

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 25: 14-29

Sermon: Drawn In: Living the Creative Life with God. Step 2: Taking a Risk to Expand God's Love by Pastor Jenn

To celebrate Scout Sunday I began to investigate, some of the most popular Scouts we know. So here are some names I came across. For Boy Scouts I discovered the following: Neil Armstrong, astronaut and the first man to walk on the moon was an Eagle Scout. Steven Spielberg, movie producer of ET, Transformers, and Lincoln, helped develop the requirements for Boy Scouts to earn the cinematography merit badge. He is also an Eagle Scout. Sam Walton is the founder of Wal-Mart and was also an Eagle Scout. Jimmy Buffett is a musician and he was a member of the Boy Scouts as was Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Presidents George W Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama were all Boy Scouts. And President Gerald Ford was an Eagle Scout. And for Girl Scouts I found such names as: Michelle Obama - Wife of President Barack Obama. Dr. Sally Ride - Astronaut, first woman in Space was a Girl Scout, as was Katie Couric, Mariah Carey, and her majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

But ultimately who is the most popular known Boy Scout? This guy! Russell, from Disney's 2009 movie Up! The story is at the beginning we meet Carl and the love of his life, Ellie. They grow up both wanting to be explorers, and vow that at one point their journey will take them to Paradise Falls. By the time they are ready for the trip, Ellie gets ill and passes, and so Carl is left with this dream. But as it would be, one day he meets Russell a young Wilderness Explorer just trying to earn his final merit badge for assisting the elderly.

-Video- https://youtu.be/ORFWdXl_zJ4

And so Carl and Russell journey up, taking a number of risks together.

In our scripture lesson today, Jesus tells the parable of a man who gave wages, known as talents back then, to his servants and entrusted them to use those talents to make a profit. But one servant did not, he did not take the risk to use those talents and in the end was condemned.

Here's the background. Jesus is getting ready for his departure, and so he knows he must prepare his listeners for his absence, which means they must continue his ministry. Yes, one day he will come back, although not even he knows the day or time, but until then, his disciples must reveal the kingdom with deeds of mercy, forgiveness, and peace. So Jesus illustrates that urgency with parables, stories the disciples are to remember, that are to inspire them to keep going with Jesus ministry.

The talent parable is about 3 servants who receive money, aka a talent, that would have been equal to 15 years of wages. So this is obviously to be understood as a very generous, very important gift, that they were entrusted in. It was precious, as is the kingdom. And with those talents the man expected the servants to use them to increase what they have. That's why he gave certain amounts, as the text says "each according to his ability" v. 15. The first two men doubled their talents. The last one claimed out of fear of the giver, he hid the money so he could return it.

So here's the dilemma, how do we view the giver? Does he appear harsh as the servant claims? "harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed." We're not certain, because up to this point he has celebrated the other workers, and allowed them to keep what they earned. What we can discern is that if Jesus is using this illustration of the Christian life until his return, do we see Jesus as hard man who takes or gives? You and I know he takes pain and sorrow, he takes worries and fears, and in return he brings new life. The first two servants knew their master, and knew talents from him would be best to be used and shared with others.

The third servant didn't know Jesus and in the end condemns himself (look at verse 26 again). Do we know people like that? People who criticize or avoid church because they have heard or sadly witnessed a gospel of condemnation and judgement, from people who have judged or condemned them? Yes, we do. But we know better, and so this story is to inspire us that what we know to be the truth of this gospel, what we have received from Jesus, we should not hide it, but share it with others. Share the encouragement, share the healing, share the forgiveness and peace, share the love. As Jesus says in John 13:34-35: ³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Further by sharing that love, there will be more, as shared in this parable today: 29 For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance

Last week we spoke of the Holy Spirit hovering over us, guiding us to create ways to share God's goodness and presence. This week Jesus challenges us to take a risk with what we have been given in our relationship with him, and share it with others. Because in doing so, he guarantees not only to commend us, but that what we give will be doubled, meaning the more we share of Christ, the more others experience him and his kingdom, the better creation will be.

Going back to Up! On their journey Carl and Russell run into a struggle to defend themselves, or help others. Carl wants to just keep to himself, because that's where he believes his journey has taken him, there is no more, no more usefulness for others, just himself. Meanwhile Russell, being a good scout, knows life is about taking risks to help others, be it people, creatures, or nature, and so he moves on, living into that goal. But one day as Carl was settling into his home, he looks through Ellie's childhood scrapbook and finding photos of their happy marriage, he found a note from Ellie thanking him for the "adventure" and encouraging him to go on a new one. That's when it clicked for Carl. If he sits and does nothing, living in the past, then he is nothing, right? However, if he goes out and welcomes the adventure each day can bring, then he is living life as an adventurer, he is living a life that can be good and useful, as he allows himself to be good and useful for others. Together Carl and Russell save the day for each other and those around them. And in the end, Russell gets his badge, and Carl receives a new family.

It's a great story about taking risks, using what you have been given, and invest yourself with it. For Russel it was the Scout program that led him to invest in Carl, and for Carl it was his love of his wife and her encouragement that led him to invest in Russel and others.

What have you received in this lifetime that fosters a sense of wanting to share with others? A scouting program, a friendship, an education? A Family?

I would hope your faith would be part of that too. And in saying that, What has your faith given you that you want to witness to others to inspire and welcome them to the Christian life? Yes, this requires risk on our part. The risk to put ourselves out there, but as we are going into a time of prayer I want you to also consider who took the risk to share with you their faith, that changed your life? Who do you believe that upon the day of his return Jesus will say, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant!...Come and share your master’s happiness!’

Let us pray: Lord you call us into this journey, a journey that leads to purpose, to assistance, and to revelation. On this day may we be inspired to be your servants, to take the risk and share you with others so they may experience your hope, your joy, your healing, your peace, your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. We pray in the name of our loving Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.