

Make Your Life Big - Risk Great Things For The Sake Of Christ (continued) - We spent our last teaching looking at great *risk takers* in the pages of Scripture. Remind yourself that **God put their stories in there**. God wanted you and me to **see** people laying everything on the line for His kingdom. The gravity of this age pulls us all into ourselves. And Jesus says you and I can never live big lives like that. We can live *busy* lives, but never *big* lives until we learn that God's loving-kindness is **better** than life on our own terms.

Today I want to consider another aspect of God's call to risk all for His kingdom. To do this I want to look at one of the most commonly asked questions regarding the way God reveals His will for our lives in this present age:

- 1) **WHY DOESN'T GOD TELL US MORE THAN HE DOES?** - There's a great text to at least begin unraveling this question: **James 4:13-15** - **"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit'— [14] yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. [15] Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.'"**

There are many Christians who see in these verses some kind of command to tack the words **"If the Lord will..."** on to everything they say about the future. I have no major argument with that, though I think James is hunting after a bigger issue. **It is arrogant to assume more knowledge of the future than we actually possess**. That's the issue. Of particular interest is the way James links our arrogance with our **travel plans** and **journeys**. Think of all the places we go to and from in an average week. Think of the number of vehicles on the road. Think of the tremendous odds that you may not arrive safely at your destination.

"Life is uncertain!" There's James's message in a nutshell. And here's how this all relates to this message on risking great things for God. Most of the time, the reason we **don't** risk great things for God is we are afraid of losing our **security** if we do. We see stepping out of our comfort zone and investing a great big slice of who we are and have on the cause of Christ as being dangerous to our security.

That's where James comes in. **You and I don't have security in this life**. Security and safety and this world are **illusions**. We get the truth all backwards. The only way to **keep** your life eternally strong and safe is to **risk** it for Christ. Life is far too uncertain **not** to be risked in great things for Christ. Is this registering in your heart today? **You can't keep your life safe in this world anyway. That's why you should invest it for Christ.**

- 2) **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PEOPLE TURN THEIR BACKS ON RISK FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD?**

I said at the beginning of this message that we must choose either to **risk** our lives for Christ or we will, by default, **waste** them. Is that statement too strong? Does the Bible sanction that kind of teaching? Look with me at the most famous story of **risk** and **waste** in the whole Bible:

The book of **Numbers, chapters 13 and 14**, is must reading for our study on risking life or wasting it. At the time of this text the Israelites had been amazingly delivered from the bondage of Egypt less than three years. They are on the border of the Promised Land - Canaan. Now it is time to go in and receive all that God has for them.

At God's command, Moses sends in twelve spies to search out the land. Two of them, Joshua and Caleb, come back with a glowing, positive assessment, but the other ten rejected the idea that Israel would ever be able to take the land. The enemies were too great. The risks were too high. And the people believed the ten rather than Joshua and Caleb. In fact, the people picked up rocks to **stone** Joshua and Caleb for their foolish, risk-filled words. Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes and pleaded with the people to reconsider, but the people would have none of it.

So what happens to these people? They got their wish. They didn't have to listen to Joshua and Caleb. They didn't risk taking the land God had for them. But what did they get? All of the men who had been part of the crowd delivered from Egypt - who had seen God's great delivering power and greatness, yet refused to venture into the land as Joshua and Caleb had urged - these men all died off, still in the wilderness. And the rest of the people wandered aimlessly for another 37 years.

Now do you see what I'm saying? We're so educated to think that the opposite of **risk** is **security**. And in this world's system of investment and finance, that may well be the case. But in the Kingdom of God it is always different. In the Kingdom of God the opposite of **risk** is never **security**. The opposite of **risk** is **waste - wasted lives and wasted years**.

- 3) **RISK IS RIGHT, EVEN THOUGH NOT ALL RISK TAKERS WIN, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN**

John the Baptist risked sticking up for righteousness when he called king Herod an adulterer. He got his head chopped off. Earlier he mentioned Paul's determined risk to continue on to Jerusalem because it was the right thing to do. He said he was willing to leave the results of his trip with God.

When he got to Jerusalem he was put in prison for two years, then he was shipped off to Rome where he was executed two years later. We're not promised immediate success for each risk taken - for each venture engaged upon. But risk is still **right**, even when it is not **immediately successful**.

Why is this true? First, because each risk taken for Christ, even when very costly, makes Christ and His kingdom look like treasure. Second, each risk taken resists the **illusion of security** in this world. And finally, each risk taken, even if **not** rewarded outwardly in this age, is an incredibly fruitful investment in Christ's kingdom in the age to come.

Let me try to wrap up this teaching with the strong, bracing comfort and encouragement of the Scriptures, even in the face of visibly **unrewarded risk** for Christ in this age: **Luke 21:12-18** - **"But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. [13] This will be your opportunity to bear witness. [14] Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, [15] for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. [16] You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. [17] You will be hated by all for my name's sake. [18] But not a hair of your head will perish."**

Jesus prepares His followers for the risky days ahead. **"Stay true to me. Don't try to hide your testimony. I will give you the words to say. But there is a risk to be faced. Some of you will be put to death (16b)."** This is where the risk comes in. Not **all** who bear witness to Christ will be put to death. But **some** of them will. No one knows in advance which group he is in. We simply take our stand for Christ, and for **some** there is the price of death.

Then come the strange words of **verse 18** - **"Yet not a hair on your head will perish."** This makes no sense when you string all the ideas together. Read and be amazed. **"Some of you will be put to death....yet not a hair on your head will perish."** What can these words possibly mean? How can they both be true?

Perhaps the best explanation can be found in Paul's words in **Romans 8:35-39** - "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' [37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The point of Paul's words is **not** that the love of Christ keeps these bad things from happening to Christians. The important word of the text is found in **verse 37** - "No, **in** all these things we are **more** than conquerors through him who loved us."

The important words are the words "**in**" and "**more**." "**In all these things....**" We conquer **in** these things, never by **avoiding** these things. And the promise is bigger than **survival**. We do "**more**" than that because we are blessed with something that can never be taken away by any earthly enemy.

This is the same message Jesus gave when He said "**Some of you will be put to death but not a hair on your head will perish.**" No risk taken for Christ and His Kingdom can separate us from the Love of Christ. No risk taken in genuine love and loyalty to Jesus can ever **not** conquer - even risks that end in distress, pain, loss or even death. **On the far side of every risk taken for Christ there is victory - even if the risk ended in death itself!**

Please remember what Paul says in Romans 8. His words are a needed kick in the pants to today's comfort geared, user friendly, conveniently scheduled, program serving church. **Conquering only comes through risk - on the far side of kingdom risk and sacrifice. Conquering comes "in" the pain and sweat and grit of risk, never by avoiding risk for earthly security.**

Live **big**, not merely **busy**. Risk and invest for the cause of Christ. Do something drastic for Christ while you still have time, strength and breath. Get out of the boat. Put something on the line. Take hands with Christ and follow Him through whatever it takes to stretch your faith beyond what you know you could do without His provision. Prove His conquering power in your service and sacrifice for Him.