

June 26, 2022 St. Peter Lutheran Church, Doss, TX

2nd half of Gospel:

Luke 9: 57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." 59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Back in February 1, 2003, I went outside to watch the Columbia Space Shuttle re-enter our atmosphere, seeing it cross the sky from west to east not knowing I was watching its demise.

Evelyn Husband, wife of shuttle commander Rick Husband, wrote a book about the astronaut's faith in God, entitled High Calling. When interviewed at a news conference at her home church, Grace Community Church in Houston, she was asked: Why did you write High Calling?

She said: When I was first asked to write High Calling, my reaction was that I would never write a book. But, after further thought and prayer, I realized what a wonderful gift this could be to my children -- a permanent record of who their father was, not only as an astronaut, but as a godly man who had his priorities straight and who loved his family dearly. It also gave me an opportunity to share publicly what God has taught me and my family privately -- that you can have hope in the midst of deep despair. People have asked me if writing the book has been therapeutic and my answer is, "No, it has not helped me through the grieving process. It has been a very difficult thing to do. However, as He promised, God has been with me every step of the way."

The interviewer went on to ask: What do you hope people learn from your story and message? She replied, "I hope people will find numerous truths in High Calling, including the truth that God is ready, willing and able to walk us through any crises that life may present publicly or privately. I also hope men will be encouraged to set priorities as Rick did, placing God first, and family second and career third. Rick made these choices, and we will benefit from that for the rest of our lives. God

showed Rick how to be a spiritual leader, a wonderful father and terrific husband. Rick was not perfect; no one is. But God takes us, if we are willing and pliable, and can make a marriage a joyous experience and a home a blessed place to be.”

The next question was: In your book, you say you have “lost all politeness with God.” What do you mean by that? She said, “I have had many moments of intense crying and gut-wrenching grieving. Without question, this has been the most intense emotional experience I have ever been through and continue to walk through. In my grief and anger, I have not been polite with God. I have screamed at Him for allowing my children to grow up without their wonderful dad and for me to be a single parent and to lose my very best friend. In response, He has given me wonderful, unconditional love and understanding. Jesus is a man of sorrows acquainted with my grief. I think being honest and open with Him and telling Him exactly how I feel has greatly deepened the intimacy of my relationship with Him.”

Finally, she was asked: In the days after the Columbia tragedy, you were on national television demonstrating an extraordinary peace. How are you able to maintain such peace in the midst of such tragedy? She answered, “I knew that my only hope for survival and strength would flow from God, and I relied on Him. Every step, every breath, I sought and cried out to God for supernatural strength and, just as He promises in the Bible, He met me with that peace that surpasses understanding. It has been amazing to feel His presence and love and encouragement at the lowest moments of my life.”

Jesus spoke of priorities as He called different people. He said, *“If you love your father or mother more than you love Me, you are not worthy of being Mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than Me, you are not worthy of being Mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being Mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for Me, you will find it.”*(MT 10:37-39)

I heard about a farmer named Kent Krukewitt. Grant Mangold, an editor with Successful Farming magazine said of him: “He knows the challenge of maintaining an optimistic outlook in agriculture. He doesn’t exactly follow a formula. But he aims at keeping his faith, family, and farm in focus -- and pretty much in that order.” Krukewitt said, “You have to know what’s really important and focus on those things. It has a lot to do with your overall attitude about life and how you view things.”

Since 1973, he has raised corn and soybeans as a third-generation farmer on 1,800 acres near Homer, Illinois.

“Agriculture is long-term and cyclical,” he notes. “And economics does not tell the whole story about each individual in farming. There are things more important than having great financial success. I start every day reading from the Bible. That puts everything in perspective and sets the tone for the day.” This helped remind him that everyday problems are less important than the bigger picture of pursuing major life goals. He said, “I try to keep things faith based and not let other things or problems get to me.”

In life and in agriculture, there are always things outside our control, Krukewitt notes. “But knowing that God is always there and in control of my life personally, and that His grace is always available, puts a calming reassurance in my life. I certainly didn’t get into agriculture to get wealthy. Life is a whole package of things, including enjoying your work.”

Being involved in family activities and his children’s interests help him to maintain optimism in life. “What I enjoy most is doing things with my family. This helps me get away from problems on the farm....” (Positive People: A farmer orders his priorities from *Innovator* - 6-1-01)

In a Catholic newsletter, Susan Hines Brigger wrote about her niece Samantha, 10 years old. She came home from school with a certificate for exemplifying good Christian character. She was one of only nine kids in her grade to be selected for the award. Her mother was ecstatic. Samantha didn’t understand what the big deal was.

My sister tried to explain to her what an honor it was to be recognized for being a good Christian. “That means that you try to live your life as Jesus did.”

All too often, as a society, we tend to overlook the importance of good, Christian character in kids. Grades, athletic abilities, looks, possessions and other things seem to rank higher in our priorities than what type of character we’re instilling in our children especially in a time when many of our kids are taught Critical race theory that demeans kids and that truth is relative and not absolute. That is in conflict with the Scriptures that say Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. What His Word says, what He taught, is true not just for some, but for all. The mom continued, “I can remember that when my sisters and I were growing up, whenever we did or said something hurtful or unkind, my parents wouldn’t say, ‘That wasn’t a nice thing to

do,' but rather, "That wasn't a very Christian thing to do.' It sounds like a simple and honest statement, but the message behind it was huge.

Perhaps nowhere else is our call to live out our Christian faith clearer than in Chapter 25 of Matthew's Gospel. There Jesus preaches that those who will enter His Father's kingdom are those who lived out their Christian faith—"Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of Mine, you did for Me." (v. 40).

Study after study has shown that kids learn the majority of their morals and ethics from what they see and hear at home. It makes sense, therefore, that if we want to raise our children to be good Christians, we should focus on everyday attitudes and choices. You can encourage Christian behavior in yourself and your children, first, by setting an example.

One author (Robert Fulghum) wrote, "Don't worry that your children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you." What type of example are you setting for your children through your own words and actions? Are you reading the Bible? Do you praise Christian behavior? Do you ask God for help?" Are you truthful? Do your words honor God – especially when you're under stress? Do you provide opportunities for Christian service? As a family, can you take part in projects or events to help others?

Looking back to my Jr. High years, I had to make some decisions. The group I was running with liked to get into trouble. The other group I was running with was the church youth group. I had to choose between the two and chose the church group. My other friends stayed friendly, but they experimented with alcohol, blowing up mail boxes, and other activities that got them into trouble. I decided to stick with the church youth group.

We can look at our check books, our calendars, and our choices and discover what our priorities are. If your priorities don't say that God is first for you, you need to ask God to help you. Second, you need to repent of those things, asking a believer friend to help you be accountable. Third, you need to let the Holy Spirit lead your priorities. He knows you inside and out. He loves you dearly. Jesus stands at our doors and knocks. No matter how much we believe that He is the Son of God and our Savior, we still have to open that door. When you do and He says, "Follow Me!" What will you say? Amen