

“Giving Up False Security”

Dear friends, greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus. Today we're in week six of our “Give It Up” series; a series in which we're looking at some of things God has called us (in our lives), either to rethink (as his people) or to give up completely.

Today we're taking on the topic of security, what it is, what it represents, where it's found. To get us going today, just for fun, I did a little Google search. I typed in the word “security”, and guess what happened? (You know how this works.) In 0.71 seconds, there were 679 million possible sites that came up. That's a lot (going on) when it comes to security, even for the internet.

By definition, security means “a state of feeling or being secure (or safe), something that gives this...” Based upon this little search, it's obvious, no matter what it is, home security, financial security, security for your family or your health; there's a long list of securities people want.

What I did next was to type in the words “false security.” Same thing, in 0.5 seconds, there were 8,690,000 sites that popped up. Not nearly as many, but still, quite a few.

False security (in contrast), means “a feeling of being safer than one really is, a sense of being more secure than is actually the case...” You think you're secure, but you're not. You hope (or believe) you're secure, but your hope or belief aren't as real as you think. And, again, your home, your finances, your health, your relationships, retirement, your future...you never really know.

Now, let me ask you a question. There are all kinds of securities in life, and we all hope and want to have them. And there are all kinds of false securities in life, and we all hope and want to avoid being falsely secure.

Let me ask you. Do you think it's possible to be “falsely secure” in your relationship with God? Do you think it's possible to believe you're secure (in your relationship, your faith-walk, in the promise of forgiveness and eternal life), when you're actually not? Do you think it's possible? Do you think it could ever happen...in the world, in the church, in your life?

Let's turn to our story. The passage we read today (from Mark's gospel), one of those four good news stories (in the Bible), comes from a section where Jesus is making his way toward the cross. He's teaching, he's preaching, he's healing, casting out demons, but (as all of this is happening), he's also heading toward his death. He's also (very much aware) of where all of this is leading.

It's interesting, (as you read through the stories), as this is all (playing out), how the things that happen (along the way) become more intense, how the challenges Jesus sets forth become more demanding, and how the number of people (who choose to stay with him) begins to decline.

At the beginning (of his ministry), there are large crowds following Jesus. It's exciting to (hang around) this one who heals and who teaches and who's able to feed large crowds. It's exciting and easy, when it's exciting (and easy); it starts getting smaller (this following) when it becomes more demanding and tough.

In our story (today), as Jesus is making his way toward Jerusalem, toward his destiny with the cross, (you heard what happens), a man runs up to him, falls on his knees, and wants to know “what he has to do to inherit eternal life.” This man (in the story) comes to Jesus with a sincere desire to want to know what he has to do to be saved.

Now, we don't know too much about this man...who he was, where he came from, where he went and (what he did) when it was all over. From the other gospels accounts (that record this same story), we know he

was a young man. We know he was rich. We also know he was a ruler. And (with all that going for him), odds are pretty good that he was (probably) good looking. (Right?)

Young and rich and a good-looking ruler, this man had a lot going for him in life. He really did. All things considered, his life was pretty good. It really was. And yet, in spite of all he had going for him, he still wanted to find out what he had to do to be saved.

Have you ever noticed that in life? It's interesting how it happens, how people work to make things work. They want to get ahead, make it to the top, become a success. And so they do it. They go after it. They give it all they have. And in a place like (this valley) many of them make it. They arrive. They've got it all going. They really do.

Riches, material wealth, the things (we think) in this life make us secure. This man had all of that (and even more). He was as secure (in the eyes of the world) as it gets. Do you know what he also had, along with his securities? He had a lot of questions. He had a lot of doubts. He had this (longing inside) on whether or not it was enough. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (That's a great question.)

Do you remember what Jesus told him? Do you remember what Jesus asked? (It's a fascinating story.) This man wanted to know how to be saved. (Do you remember what Jesus did?) He asked him about the commandments. He asked him about how well he was doing in relation to God's law.

You remember the list. "You shall not kill. You shall not steal. Be honest. Honor your parents. Stay away from your neighbor's spouse."

Have you ever thought about the commandments? Have you been (asked about) the "laws of God", when it comes to (the question) of being saved?

This is nothing new. It's exactly what (so many) people do when it comes to the question of heaven. It's exactly where (so many) people go when it comes to whether or not they're saved. A lot of people do that (in life). They think (almost automatically) about how they've lived. They respond (almost instinctively) to the question with what they need to do.

Do you remember the conversation? Do you remember how this rich, young, ruler-of-a man replied? (He said), "Teacher, all of these I have kept since I was a youth. Every one of these commands (you mentioned), I've never failed (even once) since the time I was a kid."

Do you remember what Jesus did? Do you remember what (Mark tells us) about Jesus' response? (I love this story.) He says, "Jesus looked at him and loved him." (Jesus looked at him and he just smiled.)

