

Today we have three sets of parables, the first two deal with small things that grow large. The second two deal with people prepared to risk everything to gain one thing. Then Jesus tells a parable which deals with judgment, and the two possible outcomes. There are the righteous and the wicked. The wicked are; “thrown into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 13:50) That’s not a good outcome!

I think we’d all agree that ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ is something to be avoided. I know some people who have invested sizeable amounts of money in schemes that have fallen over. If they had known the outcome there would have been no way that they would have invested in these schemes.

If I asked you to invest your life’s savings in a business venture with me what sort of information would you want from me? I’ve got this great idea of building a resort, like the ones you get in Queensland, here at Monarto. A twenty story building, with three heated swimming pools, a day spa, tennis courts, and a five star restaurant. All I want from you is \$500,000 and in ten years you’ll double your money. That would be a cool million. Just remember how well those who took the risk of investing in ‘Crocodile Dundee 1’ did. Who’s willing to invest?

Jesus’ parable about the fish reminds me that I’m investing much, much more than a miserly \$500,000 when I follow him. I’m investing my life. Now that’s an investment where you’d want to know the outcome, and not be left regretting having wasted your life, with no way of turning things around.

All the ‘If onlys’ of life can really eat away at you. If only I’d brought all that dirt cheap seaside land at Edithburgh when I was living at Yorktown. If only I’d have stayed at home when it was raining I wouldn’t have broken my leg. If only I had listened to my parents, life would have been smoother. If only I’d kept my mouth shut, and thought twice before speaking. What

‘If onlys’ gnaw away at you? I certainly don’t want my life to end up in one big regret. It is vitally important to know the outcome of your investment, especially when what you’re investing is your life, and the life of those you love. The stakes are high.

That’s what the second set of parables point to. The stakes are high because Jesus calls you to risk it all on just one venture. We’re putting it all on the nose and not hedging our bets with a second or third place. Jesus invites you to join him in an all or nothing venture.

The person who found the treasure thought it was worth risking everything they had to get it. The same with the person who found that one special pearl. They sold the lot to get the one, because it was well and truly worth it.

But any risk analyst will tell you to diversify your investments, so that overall you’ll come out in front. Some will go down, some will go up, but overall you finish with more. But Jesus calls you and me to risk it all on him. That’s the sort of relationship Jesus is interested in; all or nothing. He’s not interested in loving you half-heartedly. Jesus gives his all, that we might find life in all his fullness.

The Old Testament reading for today was about King Solomon. He prayed for wisdom so that he might govern the nation wisely. Unfortunately Solomon ended up hedging his bets. In total he ended up with 1000 wives and concubines. And instead of bringing them to the LORD he allowed them to worship their own gods, which was his downfall. Solomon is a tragic figure. He had it all, but he let it slip through his fingers. He made treaties to protect his country, rather than follow God’s will.

It made good political sense, but God had told his people not to make treaties, but to rather rely solely on him. Each treaty brought a new wife, and placed temptation to worship other gods right in the middle of his home. If only he had listened to the LORD. If only he had taken the time to get to know his children and to teach Rehoboam about wisdom, then the kingdom wouldn’t have divided. If only Solomon had listened he wouldn’t

have ended up such a tragic figure. He could have been such a great king, but he left the LORD'S people on the brink of collapse.

No longer did they risk their all trusting the LORD to save them. Their king had taught them to hedge their bets. These people got a good crop because they worship this Baal. We'll do it too, so that we get a good crop. After all its good business to follow those who are successful. You can't argue with that. Except the LORD wanted to love these people wholly and not loose any part of them. The LORD was unwilling to make treaties to get 80% of you, his goal is to love you 100%, so that we might grow in the joy of loving him 100%.

How are we tempted to sell out Jesus? Where are we tempted to hedge our bets and not trust Jesus solely and wholly?

Jesus has invested himself completely in us that's why Paul can say: "we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that ... *nothing* in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:37,39) For God, in Jesus, has invested himself completely in us. He hasn't hedged his bets but risked it all that he might love us totally.

The first two parables talked about how small things can grow. I'm sure Solomon started off with one treaty and one foreign wife. I mean just once can't hurt. Can it?

The Mustard tree started off as a small speck, which grew to take a significant place. Even the birds took shelter in it.

That reminds me of a tree in Murray Bridge. It's on Swanport Rd opposite the Mobile service station. I was visiting the home next door to this huge pine tree. There we're pine needles filling the gutter of the house next door. The thing that had got my attention was one of the pine cones hitting me on the head as I walked under it. The resident next door who I was visiting commented; 'I should have pulled that tree out when it was only a twig in the ground.' How easy that would have been. What a mess it was making

now, and what a huge effort it would be to remove it now. If only – if only he had pulled it out when it was a twig.

Little things grow. Which made me ask; 'what are the little things I'm doing regularly to help my relationship with Jesus grow.' Our relationship with Jesus starts of as a seed that he plants in our hearts and minds which has the potential to grow.

Jesus says; 'Come follow me.' The seed that leads us into a life of adventure with Jesus. A simple call that leads us into a life of love and joy. A life that knows know end. And as we follow Jesus, listen, observing, doing as he does our whole life becomes filled with his loving presence. Our whole life takes on a wonderful new perspective.

I'm no longer living for myself, cramming in as much as I can before I die. Rather in Jesus, we live for him, discovering his love for us, living this love to each other, looking forward to living intimately together forever.

Each day we are faced with many small decision which either grow us as healthy, vibrant disciples of Jesus, or leave us with regrets. It's all those many small decisions which grow us into a healthy, vibrant disciple of Jesus.

I'm often tempted to think all you need is some wonderful big act, but it's all those everyday Christ-like decisions that I make which grow me. It's making time to regularly read the bible. It's knowing Jesus' will and them applying it, by speaking in ways that builds people up according to their needs. It's giving the thirsty a drink of water. It's making the time to listen to another being there for them. Daily I'm faced with heaps of small opportunities to express Jesus love, growing a healthy, vibrant relationship with Jesus.

Jesus reminds us not to underestimate the power of those daily small decisions. I help keep my marriage and family safe by daily choosing to reject the myriad pornographic images that flood our TV's daily as wrong. Because I know Jesus has said; "To look at someone lustfully is to commit adultery."

Paul reminds us that we are transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12). All those daily little thoughts that we fill our minds with so that we grow a Christ shaped life. Never under estimate the importance of all those daily little decisions you make, they lead you to build life in all Jesus' fullness or they can leave you with a life-time of regrets, a life-time of 'If onlys'.

Let us pray.

Jesus thank you for dying that we might live. Fill our minds every minute of everyday with you wisdom, and the power to do it. Help us to test each of those little moments so that we are building a close intimate loving relationship with you that will stand the test, when you return. Amen.