

Urban Legends – “God is Safe”

Intro: I got two more of them this week; forwards warning of impending doom or accusing some corporation of evil or telling me that the government was up to this or that. A quick trip over to snopes.com or truthorfiction.com showed they were urban myths.

There are lots of urban myths out there. These urban legends are viral; they spread everywhere and people who consider themselves well educated, smart, and possessed of good common sense often are the first to fall for them.

We begin a series this morning examining urban legends about God, Christianity, and our spiritual journey.

I. The Safety Myth

- A.** There is a famous scene in C.S.Lewis’ first Narnia novel when Aslan, the lion figure that represents Christ, is introduced. One of the children asks, “is he safe?” The reply, “He is not safe, but he is good” is a powerful, haunting one, for it is true.
- B.** There is a very strong tendency in people to reverse the direction of creation (Genesis 1:27). We want to make God in our image. We want Him to behave as we think God should behave.
 - 1. The righteous would flourish.
 - 2. The bad guys would lose with the same regularity and mind numbing predictability as in an old “Walker, Texas Ranger” re-run.
 - 3. No lotteries, but if there were, only righteous folk would win them and they would use the funds wisely, with kindness and charity towards all.
- C.** People often hold up their churches as solutions to your marriage problems, problems with children, health issues; as the way to world peace. They mine the Bible as a leadership book, a business model, or as a financial blueprint.
- D.** This begs a rather large question: *Is God made in our image or are we made in His?*
 - 1. And if we are made in his image, what does that mean? Were we created to be prosperous, healthy, comfortable, powerful and rich?

2. Those who answer “yes” to this ignore the lessons of the Garden of Eden. We don’t do well when everything is given to us. There is a snake in the garden.
3. It also ignores all those passages we are about to examine – the real story of scripture is one of risk, not safety.

II. A God of Risk

- A. Noah – put himself at risk by building this thing for a hundred years and then by getting in it!
- B. Abraham – had to leave his city, his family, his culture if he wanted to play a part in the plans of God.
- C. Moses – had to leave Egypt, then come back in.
- D. The people of Israel had to enter the desert, walk into the Red Sea, follow the pillars of cloud and fire for forty years, fight enemies – even the mighty Jericho, and walk into the Jordan.
- E. All this time, God is using the Philistines, Moabites, Assyrians, etc. as functionaries in His plan; as risky allies in a battle plan that advances His will. Risky? Yes!

III. The Record of Jesus in Matthew

- A. Jesus was born in perilous times and in a weak and exposed condition.
- B. Right after his baptism, he is led into the desert and tempted by Satan himself (Matthew 4). Angels didn’t protect him from that. He was at risk.
- C. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says “you’ve heard it said, but I say to you” to a people who protected their traditions fiercely.
- D. He claimed to be God in the most fiercely monotheistic culture on earth.
- E. His message was consistently one of putting yourself at risk for the Lord, your God. (5:11,12; 8:18-22)
- F. And then there is The Sending (always a part of following Jesus. Not for apostles only).
 1. 10:9,10,17-23, 34-39.
 2. Could he have been any plainer? To follow God, you must place your life at risk.

3. No more self-centeredness. No more “what about MY needs?” No more safe and comfortable paths. Put your life into play.
 4. Because it is worth everything you have. 13:44,45
 5. The reward comes on the Day of the Lord – either the big one or your personal one. 16:24-27
- G.** The parable of the talents and the pounds (Matthew 25).
- H.** Jesus put his own life at risk on the cross. The apostles put their lives at risk and all but one lost them violently... but they received a crown of life.
- I.** They might not have had shiny, happy families and their bank accounts might not have been balanced, but they have a home with God forever.
- J.** The Sending has not ended. He sends us as well. Matthew 28:18-20.