

Safe as Hell

Luke 19: 11-28

#10 in Stories Jesus Told series

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Prayer

So Lord God, we thank you that you know our name, that you know us. And we pray that you would know us now through the power of your Word, that you would penetrate our hearts with your presence, and that we would bear the fruit of righteousness. Lord God, you know how we're ashamed, you know how we're afraid, you know how we hide ourselves. We confess that to you. In fact, if you're hiding right now, just confess that to the Lord. Oh, thank you that you provide for us; you cover us; you cleanse us; you call us your own. And now Lord God, may we hear you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sermon

In 1982, Larry Walters was a truck driver in Los Angeles. At the age of 33, he used to sit in his backyard every Saturday in his favorite lawn chair. He lived in a subdivision near LAX. All the houses looked alike, all the backyards alike, chain link fences alike. And he would sit there every Saturday afternoon drinking a six-pack for several hours.

One particular Saturday, Larry Walters got this bright idea (probably about the time he was finishing his sixth beer). He thought: "Wouldn't it be cool to go get some balloons, attach 'em to my lawn chair and float over my neighbor's back yard?" Not being a physicist, but a truck driver, he didn't know how many balloons to get, so he got 45 weather balloons. Then he made a couple PBJ sandwiches, and grabbed a six-pack. With his neighbor's help, he filled the weather balloons with helium, tied them down to his Jeep as they attached them to his \$19.95 K-Mart lawn chair.

He then took his sandwiches, beer, and a BB gun and sat in his chair. See, his plan was to shoot out some of the weather balloons if he got a little too high and he'd just float over his neighbor's yard. He set the BB gun on his lap and said to his neighbors, "Let go." (But, he didn't get to 50 – 60 feet as he planned.) He shot straight up to 16,000 feet, above L.A. He didn't get to shoot out a balloon because he was holding on so hard to the lawn chair.

He was first spotted by a Continental airlines DC-10 captain, who radioed to the tower: "I just passed a guy in a lawn chair." They diverted traffic around LAX for four hours. They sent helicopters and aircraft, and there were searchlights on the ground because it was getting dark. Finally they guided him down. You can imagine how Larry looked getting off that lawn chair. (There were sirens going, lights flashing.) This television crew ran up to Larry Walters, stuck a microphone in his face, and asked, "Were you scared?" and Larry Walters said, "Yup." Then they asked the best question. "Why would you do a thing like that?" And Larry Walters said, "Well, . . . You can't just sit there."



The Lawn Chair Pilot (true story)

Larry Walters went to the local Army-Navy surplus store and purchased 45 weather balloons and several tanks of helium. He securely strapped the balloons to his sturdy lawn chair and anchored it to the bumper of his jeep and inflated the balloons with helium. Larry then donned a parachute and strapped himself into the chair as his friends helped him. He also took along a large bottle of soda, a portable CB radio to alert air traffic to his presence, and a BB gun to shoot the balloons when he was ready to come down. Larry's plan was to lazily float around the area and come back down in a few hours. But things didn't quite work out for Larry. When they cut the cord anchoring the lawn chair to the jeep he streaked into the LA sky as if shot from a cannon where he leveled off at 16,000 feet! For several hours he drifted, cold, and frightened. He eventually made his way into the primary approach corridor for LAX airport. A TWA pilot first spotted Larry. He radioed the tower and described passing a guy in a lawn chair...with a gun! Radar confirmed the existence of an object floating 16,000 feet above the airport. LAX emergency procedures went into full alert. Larry finally shot enough balloons to lower himself down safely. Although he was entangled in some power lines, he was uninjured.

Well, that's Larry Walters right there. You can't, you can't just sit there.

You've all heard that if you drop a frog in hot water, it will immediately jump out. But, if you put a frog in cool water (and they actually ran experiments on this in the 19th century, I was reading about it) and gradually increase the heat, it will just "sit there." "Sit there" until it boils to death. Maybe we're all just "sitting there." Little kids can't just "sit there." They just naturally dream of flying. They'll attach a cape to their back and jump off the roof, imitating Superman – saving the world. My son, Coleman, used to play Hercules, who sacrificed all, descended into Hades, and beat death. Little kids are born with Super-hero dreams.

One of my first or maybe my very first memory is of my friend, Cash, on our front porch in Junction City, Kansas.



I was on this porch with my friend Cash.

Cash was sitting on his tricycle. He turned to me and said, "Watch this!" And he took off like a rocket – right down the cement front steps. It didn't go as he envisioned. I remember him coming back, with medicine plastered all over his scraped up face.

This world has a way of beating those super-hero dreams right out of you, and you begin to think: "Maybe I better just sit here . . ."

