

“Life Is Worth Losing”

Mark 8:31-38
September 21, 2008

“Whoever wants to save his own life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”

When Barry Minkow was a small child, his mother worked for a carpet cleaning company. Since she could not afford a babysitter, she took him to work with her – so he learned the basics of cleaning carpets. When he was older, he helped her with her work.

At age 15, Barry started his own cleaning company. He was too young to get a driver’s license, so he paid friends to drive him. By the time he got a license, he already had a backlog of satisfied customers. By the time he was 21, he was a multimillionaire. He was invited to appear on Oprah and other shows. In 5 years, he became one of the best-known young businessmen in the country.

Then the bubble burst. Barry’s corporation developed a series of legal problems that destroyed his reputation, for he was charged with embezzling millions from his own company. He was forced into bankruptcy. Even worse, he came under investigation for several other illegal activities.

The strain had taken its toll. Before he was old enough to vote, he had bleeding ulcers, and the pressure led him to erratic behavior and explosions of temper. It is the sad story of a brilliant young man whose future seemed to be threatened when he was barely old enough to shave.

(Luke 9:23-27) speaks of losing one’s life for Jesus’ sake and that means to find a larger goal to life than merely chasing dollars – or some of the other lesser things to which we give our lives.

Children at play are always losing things and finding them again. And so the question of ownership often arises. To settle the disputes, there is a simple saying that goes like this: “Finders keepers, losers weepers.”

As we become older we might be inclined to protest this saying, not only because it is plainly unfair, but also because it is such an obvious expression of selfishness. Yet, what the children declare when they say, “finders keepers, losers weepers” is, in a very real sense, the code many people live by.

Jesus said exactly the opposite. He said, “Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”

WE say: “Finders keepers, losers weepers.”

JESUS says: “You must lose your life.” Or “Finders weepers, losers keepers.”

The person who loses his life in concern for others will find a new and more purposeful vocation. The person whose whole purpose centers on themselves, on always getting, will in the long run end up losing everything.

“Whoever would save his life will lose it.” Jesus asserts this as a fact – not just as an idea. The laws of living are such that you cannot save your life by trying to save it, but only by daring to lose it. You must die to self if you would have life at its fullest and best.

“The plain truth is, there is something divine in us that will not let us be at peace until we rise above ourselves and reach toward the greatness of which we are capable as sons and daughters of God.” (Tuttle, PR, 6/92)

The more tightly we cling to something, the more it costs us when we finally lose it. AND WE WILL LOSE IT. WE WILL LOSE IT ALL.

There are two sure bets in life:

- everything we have in life we will lose
- everything we give to Christ we will keep.

The only thing we won't lose is the eternal life we have in Christ.

“Only one life, will soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.”

If you try to manipulate and control the people around you, you will lose them.

We work and slave and sacrifice to have things – only to lose them all. And to find that everything we have given our life to is gone. Were you watching the news reports from the hurricane areas lately? How tightly are you clinging to the things that can be washed away?

We run, and exercise, and work out, and diet, and have a tuck here and a nip there - clinging desperately to the god of youth. But each passing day flaunts our foolishness in our face. (How silly to see 60/70 year old movie stars with the face of a 20/30 year old, because they have had their skin stretched tight.)

How many times have I heard someone say – “I gained 100 pounds because I ate, and I ate because I was unhappy.” (a physical answer for a spiritual problem.)

I remember several years ago this great new worship song that came out of Detroit. It was recorded by some country hunk.

Well if I had the money, tell ya what I'd do.
Go down town, buy a Ford truck or two.
Crazy 'bout a Ford truck.”

One Ford truck would be enough.. (actually there are some who think there is nothing quite like a Chevy truck, but that is another subject!) **The issue is a society that teaches us from the time we are tiny that the essence of life is in getting. And it's a lie.**

Harve was wearing a t-shirt the other day with a fascinating line on it: “The opposite of poverty is not too much. The opposite of poverty is enough.” Jesus tells us that life is in giving. He wanted us to know that the meaning of life is found in giving it away. You only keep what you give up. It is so opposite of everything we have been taught from day one in our life.

Do you realize that the entire US economy is built on the idea of you spending more money than you actually take in? If we all stopped spending more than we make, our economy would be in trouble. Do you realize the government spent million or billions writing you a letter earlier this year telling you that they were going to give you \$300 (whose money was it in the first place?), another letter telling you that it was coming soon, sending you \$600 per person – and strongly encouraging you to spend it? (not save it, not give it to a charity, not tithe it, but spend it).

But I tell you the truth from God. At some time or other, in some way or other, we will give up everything we own except for the things we have given to God. The things that are eternal. I’ve been in the ministry for almost 29 years. In that time I have conducted a whole bunch of funerals. Let me tell you something, listen to me. I have not seen one funeral car yet with a U-haul hooked up to it. We leave this world with the same exact amount that we came into it with.

Joan of Arc, when she was condemned to die at the stake, at first consented to retract her alleged heresies, feeling herself unable to face so terrible an ordeal. But then she discovered that she could not endure to live with herself, that it was actually easier to face death at the stake than to face life without honor or peace. And 3 days later she retracted her recantation.

God loves you so much that He wants you to know, before it is too late, that you need to build your life on things that last. The tighter you cling to the things of this world, the more they will cost you in the end. And God wants you to now that life is worth losing.

In the name of the Father, and the son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.