

“VICTORY ~ Finding True Life” [4.26.09]

- As I studied the passage for today’s message I was reminded of a story that my mom told me when I was a teenager.
  - In the early 1980s Mary Ison Ferguson passed away in my hometown.
  - She was a retired school teacher that had never been married & who had led a very quiet & private life
  - She began teaching in the 1930s & taught school for well over 40 yrs.
  - When Mary Ison Ferguson passed away, a part of her life was revealed that was a mystery to our small community.
  - When the value of her estate became public, it was revealed that she had accumulated a net worth of nearly 1 million dollars.
  - This was a mystery because everyone knew that she had only made pennies as a school teacher - - how had she come into all this money?
  - The executor of her estate explained that Mary Ison Ferguson
    - Only flushed the commode once a day
    - She never allowed herself the luxury of receiving the newspaper
    - she only burned 1 light bulb at a time in her home she had inherited.
    - Mary Ison Ferguson never had a washer & drier
    - never traveled outside of McMinn County
    - seldom if ever bought herself a new dress
    - She hoarded every last penny she ever made - NEVER ALLOWING herself to enjoy the fruit of her labor.

Mary Ison Ferguson missed out on so much of life protecting that hefty bank account!

Jesus knew we would have trouble trusting Him & He knew many of us would miss out on ‘True Life’ attempting to hold on - hoard as much life as possible.

Today Jesus introduces 3 parallel sayings that contradict conventional wisdom that most of us have grown up believing; it’s a secret that only He reveals.

It’s not easy to comprehend, in fact it’s so difficult that you will never understand it until YOU’VE LIVED IT!

I. Jesus predicts His death

- A. (R) Luke 9: 21 – 22 or p. 790 in pew Bible
- B. [Back-drop]

1. Immediately after Jesus spoke of His forth-coming suffering & death; He took this window of opportunity to call out His 12 disciples to participate in the same type of suffering & self-giving.
2. In the same breath, He makes it very clear that such a demand would not only be for the 12 alone; but for any of us that would follow after Him.

- (R) Luke 9: 23

3. In recent years, several schools of psychology have developed that base their theory on self-actualization.
  - a. Self-actualization asserts that there is “a driving life force, that will ultimately lead to maximizing one’s abilities, & determine the path of one’s life.”

- b. This term sounds promising & merit worthy until we remember that according to Jesus = the only way to self-discovery is self-denial; & the only way to live is to die to our own self centeredness!
- c. Completely contradictory to humanistic school of thought!
- d. Let's tackle these...

II. 3 parallel sayings of Jesus with a proverb-like quality

(R) Luke 9: 24 – 26

A. 1<sup>st</sup> saying = re(R) Luke 9: 24

1. v. 24 contains a general truth:
  - a. According to Jesus, self-centeredness is counter productive & destructive; it severs you from the resources that give life.
  - b. If you insist on holding on to yourself & you refuse to let go, determined to live for yourself; eventually you will lose yourself!
  - c. Jesus tells us that being self-centered is the way of death; not the way to 'True Life.'
2. Saving life by losing life dying to self = taking up your cross daily IS NOT a strategy for successful living BUT is a condition for discipleship!
3. In other words your life was intended to be spent NOT to be hoarded!
4. Jesus' conditions for discipleship completely contradict the worst standards & values; He calls us to completely re-orient our minds & hearts.  
The question is not...
  - a. "How much can I get?" but, "How much can I now give."
  - The question is not...
  - b. "What is the safe thing to do? but, "What is the right thing to do?"
  - The question is not...
  - c. "What is the bare minimal I am required to do @ work?" but, "What can I do to maximize my production @ work?"

If you have accepted Christ as Lord & Savior; YOU have been given the gift of life to spend on others; not to hoard all for yourself!

5. [INSERT] Jim & Elizabeth Elliott's testimony = "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose!"

Gaining 'True Life' by dying to your old life ~ doesn't make sense until you do it! Jesus does a miracle inside of you that is almost indescribable!

Faith – Hope & Love [July 19 – 24, 2009] = Community Works

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Short term & Long term missions trips = radically life-changing for most of us!

B. 2<sup>nd</sup> saying = re(R) Luke 9: 25

1. v. 25 contains a painful truth that has been lived out before our very eyes during the prosperity of the late 80s, throughout the 1990s, until about 18 months ago.
  - a. We've all personally known or witnessed the demise of individuals in the media that burned with unrestrained greed & ambition; completely driven in the marketplace; that soon learned how reliable & satisfying stuff can be.
  - b. Nothing in this material world can satisfy the empty void in your heart!
2. Jesus attempts to tell us this important fact with a simple question:
  - a. re(R) v. 25
  - b. Jesus makes a stark comparison between the INFINITE VALUE of your soul in contrast to the value of this entire physical world;
  - c. If it were possible to gain the world & it's not; if you could somehow purchase & gain the whole world it would not last & while it did last it would not satisfy.
  - d. Most valuable thing is your eternal soul = nothing compares!

C. 3<sup>rd</sup> saying = re(R) Luke 9: 26

1. v. 26 is straight-up = self explanatory; no need to make it confusing!
2. Jesus says IF...
  - a. You are ashamed of HIM & the GOSPEL = HE WILL BE ashamed of you when He returns w/mighty angels!
  - b. NOT lip-service if we by our lives [attitudes + mindset] disown Him, even though with our lips we have confessed Him; the day must come when He cannot do anything different but disown us ☹
  - c. (R) Matthew 7: 21 – 23 or p. 738 in pew Bible
3. [Question] Are you ashamed of Jesus - - His gospel?  
I think we are more than any of us would like to admit!
  - a. When is the last time you shared the grace of God with someone who has not crossed the line of faith; if you love them - - why would you ever back down from boldly sharing this 'FREE GIFT' of salvation?
  - b. When God's name is cursed - Jesus' name is used in vain - do you ever stand up for Him?
  - c. [Subjective] Are you more concerned (worried) over the economy or a loved one, a friend, a work associate, dying & going to Hell?
  - d. How would you answer a question IF you knew it might very well cost you a life-long dream to stand up for Jesus & His gospel?
  - e. [INSERT] Video of Miss California as a finalist for the crown of Miss America 2009 pageant! LET'S WATCH

Long before her national debut - - Miss California understood the value of a temporary crown over a VICTOR'S CROWN in heaven!

Jesus does not say that confessing Him will make us happier but He does tell us that it will save us from the fiery flames of Hell!