The sociologist, Ernest Becker wrote, "Youth was made for heroism"
I suppose that's true – and then comes middle age.
I have this news release in my files:

Tahlequah Oklahoma: "A 32 year old man apparently lost his balance and fell to his death from a 64 foot water tower on which he had just finished spray-painting the words, "No fear."

That was a mid-life crisis.

I bet Larry Walters was having a mid-life crisis. When I was Larry's age, I borrowed my friend's brand new Jeep and took Susan Jeeping in October on Mesquito Pass up by Leadville. At one point, we came upon a bog filled with abandoned vehicles. Susan said, "Don't," and so of course I did. I punched it and we flew into the bog.

We spent the next four hours waist deep in mud, and finally hiked four more hours into Leadville. When I told the guys at the garage approximately where this had occurred, they all started laughing and exclaimed "Bird's Eye Bog!" We spent the night at the Silver King Motel in nothing but underwear and mud. (That had actually been a fantasy of mine, but Susan wouldn't let me touch her.)

We were up all night watching the Weather Channel, for a storm was coming in and if it snowed, we'd have to wait for spring to retrieve the Jeep and I would have to buy my friend, Gary Reddish, a new one. I think that's called "Bad stewardship"—driving new Jeeps into bogs, flying lawn chairs into DC-10, losing your life spray-painting "no fear" on a water tower. Well, we finally got the Jeep out (which is another great story) but for the last seventeen years, whenever I'm tempted to take risks or go on some adventure, my beloved bride just looks at me and says 3 words. "Bird's Eye Bog."

Tony Campolo tells about watching the musical "Man of La Mancha," when the woman next to him began scolding her husband: "John," she said, "John stop that, you're exposing yourself; you're exposing yourself!" Seated next to her, was a middle aged businessman dressed in a very nice three- piece suit; he was crying uncontrollably as the actor playing Don Quixote stood on stage singing, "To Dream the Impossible Dream."

"Most men lead lives of quiet desperation" wrote Henry D. Thoreau, "and go to the grave with the song still in them." What song is that?

The last time I sobbed in a theater was in 2009. I remember trying to hide it from Susan and the kids. I was in the process of dying to a whole bunch of dreams and the movie just got me. It was about a man named, Carl Fredrickson, who, even as a little boy dreamed of adventure. He fell in love with a child-hood friend who also dreamed of adventure. Upon their first meeting to

receive him into her “Explorers club,” she pinned the Ellie Badge on his chest: A Grape soda bottle cap fastened with a safety pin. It symbolized, “The spirit of adventure.”

The first five minutes of the movie portrays the next seventy years of Carl’s life. He and Ellie eventually marry and set out on their adventure. Sadly, Ellie can’t have children, but together they dream of visiting Paradise Falls in Venezuela, South America. They save for their trip, but there are always other concerns. Eventually Ellie dies, and Karl just “sits there” alone in his house grumbling about everyone and everything, including Russell, the young wilderness explorer who keeps knocking at his door.

Russell is a fatherless boy. Carl is a boy-less father. Well, the night before they come to take him to the retirement home, the night before they come to demolish his house, (which has been condemned) Carl finds Ellie’s old adventure book and then comes up with a bright idea. You see, Carl has spent the last fifty years as a balloon salesman.

Clip from the movie *UP*

[Sad piano music plays. Carl (a short stout old man) stands before a closet. He reaches up to pull out an old suitcase off the top shelf. Once he pulls it down, he hears a bunch of books fall over. He looks up to see a large book labeled “My Adventure Book.” The scene then shifts to show Carl sitting in his living room chair with a lamp on and he is looking at this book. He turns a page. He then turns to a blank one and sighs. He looks down and closes the book as the scene fades into night. Crickets chirp in the background. Morning comes, birds sing and two guys from a retirement home drive up. They approach Carl’s porch and one of them knocks on Carl’s front door. Carl swings the creaky door open and faces the men on his porch.]

Carl: (Leaning down to pick up his suitcase he then greets them.) *Morning gentleman.*

Nurse George (a slender balding Black guy): *Good morning Mr. Fredrickson! You ready to go?*

Carl: *Hmph. Ready as I’ll ever be! Would you do me a favor and take this? (He steps forward and hands his suitcase out the door to the large guy, named Nurse A.J.) I’ll meet ya’ at the van in just a minute. (Carl slams the door leaving the two on the porch looking at each other.)*

Nurse A.J.: *That’s typical!* (The two left outside turn to walk off the porch and move towards the Shady Oaks van.) *He’s probably going to the bathroom for the eightieth time!*

Nurse George: *Euch!* (looking around the front lawn as he walks) *You’d think he’d take better care of his house!*

