

Living in Safety or Living in Joy

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Laziness and Apathy; Joy; Safety / Matthew 25:14–30

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ our Coming King. Amen.

Safety first!

Caution! Caution! Safety first! Look out! Watch out! Be Careful! Be Alert! In today's day and age people are thinking about safety!

Many of us have been told "Safety First" and rightfully so. We should look both ways before we cross the street, even at a stop sign and when we have a walking signal. We should be keeping watch of our surroundings. And yes, even the government in some ways talks about Safety First...such as in the work place with OSHA or after September 11, 2001, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. After the events that keep hitting the airwaves we are constantly talking and thinking about how to keep our families, friends, schools, workplaces, and now our churches "safe."

Overly cautious.

These are good things to think about when it comes to the earthly realm, for God has entrusted to us in these places gifts and talents to use.

However, when God gives us these gifts and these talents should we live in joy with them or should we be living with the idea that we have a God who isn't loving at all, who doesn't offer joy to his servants, and one who is very harsh and if he takes a risk with the gifts and fails to bring in results with the talents, he will

be cast out. This servant is living with the idea that he has to be “safe” with the use of his talents.

How safe should we be with the talents that God has given to us, whether they be our time, talents, or treasures? Can we be overly cautious with the gifts God has given to us? What happens when we take the “talents” that God has given to us and bury them - because we see God as a “hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.” What happens when we bury our talents because we are afraid of the Master? What happens when we are overly cautious?

What happens when our “faith” does not produce “works?” As James tells us “faith without works is dead.” What happens when the life God has given to us and everything else is not used for his glory, because we want to keep ourselves safe. Safe from ridicule, safe from rejection, safe from attacks of the devil. Really, when we are living out our faith, the devil is sure to attack. We are thinking safety first and we fail to see the eternal joys of the master. Therefore when we are living with a safety first mindset and living as the third servant and keeping the talent hidden and not letting God’s Word do as he wills, then we should be called wicked and slothful. Sloth means spiritual apathy. It’s a spiritual laziness. A lack of care for the spiritual well-being of others. Living like this, we earn the title of worthless servant and should be cast into the outer darkness. The things is this wicked and slothful servant bought into the idea that his master was a hard man, he bought into the idea that living with his master is no joy, only harshness.

Yet, this parable talks of a generous master who gives to his servants many talents. Talents to be used for his work in his kingdom. The master even promises that His Word will not return to Him void, but will do the very thing for which He intends. This generous master gave talents each according to his ability. The master knows you. The master knows what you can do in his kingdom. The lives he gives to you are not yours to live, but his. The talents he gives to you are not for your benefit, but are his. Yet, this generous master doesn’t deprive us of using our talents for personal purposes, we are called to invest for him.

Living in Joy

And as you and I are called in our baptisms to invest in him, it's not an easy task. For when we do the work of God, your safety may come into question. As Jesus is talking to the disciples in Matthew 24 he says to them...

English Standard Version Chapter 24

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

He tells them and he tells you, you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. Now you may not die for your faith, but you may be called bigoted. You may not be imprisoned currently for your faith, but you could lose a job. You may not be beaten for using your talents for Christ's sake, but you could be ridiculed and rejected by friends and family...and yes even fellow church members. As you live in the joy of your master while you serve him, the investment that you make him for him will not be futile. It will accomplish the very thing that it was sent there for. As Jesus is preaching about the kingdom of heaven, success is guaranteed. Success is guaranteed when we as God's workmanship are doing the works that God has created for us to do. Yes, when we we live with the joy of the master, the works God has given us to do will be accomplished and like the wicked servants, these servants living in the joy of the master will receive their reward...for they will be told, "Well done good and faithful servant, Enter into the joy of your master."

It's not because we did the works that we get to live in His joys. It's because of His action for you. When Christ Jesus came down to earth on that first Christmas, he was kept safe from Herod. The Father kept him safe until his time had come. Yet, when Christ ministered for three years, he didn't keep "safe" from doing the work that His Father called Him to do.

He saves you and brings you into the joys of your master through the judgment of the Father on Himself. He received the judgment for your sins. On the cross he heard for you, "You wicked and slothful servant." You will receive the punishment of your sins. You are going to suffer hell on the cross. That's precisely how Jesus Christ paid for your sins...your sins of apathy and sloth.

Jesus Christ died for you so that you can experience and live in the joy of your master. Jesus Christ died for you so that you can carry out the living out of your

faith in action. Jesus Christ died for you so that you can be safe in his loving arms, the only place where you will be truly safe. And yes, Jesus Christ, through his life, death and resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, enables you to use your talents for His Kingdom. And yes the single parent who sits with her or his squirmy toddlers is doing a good work for the kingdom, just as the musician is doing a good work for the kingdom and the preacher is doing a good work for the kingdom as he shares God's Word.

Living in the joy of the master is a gracious gift, and we live in this joy as we repent of our sins, as we receive His absolution, so that we can live in joy and peace.

And yes as we live in joy of the master here in this life, the master gives us great and numerous talents to use for his work. No you don't have to be flashy preacher, you don't have to volunteer at the church each and every day of the week. Being faithful in your vocations of parents and teaching your children the faith is using your talents. Being faithful in your vocation as student, without neglecting your true God, is using your talent. Living in your masters joy means on this side of eternity doing the very things God has given you to do, even if means risking our own personal safety, while we wait in eager expectation of receiving the everlasting and perfect joy and to be able to live in safety for all eternity - safely in our master's arms.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.