

**Sermon - 09-12-21**  
**Ps 19; Pr 1:20-23; Ja 3:1-12; Mk 8:27-38**  
**Eternal Profit – Eternal Loss**

Who was the most brilliant financial manager in the Bible? Pharaoh's daughter went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little profit.

Jesus calls the crowd over to teach them. We must consider the spread sheet of life as we hear His words. He gives us a profit and loss analysis that has nothing to do with money. This morning, we are speaking of ultimate things not material, but eternal, spiritual profit and loss.

Jesus' teaching has to do with the conversation he just had with Peter. At first, Peter thinks and speaks as a citizen of the kingdom of God: He says, "Jesus, You are the Messiah." (v 29) But he turns around a few minutes later and gives Jesus a hard time about His sacrifice for the sins of the world. Peter reverts to worldly thinking when he hears that Jesus is going to suffer and die. Does thinking about death have that effect on you? Does it cause your heart and mind to go into panic mode? Are you completely opposed to the idea of dying? It gives us a little jolt to ponder not being here anymore, doesn't it?

**Mark 8:34-38 (TLB)**

<sup>34</sup> Then he called his disciples and the crowds to come over and listen. "If any of you wants to be my follower," he told them, "You must put aside your own pleasures and shoulder your cross and follow me closely. <sup>35</sup> If you insist on saving your life, you will lose it. Only those who throw away their lives for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will ever know what it means to really live.

<sup>36</sup> "And how does a man benefit if he gains the whole world and loses his soul in the process? <sup>37</sup> For is anything worth more than his soul? <sup>38</sup> And anyone who is ashamed of me and my message in these days of unbelief and sin, I, the Messiah, will be ashamed of him when I return in the glory of my Father, with the holy angels."

Did you hear Jesus say you must "throw away" your life for the sake of the Gospel? Christian tradition teaches that all the disciples died for the sake of the Gospel Message. The flesh – your flesh – my flesh – rises up and says, "Oh no you don't. I'm not going to be a sacrifice for the sake of a story, even a Gospel story!" Remember that Jesus' disciples gave it all up for the Good News.

The Apostle Peter is a wonderful example of the imperfect Jesus-follower. I believe that is why we love him so much. Did Jesus really say, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." (Mt 16:18) Yes, He did. Peter got some things right, and some things wrong – just like you and me. The Apostle James says today in his letter to the churches that we make mistakes. James seems to say, "We make many mistakes, but if you can just be silent, you will appear wiser than you are. The truth is, if you and I avoid loose talk, our mouths won't get us into trouble."

In our Christian life together, we practice times of self-examination. For example, around the Season of Lent. That is the forty days leading up to Easter Morning. In that season we look at the ways we are flawed. We look at the loss side of our balance sheet. We consider the strength or weakness of our witness of Jesus and the Good News of His love. When the time of accounting is over, we appreciate that we have been given a free gift – resurrection life that Jesus experienced before sunrise on Sunday in the garden. A huge part of figuring our profit and loss is the immeasurable riches we have in God's grace through Jesus Christ. How we profit from this! This gift always outweighs our mistakes and flaws!

In these days of grace – our time of history – any sinner can still turn at any moment and receive the riches of God's grace. Jesus' sacrifice – His blood shed on the cross for us. In any gathering of Jesus-followers there are those who have walked with Jesus for years and years. There are those who have been Christ-bearers for some time, after surrendering everything to Him. And, there are some in the crowd who have just begun to live a life of obedience to Him. All are

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welcomed and received into God's family – into His kingdom. I'll let you ponder where you are in this. Intensity, not length of time is the main thing.

The day Jesus was executed by the Roman authorities, there were two criminals – one on either side of our Savior. One mocked Him. The other believed in Him and asked to be with Him. That thief wanted the grace and forgiveness Jesus was offering the whole world by His sacrifice that day.

The man had thrown his life away on dishonest gain – lying and stealing and cheating people. The loss side of his balance sheet was full of liabilities. He was about to face eternity with no profit for his soul. Jesus saw into his heart – saw his sadness and regret for his sins. Jesus said, “Truly I tell you today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Mt 23:43) With Jesus' forgiveness, the criminal was truly, forever forgiven. What was it – perhaps three more hours at most – he lived his life in Christ. The other thief was not convinced. Sad to consider the hard-hearted one. But this man with a softened heart had a profit side that entirely wiped out his losses!

The loss that would have been written eternally was transformed into gain. Marked ***paid!*** Eternal Life. That man dwells in Jesus' presence forever. It's never too late. The missionary Jim Elliott said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.” Amen.