Clip from *UP* continues

[Suddenly a large round shadow comes over the two men. They turn to see what is going on and view a large bag-like shape growing larger behind the house. The bag falls aside and then balloons of all colors burst out and start to float up in a tremendous bunch above the house coming out of the chimney. The foundation of the house starts to crack, the cellar door starts to shake and the electric lines spark as the two guys look on in amazement. The foundation pops, the front porch snaps loose from the ground, the water lines break loose; water shoots out all over. The two guys step back stunned as the house starts to lift into the sky and then they cry out and duck as the house swings right past where their heads were and slams into the roof of their van. The van alarms start going off and the house swings on up into the sky as Carl leans out his window and laughs gleefully down at the two men on the street.]

Carl: *Ah! Ha! Ha! Ha! So long, boys! I'll send ya' a postcard from Paradise Falls!*

[The house floats up into the air above the city with multitudinous helium balloons of all colors shift, lifting them further into the air while Carl leans out in glee and waves.]

I suspect that movie, *Up*, was inspired by Larry Walters.

October 6th 1993, at the age of 44, Larry Walters went for a walk in Angeles National Forest, pulled out a gun, shot himself in the heart, and died . . . alone.

Sixteen thousand feet in a lawn chair wasn't enough.

In the words of Thoreau, he must've "gone to the grave with the song still in him."

Well, in Luke 19, Jesus tells a fascinating story. It comes on the heels of a story about Jesus that we preached on last spring: the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus. Hopefully you remember Luke 19: 1-2 Jesus was passing through Jericho: "*And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and rich.*" I imagine he was middle aged and looked like Carl Fredricksen. When he wasn't collecting taxes at his tax-table, he would sit alone in his house at his own table. Well, Jesus meets Him on a tree and says, "*I will stay at your house today.*" And that's huge, for Jesus is offering what Bible scholars call "table-fellowship" to a notorious sinner – a man whom Luke describes as "*lost*" or "*destroyed*."

To sit at table and eat with someone in Jesus' day was to invite that someone into intimate communion with yourself, creating something of a covenant, and a miniature personal sanctuary. Zacchaeus is so thrilled that he stands at the feast he held in his house for Jesus and makes a declaration: He gives one half of his possessions to the poor and promises to return fourfold to anyone that he has wronged. Basically, he sacrifices his house, his life, his security. He lays it all on the table like a song. And Jesus says, "*Today salvation has come to this house.*" Salvation – for, you see, when Zacchaeus sat alone in his house, he sat alone in hell, or at least trapped by hell (what the Bible calls *Hades*).

"*The long, dull monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather,*" writes Uncle Screwtape to his demon nephew in C.S. Lewis' novel, *The Screwtape Letters*.

He goes on to explain how hard it is to tempt the young. But how easy it is to tempt the middle aged – because they give in to a policy of “*Safety first*” and knit themselves to this world. Then Screwtape writes:

*“Whatever you do, keep your patient as safe as you possibly can . . .
Your affectionate Uncle Screwtape.”*

In another place, Lewis wrote, “*The only place, outside of Heaven, where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.*”

I think that may be why I was sobbing in the movie theater. I had just spent fifteen years building Lookout Mountain Community church, and now I was giving it up . . . but it wasn't the house. Make no mistake: It was the people – I had invested my life in so many people. But now so many had been taken away and so many were so angry with me. I felt this intense temptation to never give my heart away again. I've struggled mightily with that for the last seven years. And now slogans that had no appeal to me in my twenties, make a lot more sense today: “Safety first,” “Life is precious. Don't risk it.” “Play it safe.” And yet, something in me realizes: that's “*quiet desperation*” and if I do that, I'll go to the grave with the song stuck in my dark, hard, and God damned heart.

Luke 19: 9 - 10

And Jesus said to [Zacchaeus], “*Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*”

That's the word *apollolos*, also translated “*destroyed*” or “*perished.*” A “*lost*” one would be someone with a “God-damned heart,” a God condemned heart – a heart that's locked up and closed in on itself – someone trapped in Hades. And Jesus says, “*I came to save the lost*” - “*Those trapped in Hades.*” And, WOW that would be quite an adventure, don't you think? (The words “*Adventure*” and “*Advent*” both come from the same Latin roots . . . meaning: “*something is about to happen,*” or “*someone is about to arrive.*”)

Next Verse, Luke 19: 11: *As they heard these things . . .*

So Jesus is telling this story in Zacchaeus' house, at Zacchaeus' table, the *trapeza* – It's a loaded word in Scripture, used for:

1. Any banqueting table,
2. The table in the temple where they placed the showbread, and
3. A table on which people exchanged money (like taxes) or made investments.