Try to picture it. I've got to believe that (inside) Jesus was laughing. I have to believe that (when he heard) the man's response, he had to be thinking (to himself), "Who are you trying to kid? From the time you were a kid until now? From the time you were just a youth, you've (never once) missed the mark?"

Mark tells us that Jesus just smiled. He looked at this man and loved him. And then he said, (and here's the punch line); he said, "One thing you still lack. One thing you still (in your life) do not have. Sell what you have. Give it all away...and follow me. Sell what you have, offer it to those who don't, and then come and follow."

(And what happens?) Mark tells us, "At this the man's face fell...and he went away sad, because he had great wealth."

"False Security." A feeling of being safer (and more secure) than you really are. A hope and belief that you are secure, when your hope and belief are not as secure as you think.

"One thing you still lack", (Jesus said). "One thing (in life) you still do not have." Do you know what this man was missing? Do you know what the (one thing lacking) in his life was, that you and I want to make sure is not lacking in ours?

What he didn't have was a Savior that was secure. What he didn't have was a hope and a promise (for life) that went beyond the hope and the promise of this life. That's what he was missing. That's the one thing that was lacking in his life.

And (that sad part is), when he had the chance (in the story) to have one, he didn't take it. When he had the opportunity (in this interaction with Jesus) to let go (of his false security) – all of the things he had been doing in and by himself – and truly become secure, he couldn't do it, and so he never was. And he went away sad because he couldn't let go. He went away insecure, because in his false security, he had become too secure.

There are all kinds of lessons in this story. (We could spend all day, if we wanted.) Let me touch on just a few. (Here's the first.) #1: It's not wrong (in this life) to be rich. It's not a sin (in this life) to have possessions and wealth. (It's not.) For Jesus, it was not, nor has it (ever been) a question of what we possess. It is and it (always will be) a question of what possesses us.

You tell me. What possesses you in life? (Be honest.) Of all the things you have in your life, what place (in your life) are you giving to Christ? The man (in the story) wanted it both ways. Jesus said, "That's not going to work...not for him, or for us." (We need to figure it out.)

Here's another lesson. #2: The laws of God are given to us for a reason. The commandments of God (Jesus listed) are given to us as a gift. But the laws of God, his commandments, are not designed to save us. They're not, and they can't...and you are living with a false security if you think (in your case) they will.

#3: No matter what you've done (with your life), it'll never be enough to get you into the kingdom, even if you think you've done it all. And no matter what you haven't done (in your life), it'll never be enough to keep you from the kingdom, if your eyes and your faith are on Christ.

And #4: If there's anything in life that stands between you and your relationship with Jesus, then there is still "one thing lacking" in your life. There's still one thing missing that you do need. Whatever it is, (if it's in the way), you need to let it go. Whatever it takes, (no matter what it takes), you need to make it happen. There's only one Savior in this world, and it's not you. There's only one who can ever save you, and his name is Jesus.

Let me close with this. A few years back, a man by the name of Andrew Walls, a distinguished historian of world Christianity (and its trends), came out with an interesting study. He noted that wherever the world's major religions began, for the most part, that (same location) is still their center today. Islam (for example) started in Arabia, and the Middle East is still the center of the Islamic faith. Buddhism started in the Far East, and the Far East is still where Buddhism finds its center. It's the same thing with Hinduism – it started in India and it is still predominately an Indian religion.

The one exception (among world religions) is Christianity. Christianity's center (he said) is always moving. It started in Jerusalem, but (not long after) branched out into the Mediterranean, where it stayed for years. From there, over the years, it re-centered itself in Europe, and (from there) into North America, where (between the two) it has remained for nearly a thousand years.

What's happening now (he said), is that the center is shifting (once again), this time into Latin America and Asia and Africa; places where (for centuries) it was hardly on the map.

You go back a hundred years, only 1% of the African continent was Christian. Today, it's nearly half. More than 50% of the world's Christian population now lives in the southern hemisphere, and it is predicted, in the next fifty to seventy years, that the center of Christianity will have completely shifted away from the European countries and the United States and will have migrated, as it always does, to its new center.

When asked (the question), "Why does this happen? If the centers of other religions remain constant, why does the center of Christianity constantly change?" (Do you know what he said?)

He said, "What happens is, because the Christian faith is all about the cross, (and that's what sets it apart), and because the cross (and the message of Jesus) are all about giving up power and giving away

resources and sacrificing one's life (in order) to serve, what happens is, that it all begins to shift when it becomes too hard. It all begins to move (to a new center) when the cost becomes too great.

Because, when it becomes too hard (he said) and too costly, and people would rather have it easy and (at no expense), then that's what they do – they make it all too easy and safe (and seemingly) secure. And, over time, (he said), when that happens, the Christian faith, instead of remaining intimately tied to the cross of Jesus Christ, begins to transmute into a nice and comfortable (and not so demanding) religious way of life, designed for respectable (rich, young ruler) kind of people who try their best to be good.

“False Security.” One thing you still lack. Let us hope and pray that we never (ever, ever) take our eyes off of Jesus. Amen.