

Exaltation of the Holy Cross - 2025

The Language of Heaven

This is the problem Nicodemus is having. Nicodemus knows only one language. And that is the language of earth. It is the only language that any of us knows. Suddenly Jesus appears on the scene and begins speaking the language of Heaven. Nicodemus hears the words "You must be born again," and he is confused. So, he asks, "How can a person go back into his mother's womb and come out again?"

Taking Risks

Nicodemus took a huge risk in his secret night time visit to see the Teacher Jesus, but risks are sometimes necessary for growth and change. Alex Haley, the author of *Roots*, said this about taking risks, "Nothing is more important. Too often we are taught how not to take risks. When we are children in school...we are told to respect our heroes.... What we are not told is that these leaders...were in fact rule-breakers. They were risk-takers in the best sense of the word; they dared to be different" (Alex Haley quote is taken from Walter Anderson, *The Greatest Risk of All*).

(by Brett Blair, www.eSermons.com)

The Rewards of Risk

A temporary office-help agency in Washington DC recently began offering a \$100 bonus to the employee who makes the biggest mistake of the month. He doesn't get a reprimand. He doesn't get demoted. He gets a \$100 bonus. I read about an executive for a company called Sara Lee Direct who thought he was getting a great deal on a shipment of belts, so he acted quickly and bought a whole warehouse full. Only later did he discover that what he bought was not manufacturing belts for the conveyor system at the factory, but a bunch of those three-inch-wide paisley belts from the 1960's. Instead of getting fired, he was awarded a bronze plaque that proudly commemorated the "Worst Buy of the Year."

When I read these stories, I had two reactions. My first was: Are these businesses nuts? Have they gone crazy, or what?

Seriously though, there's a strategy behind rewarding mistakes. The president of that temporary help company explained it this way: "The object is to get people to take risks." An official at Sara Lee Direct where the employee got promoted instead of fired for making that terrible purchase put it this way, "If you don't go up to the plate and swing hard, you're never going to hit a home run. If you're not willing to make a mistake, you're not really trying." The bottom-line is that risk-taking is the only road to success. And companies are finding that it's worth rewarding a few mistakes along the way if it encourages their people to take the kind of risks that can bring huge rewards. And the

same is true for people of faith. How much faith does it take to follow? How much risk are we willing to take? That's the crux of the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus. That's what Jesus meant when he said you must be reborn.

Born of the Spirit

Windborne! That's a far better moniker for Christians than that mistaken term "born again". That's a phrase we picked up from Nicodemus' misunderstanding of entering a second time into the mother's womb rather than Jesus' terminology "born from above" or "born of the Spirit". "No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and wind - Spirit - pneumatos."

Windborne speaks of being carried along by the wind of the Spirit of God. Here is a lifestyle that is not bogged down with the how questions, but a life that soars among the clouds powered by the mystery of God. "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes." Ours is a life filled with mystery and the unexplainable.

Science has taught us to ask the how questions. Our contemporary culture seems to be obsessed with the tangible, the explainable, and the measurable. And we are tempted to believe that the only reality is that which we can see and touch. But Jesus calls us to a life of the spirit. It's a life lifted by the invisible power of the wind. (by Mickey Anders from [Windborne](#))

The Gift of the Breeze

I remember growing up in the South, in cotton country, in the summer, before air conditioning became something almost every home had. Several of those summers I spent working on my uncle's cotton farm, down in the Mississippi delta, just outside of my birthplace, Cleveland, Mississippi. It was hot work, hard work, bringing in a cotton crop. It still is, but technology has made it a lot easier than it was back then.

When the crop had been tended for another day, the weeds chopped from between the cotton plants, in the evening everyone would gather on the front porch. We would rock and talk and laugh in a futile attempt to escape the ever-present heat and humidity. And sometimes, on a really good day, the leaves of the trees would begin to rustle. And the conversation would die down, and everyone would just sit back and enjoy the summer breeze, the gift of the breeze. We didn't know where it came from. We didn't know where it was going. But we knew it was there, because we could feel it.

(by Johnny Dean www.eSermons.com)