Luke 19: 11

As they heard these things, [Jesus] proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

And yet, it had just appeared in Zacchaeus' house at his table . . . (it didn't mean sitting on stockpiles of food, while shooting at the armies of the Antichrist. It meant throwing parties for tax collectors and sinners.)

Next verse:

Luke 19: 12

[Jesus] said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return."

That's a little bizarre . . . But can you think of a person of royal birth – like a son of the king – who's about to leave and then come back, having inherited a kingdom?

Luke 19: 12 – 13

[Jesus] said therefore, A [man of royal birth] went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, (a mina is a coin worth about three month's wage.)
. . . he gave them ten minas, and said to them, "Engage in business until I come."

That's the Greek verb *pragmateuomai*. It's where we get our word "pragmatic." It means: "do stuff" "engage in business." The concordance defines the word as "putting capital to work."

This is the foundation of "the Protestant work ethic."

This is Capitalism . . . with one important caveat:

These capitalists don't own the capital –

It's all their master's capital and they are slaves.

They are stewards.

Matthew records Jesus telling a story like this in His Gospel, but it's a few days later and in a different situation.

- In Mathew's version, Jesus gives three servants "Talents," and He gives each one a different amount: one, three, and five talents.
- In Luke's version, this version, He gives each the same amount: one mina. I find that interesting, because, like the mina, Jesus gives each of us the exact same thing . . . and that's **His Life**.

Well, (Luke 19: 13-14)

he gave [the ten servants] ten minas, and said to them, "Engage in business until I come." But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We do not want this man to reign over us."

That's bizarre as well . . . but can you think of a delegation, or some spokesmen for a crowd, saying something to a Roman official like, "We have no king . . . but Caesar!" "We do not want this man reigning over us."

Verse 15 - 17

When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first came before him, saying, "Lord, your mina has made ten minas more." And he said to him, "Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities."

So his reward for work . . . is more work, specifically managing cities – that is economies. And economies are a strange thing: They're like nothing and everything.

- I mean, when the news reports on a particular day that the market has crashed and the economy is in turmoil, nothing has really happened.
- I mean, the exact same workers, wake up with the exact same resources in the exact same world, with the exact same amount of capital.

Nothing has happened and yet everything has happened, for it's all ground to a halt, because someone somewhere, or many people everywhere, all of a sudden, filled with fear, have decided to "play it safe" and hang on to their capital.

It's like when a person has a heart attack. One blood vessel has "decided" to hang on to its blood, and thus the heart is damned – literally dammed, because it won't bleed, it won't circulate blood . . . and at that point that person is "lost," *apollolos*, perished, good as dead.

Well, anyway, the reward for the good steward's work is more work, more investing. In Matthew, Jesus calls it: "*entering the joy of the Master.*"

Luke 19: 17-19

. . . Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in very little, you shall have authority over ten cities." And the second came, saying, "Lord, your mina has made five minas." And he said to him, "And you are to be over five cities."

You know, I used to think that Jesus told this story wrong, because there is no servant in the story that invests and gets no return.

Yet in life, there are people that give everything and seem to lose everything. It's not like the health and wealth preachers would have you believe:

- There are disciples, like Jesus' disciples, who give everything and end up poor and chained in stocks in prison cells or fed to the lions.
- There are people that love with all they've got, and end up betrayed, beaten and crucified, naked on a tree.

But Jesus seems to say, "There are no stewards who invest and get no return."

Luke 18: 30

"Truly I say to you there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God who will not receive manifold more, in this life and in the age to come eternal life."

" . . . in this life." Think of Zacchaeus: he **lost** his fortune, but **gained** a party "*in this life and in the age to come, eternal life.*"

Like, "*If you lose your life, for my sake,*" said Jesus, "*you will find it.*"
"*If you lose your life.*"

But maybe it's not really your life, but Christ's life. I mean He said, "*I AM the Life.*"

That would imply:

He, Himself is the King's Mina (that you have been told to invest.)

He is the Word. And the "*Word will not return void*"

– even if there comes a point where He is betrayed, beaten, crucified naked on a tree –

– even if He looks like the worst steward that ever lived.

And I hope you realize, that in order to be the good steward that Jesus is talking about, there must come a point when you look like a terrible steward. I mean there is a moment in which the steward has to hand over his “Mina” and have nothing.

- The Mina was a coin. (So it was all or nothing.)
- To invest it, the steward has to “hand it over,” “deliver it up.”
Paradidomai is the appropriate verb in Greek. It’s also translated, “betray.”

The steward had to place the Mina on the *Trapeza*, the Banker’s table.

