,,0#,,138201# Australia

⁴ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 955

⁵ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 951