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A SS teacher held up a picture of Jesus for her class one time and said it was not an actual photo but was an artist's conception of what Jesus looks like. One little girl said: "But you have to admit that it looks a lot like him". To a child a picture of Jesus is clear. Sometimes to those of a shallow faith the teachings of Jesus seem clear. The simple gospel...so easy to understand. Have we forgotten how much difficulty the disciples had with Jesus' teachings, and they lived with him for 3 years. They were constantly asking him to explain himself. When we wasn't talking in parable, he was in paradox. What some today claim to be simple, was perplexing to those nearest Jesus.

Nevertheless, we can see thru the teachings of Jesus some principles that are at the heart of successful living in this world.. These principles are important, not only in understanding life, but by god's grace how to conquer.

1. Here's the first one: anything you save will be lost. Reubin Job, who recently became editor of the UPPER ROOM, tells of a family experience in a book on evangelism he wrote. He said

One day, several years ago I picked up <sup>one of</sup> my sons who was 14 years old and competing in a track meet. As a busy father I wasn't there but probalby should have. But I was there to pick him up. As he came out the gate I could see that he had not won. You can tell the difference between a winner

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Whoever wants to save his  
own life will lose it.

and a loser. That morning when he had left he said, 'Dad, I (2) feel great. I had a good night's sleep. I'm trained and feel like I really will do well today'. He doesn't normally do well in track - and that day as he came to the car, I could see it had not gone well. I thought we could get it over with and said, 'Son how did you do?' and he replied: 'The worst I have ever done'. "What went wrong", I asked. He said, 'Well, you see Dad, it's like this. I run the 330. And in the Jr Hi Sch where I go, we train on a 330 yard track. Here, today, the 330 was staked out on a 440 yd track, and I misjudged the race. I started off easy, saving myself, and I started running hard too late. The race was over too quick, and when the race was over I had too much left. I hadn't used all I had'.

That is a parable of life. The tragedy of our lives is not that we have received too ~~much~~ little but that we have given too little. For anything that is saved in this world is lost. That is the meaning of the parable of the talents. The servant took the one talent and saved it...he buried it in the ground. The other two servants used their talents. Anything you save in this world is lost.

It is really sort of sad when you read about someone who dies and leaves a big fortune. I always wonder: "Did they enjoy their wealth while they had it. It is a cliché to say "you can't take it with you". But what good is it to you when you are gone? Anything you save will eventually be lost. One of the saddest laments I hear when someone dies is this: "I wish I had done more for him (or her) while he or she was alive". And the truth is we do have so much to give away...our love, our



friendship, our time, our resources. Anything we save we will lose. That is true of all aspects of life, If you sit around conserving your energy, who will lose it. It is the person who does nothing that is tired, it is not the person out living victoriously. That is a lesson of life, and that is the first principle: Whatever you save you will lose. (3)

Dr. Beran Wolfe wrote: If you observe a really happy man you will find him building a boat, writing a symphony, educating his son, growing a garden, and helping someone. He will not be searching for happiness as if it were a collar button which had rolled under the radiator. He will not be striving for it as if it were a goal in itself,,,,,. To find happiness we must seek for it in a focus outside ourselves".

2. This brings us to the second principle, and it is related to the first. Anything you share you will regain. We are created for sharing. Would you like to have a miserable day? Go to an amusement park by yourself, ride the rides by yourself see the shows by yourself. Now, of course solitude is a valuable thing. But solitude can only be enjoyed when it is balanced off with those hours we spend with someone else, and there are many experiences in life which we simply cannot enjoy by ourselves. We are created for sharing.

We who are parents know that the greatest blessing in life is not a gift our children can give to ~~us~~ us; it is what we give to them that brings happiness. If we could only know ourselves to be related to all others in this same kind of family relationship so that what we give ultimately ~~is~~ is restored to

whoever loses his life for me, & for the gospel will save it

to us. We are made for sharing. (4)

We ought to know that in the church. Engineers once were building a bridge across a portion of NYC harbor. But they discover an old sunken barge right in the spot where they wanted to sink a pier, a barge of stones and bricks. They used every device they could, but the old barge remained firmly embedded. But one engineer had an idea. He gathered a number of other barges above the sunken craft and tied long chains to the sunken one when the tide was low. Then they waited. The tide came in, and with a good deal of creaking and straining the old barge was lifted. That too is a parable of our lives: If we will tie ourselves firmly to Jesus Christ we are lifted by the power and love of God. If we refuse to be yoked together then there is no lifting power and the blessings of the Christian faith will pass us by. Anything we save will be lost, anything we share, we will regain.

3. And here is the final principle, Anything you surrender will be glorified. There is a little children's book about a couple in Sussex England who were buying a new teacup:

"The wife said to the husband, 'look at this one. It is so beautiful I want to buy it'. And the teacup said: 'Aw but you know I wasn't always beautiful'. Now in children's stories the teacup could talk, and the couple isn't surprised so they asked what he meant. The teacup said: 'Originally I was just a soggy and ugly lump of clay. They put me on a wheel and they spun me round and round until I was dizzy. Then they started to poke and prod and it hurt. I cried out "stop" but they said "not yet". Then they put me in a furnace. It got hotter and



"stop" and they said "Not yet". Then someone started to paint on me and the fumes from the paint made me ill. And I shouted "stop" and they said "not yet". Then they finished painting and they put me back into the furnace and it was hotter than before. And I cried "stop" and they said "not yet". Finally they took me out of the furnace, and after I cooled down, they placed me on a counter top in front of a mirror. I remembered myself as soggy ugly clay. When I saw myself in the mirror, I lost my breath and said in amazement "I am beautiful". And then I knew that it was only the pain that I went thru that Had made it possible for me to be beautiful.



And that is another parable for our lives.

Whatever we surrender will be glorified. God can take the sogginess and the drabness and the ugliness of our lives and turn those lives into something beautiful. But we must, first of all, surrender them to him. We are the ~~poor~~ clay, he is the potter. But what he can do with clay....

One can stand at a century old oak tree and wonder how this marvelous thing ever rose out of the dead earth where its roots are. As a matter of fact, it did not,.. at least entirely. A tree is largely transformed sunlight. There is from first to last an earth element, to be sure, but the tree is forever drawing upon streams of sunlight which flood it and it builds the intangible light energy into leaf and blossom and fiber until there stands the giant oak actually living on sunshine.

And the little daisy at its base, modest and delicate, is equally consolidated sunshine, tho it pushes its face hardly 6 inches from the soil . God is the creator of beauty, and He

can take our lives and make something beautiful out of them if  
we are willing to surrender them.

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~~that~~ and that which you surrender to God, he  
will glorify.