I find that strangely comforting, for that means there may come a time when you look like a terrible steward—

- A time when you feel like you’ve given everything and seen no return on your investment;
- A time when you’ve loved a group of people, or perhaps a bride, only to be betrayed, beaten and hung naked on a tree . . .
- A time when you’ve given your life and cannot take another breath . . . all you can do is surrender your spirit.

Well, you see, if you’re in that spot now, or find yourself in that spot in the near future, it doesn’t mean that you’re a **bad steward**.

But, if you never find yourself in that spot, it means you are a bad steward.

It means you never invested your “mina.”

You’ve played it safe, . . . and now you’re safe as Hell.

Well, upon His return, the nobleman rewards the first two servants for investing their Mina . . . that is “His Mina.”

Verse 20 Jesus continues His story:

Luke 19:20-21

Then another came saying, “Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.”

Ask yourself:

- What could **God** “reap” that He did not first “sow?”
- What could **the Creator** “take” that He did not first “deposit?”

Well . . . nothing, right? Yet, we all act like it’s everything.

We all cry, “God, how could you take **everything** away from me?”

But we could equally cry, “Why did you give **everything** to me?”

Why does He give you things? He gives and takes away. Why?

Well, this third steward does not trust that the King is Good.

So, in fear, he “plays it safe,” making absurd statements like:

“You take what you did not give and you reap what you did not sow.”

“You are a severe man.”

Is God a severe man?

Well, God became a man. And He gave His Life.

Jesus is “the Life,” the seed that is sown.

He is the Word of God, through whom all is created.

He is God’s Word. And God’s Word is God’s Judgment.

God’s Word is a sword and the sword is on fire and it cuts to the: *“division of soul and spirit, joint and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

Is God a severe man?

Well, I guess that depends on what you mean by “severe.”

Sometimes Mercy can be severe.

Luke 19: 21-23. Well, the servant says,

“I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.”

Verse 22

[The King] *said to him, “I will condemn you with your own words, (like the “measure you give is the measure you get.”)*

“I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, [Literally: “Why did you not put my money on the table—the trapeza?”] and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?”

In other words,

“Maybe you were afraid, but you weren’t afraid of Me.

You don’t even see Me —the One who provides you with all things.

Fear is the beginning of Wisdom . . . but I Am the end of Fear.

If you truly saw me, You’d imitate me and put that Mina on the table.”

Next verse, Jesus continues:

Luke 19: 24-26

And [the king] said to those who stood by, “Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.” And they said to him, “Lord, he has ten minas!”

“I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. – (even what he has)

That leaves you with nothing, alone in outer darkness, the land of “*the lost*” – it sounds like *Hades*.

[In Matthew’s version of the story, Jesus says the servant who refuses to invest is cast into “*outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth.*”]

Luke 19: 26-27

I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.

That's not Hades. That's judgment in Gehenna.

So there you have it! Jesus: "meek and mild": *"Unless you give your life and your talents, you will be cast into outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth."* – that's Hades. Or maybe thrown into Judgment—like Gehenna and slaughtered, *"Kata sphazo"* in Greek. It can also be translated, *"sacrificed."* The word refers to the action of the priest who slaughters, sacrifices in the temple, pouring out their blood on the altar.

People think Jesus came to end sacrifice, but maybe He came to get it started. That's why Paul ends his entire theological discourse in the book of Romans with this statement:

Romans 12:1

"Therefore, I appeal to you brethren by the mercies of God to present you bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

Well, it sounds like Jesus is saying:

"Sacrifice your life, (which is my life – my mina").

"Sacrifice your life or, one day, your life will be taken."

That's terrifying, isn't it?

It's so terrifying that at this point we naturally think: "Gosh, I better be careful."

And the Pastor says, "Gosh you better be careful."

"You better give ten percent of your income . . . or else."

And people will give; believe me. I know. They will give some money – but not their lives. In fact, they'll give money in order to save their lives, which is the opposite of giving your life. It's attempting to buy your life. It's giving to get, which isn't giving.

See?

At first glance, the Word of God is so terrifying that we think, "I better be careful with my life. I better worry about ISIS and the stock market, and Judgment Day and the coming kingdom. I better wrap my life in insurance policies, security systems, good deeds, and Play it SAFE. I'm afraid He is a severe Man and NOT infinite Love."

So we play it safe because we don't have faith in Grace.

We don't have faith in Grace.

But playing it safe is entirely unsafe. And that's the very point of the parable.

So I can't scare you into being a good steward. But maybe I can scare you into taking another look at the Word of God, at Jesus, the severe man. Maybe God destroys your house and even wrecks your life so that you'll stop trying to save your life and look at Jesus the Savior.

Maybe there's no place safer in all this world than hanging on a cross with Jesus.

He said, *"Unless you lose your life – you'll never find it."*

You do realize that each of us must lose his or her life.
We each must die.
God will take your life.
Unless of course, He can't.
He can't take your life,
If you've already given your life because then it's not your life;
It's His life.
He can't take your life, if you're a "living sacrifice."

Well, anyway, let's look to Jesus. Let's watch Jesus. Jesus finishes His story, then verse 28.

Luke 19: 28

"And when He said these things, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem."

It was Palm Sunday, and in a week, Easter. In Scripture Jerusalem is pictured as a bride, and you and I are also called a bride. Well, if Jerusalem is a bride, the temple is her heart. And in Jesus' day, it was a stone heart, - locked down in fear and shame.

Daily the priests attended to the sacrifices, but God had made it clear through the prophets that although He had commanded the whole sacrificial system, it wasn't the sheep and goats, (the sacrifices and offerings) that He desired, but Mercy – *Hesed*. That's steadfast love poured out. That's giving your life for another.

God had always said, *"The life is in the blood."* And *"The blood belongs to me."* We think the whole thing is barbaric, but maybe we're barbaric. You know every time you eat a cheeseburger, you slaughter a cow? Even a slice of bread, you take the life of a plant. Maybe you say, "Thanks" but probably don't mean it.

Did you realize that every time a Hebrew killed an animal on their journey through the wilderness, they were commanded (Leviticus 17) to bring it to the Sanctuary – return the blood to God who gave it, and offer the animal as a "peace offering," eating it with gratitude and joy before God.

See?

We think the sacrifices and offerings were just about appeasing an angry blood-thirsty God, when, in fact, they were all about a "Great Banquet," called the "wedding supper of the Lamb," a banquet like that banquet in the house of Zacchaeus. The temple was about recognizing that God gives life and we must return life – grateful for life. It's actually not our life – it's God's Life and the Life is in the blood.¹

The temple was all about circulation like a heart is all about circulation. Jesus said, *"Destroy this temple and I'll rebuild it in three days."* The priests were so angry at that statement and the way Jesus just gave His Life away . . . so angry that they had Him arrested and Jesus said, *"from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the*

¹ God is bloodthirsty like a beating heart is bloodthirsty.

clouds of Heaven" (Matthew 26: 64) as if He had received a Kingdom – and would be coming back for the rest of time.

Well, the citizens chanted, "Crucify, crucify" and a delegate spoke on behalf of Jerusalem to Rome saying, "We have no king but Caesar." "We do not want this man to reign over us." They betrayed Him, denied Him, beat Him, lead Him outside the city and nailed Him to the tree naked. And yet, Jesus did not "live a life of quiet desperation," and He did not die with the song still in Him. He died singing – Psalm 22, it starts, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me . . .*" and it ends with this line: ". . .*they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.*" "*It is finished.*"

According to Scripture, Jesus descended into Hades where He preached to the "spirits in prison" – the dead, and led a host of captives free. Then God exalted Him above every name that is named. All Judgment has now been given to Him and He has received a Kingdom that is in fact, all things. On the cross, He cried, "It is finished!" Then He delivered up "His Spirit."

It is the Spirit of Life—the Spirit of Love.

It is the Spirit of advent—the Spirit of adventure.

It is the Spirit in the blood, the oxygen in the blood.

He delivered up His Holy Spirit. The earth shook, the tombs were opened, and the veil in the temple ripped from top to bottom. God was performing heart surgery on His Bride. And that day, as the curtain ripped, her heart was unclogged. Just a few hours before Jesus had sat at table – with His twelve disciples. He took bread and broke it saying, "*This is my body.*" And He took the cup saying, "*This is the covenant in my blood*" (the Life is in the blood) and He set it on the table. Jesus is the King and Jesus is the Good Steward.

Jesus gives His life because He trusts that God is Good.

He gives His life and helps us give ours.

He didn't sacrifice so none would sacrifice.

He sacrificed so all would sacrifice.

He gave His life so we'd all give His life.

The temple is a heart and the heart contains a throne. It is Christ's Life that flows from the throne and Christ's Life that returns to the throne. And YOU are HIS BODY, through which His Life flows. So, "*The measure you give is the measure you get.*" Giving Life is called "Grace": "*so to him who has, will more be given and to him who has not, even what he has,— a blood clot – will be taken away.*"

You must surrender Life to receive Life and not just a little Life, all the Life – like a river, constantly through you, flowing – the economy of Absolute Grace.

If you get scared of "losing your life," and so hang on to life – the body dies and you die like a blood clot makes a body part die -

Until the Great Physician unclogs it,

Until He cuts you (*Katasphazo*) – causes you to bleed.

But once you lose your life, you find God's Life.

Once you surrender life, you receive more life – eternal life – an endless river of Life.

It's the Life of Love and God is Love and Love is Happy. Get the picture? Bride of Christ?

Love is happy, and yet love hurts when only one loves, but if you love in hope (even when it hurts) if you give your "mina" in faith (even when others don't) well, that must be the Spirit of

Adventure in you. That's the Advent of an entire New Creation and that's why you can't just sit there.

Larry Walters strapped balloons to his lawn chair, but it wasn't the adventure his heart longed for.

Carl Fredricksen strapped balloons to his house, that had become his hell and this happened:

Clip 2 from *UP* (See the next page)

[The scene opens to Carl's house under an enormous bunch of helium balloons floating across a clear blue sky. Then the image moves to Carl Fredricksen seated contentedly in his living room chair with his eyes closed. Suddenly there is an unexpected knock at the door. Carl's eyes open wide, he looks back and forth and gasps.)

Carl: *Huh?*

[Carl leans to the side and listens to sounds outside. He then goes to the front door and peers through the peep-hole and sees nothing but his front porch with clouds going by underneath a blue sky. He opens his front door and stands there looking left then right. As he turns to his right, the scene pans to show a rather chubby, young boy in a bright yellow and orange Explorer's uniform and a yellow cap. The boy has plastered himself against the side of the house with his eyes in shock. Carl moves his head back to the left and then does a double take.]

Carl: *Eeeeah!*

Russell: (remaining plastered to the wall and smiling) *Hi Mr. Fredrickson! It's me, Russell!*

Carl: *What are you doing out here, kid?*

Russell: (Looking at Mr Fredricksen) *I found a snake and I followed it under your porch!* (He faces forward.) . . . *Please let me in!*

Carl: (He looks at Russell a minute.) *No.* (Carl slams the door shut.)
(Russell remains plastered silently to the side of the house on the porch, looking around as the house creaks and groans and the wind moans by.)

Carl: (Whipping open the door.)
Oh, all right! You can come . . . in.
(By that time Russell had already scampered into the house, past Carl, and plastered himself to an inside wall panting for air.)

Russell: (Gasps for air, then wallows. He then smiles a little close-lipped smile at Carl.)

Carl let someone in. He had been alone in outer darkness – just sitting there - until tribulation threatened his house and forced him to let someone in. And it turns out that Russell is a far greater adventure than a balloon ride to Paradise Falls.

Well, Jesus went to Jerusalem and put His life on the *Trapeza* saying to you, "*Take and eat – take and drink.*" It's your mina and you are His servant.

Last time we read, "*Many are called and few are chosen.*" We realized that many is all and few is Jesus. And yet maybe, few is also you. Like Israel, "You've been chosen. "*Blessed to be a blessing to all.*" We receive Christ's life to give Christ's life to the many, the many that is all.

We must not "play it safe" with that life.

We must not "play it safe" with grace.

We must not act as if it's small and only ours and then be stingy about giving it away.

We must not become a blood clot.

You must give His life away using your particular talents
and give it away with abandon

and then come back each week and every day – for more.

The giving means money and possessions, but even more, it means your heart. People ask, “What does the church need?” And money would be really nice. It would allow us to have a youth pastor, more programs, and more of the Word here and over the internet. But most of all, we need you. We need you to find someone and invest your Life in the Life of that someone. I hope you see: that’s what a church is. A church is a body circulating blood, the *“life is in the blood.”*

A few weeks ago, at a prayer meeting, my friend was startled by an intense vision. She saw our new church building. It lifted up and turned into a giant boat with sails, ready to be driven by the wind out to sea. Well, that’s a pretty awesome vision, but this is the picture that keeps popping into my head.



See, that’s the new church building! Glen made that for me.

Understand? Every person in this room is part of a temple.
Every person in this room is an adventure. They are the advent of the Kingdom of Heaven.
Stop waiting for them to invest in you.
Stop playing it safe with your heart.
Find a way to give your heart and invest in them.

Yes, it will really hurt at times and you might get crucified. But, if you lose your house, for the sake of Love, you will become Love’s House – God’s House. If you lose your life for Christ’s sake, you will find it and all things with Him.

Clip 3 from *UP*

[The scene opens up with the sound of Carl panting and you see a blue rope over the rounded edge of something. The scene pans to show Carl's worried, wide-eyed, panting and bristly face as he holds on to the rope looking down anxiously. There is silence as he waits. Then the rope swings out and Russell and his companions are joyfully swinging through the air.]

Russell: *That was cool!*

Carl: (Carl lets out a child-like giggle.)

Ha! Ha! Ha! Don't jerk around so much kid! (Pulling Russell and his companions up.)

Carl: *Easy Russe!* (Russell appears at the top edge where Carl is standing holding on to the rope.)

Hu-ha-ha-huh! Huh-ha-heh-heh-huh! (A bird climbs up behind Russell and pushes by.)

Kevin (the Bird): *Oh! I am ready to not be up high!*

[As he speaks and scrambles by, Russell falls into Carl's arms for a hug. Then a dog, named Dug, is pulled up and Carl hugs him and continues to laugh delightedly as Dug licks his face.]

Carl: *Hmn-Hmm- tyeh- heh!*

(He stands up patting the dog and you can see an astonished look on his face and he stands looking out.)

[The scene shows him looking out to see his house floating away. Carl looks a little sad as his old house is swallowed up into the clouds below him. Carl stands there a bit, wearing the boy's explorer sash and looking at the spot where his house disappeared. Russell comes up beside him and stands there looking at it and then looks up at Carl.)

Russel: *Sorry about your house Mr. Fredricksen.*

Carl: (His mouth opens silently and closes again as his face softens.)

You know, . . . it's just a house.

(He reaches around Russell and pats him on the back a few times.)

[The scene shifts to show Russell in his full Explorer uniform, hat off, looking up eagerly as Carl steps slowly up and reaches out to grab his shoulder.]

Carl: *I'm here for him.*

(Carl puts his arm around Russel and they both turn to face the scoutmaster.)

Scoutmaster: *Congratulations Russell! Sir.*

(He hands off a pin to Carl so he can pin it to Russell's sash. Carl smilingly and tenderly accepts it and turns to Russell as the scoutmaster walks off the stage. Carl kneels down facing Russell.)

Carl: *Russell. For assisting the elderly,* (The camera pans to show Russell's awed face)

and for performing above and beyond the call of duty, I would like to award you the highest honor I can bestow...

(Carl pins the Grape soda bottle cap pin, on the sash over Russell's heart.)
the Ellie badge.

Russell: (Looks down in awe and then up at Carl.) *Wow!* (said breathlessly and with wonder.)

[Then they both salute each other smiling, only to end the scene with Russell hugging Carl tight. Then, on the side of the road, in front of an ice cream shop: Russell, Carl, and Dug sit on the curb. Car and Russell lick ice cream cones.)

Russell: *Blue one!* (a blue car passes.)

Carl: (pointing with his index finger and cone) *Red one!* (A red car goes by)

Russell: *Blue one!*

Dog: *Grey one!* (Carl looks over at the dog.)

Carl: *Red one.*

Russell: *That's a bike!*

Carl: *It's red, isn't it?*

Russell: *Heh-huh! Mr. Fredrickson! You're cheating!*

Carl: (laughs out) *No, I'm not! . . . Red one!*

Russell: *That's a fire hydrant!*

(They laugh together as the scene pans out to show their airship floating parked above the ice cream shop with a ladder leading down to the street they're ob.)

Carl: *Maybe I need new glasses.*

(The camera shifts to show the name of the airship: *Spirit of Adventure*, and then pans up into a beautiful sunset reflected in the clouds above as they continue to converse below.)

Communion

And so on the night that we all betrayed Him, and Scripture says He even betrayed Himself: He betrayed His life; He gave up His life. He took bread and He broke it saying, "This is my body, given to you. Take it; eat it. Do it in remembrance of Me." And in the same way after supper and having given thanks, He took the cup and He said, "This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the fore-giveness of sins. I give this for sins. And what is sin? Isn't it like claiming the blood as your own? I give you this blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Well, you see, this is your Mina. (Peter holds up the bread.) And this contains the "Spirit of Adventure" (Peter holds up the cup of wine.) "The life is in the blood." In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

And so Jesus paid your debt.

And what was your debt? It was a blood debt. You were hanging on to the blood.

And He is the blood. He is the life.

And what does Jesus do? He returns the life to the temple. He returns the life.

And what does the Father do? He gives The Life.

And what does the Spirit do? Well, He inhabits The Life. He's the oxygen in the blood.

You see, we see God as such a threat! And He is a threat – to hell . . . your hell

Because He is inviting you to participate in the very life of the Godhead.

And God is happy.

Prayer

And so Lord God, we thank you for who you are. And thank you Lord Jesus that you said you've made us your body and your Bride. Thank you, Lord God, that you are ab-so-lutely good. In fact you are so good, that you have given everything so that we would trust you're good and that we would give you away, and receive you, and participate in the very life that is – you, Lord Jesus, filled with your Spirit forever, and ever and ever. Thank you. Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.