

TITLE: "Adventure"

Text: John 10:1-10 (NT p. 103)

Introduction – A secure base

In his book A Secure Base, John Bowlby gives an illustration of a mother sitting on a park bench while her four-year-old son plays on the grass. At first, the boy stays very close to his mother, but soon he is wandering farther away, although he keeps looking back to be sure his mother is still there. In a little while, he strays quite far, but trips and hurts his knee. He runs back to his mother, she comforts him, tells him it's all right, and encourages him to go back and play, which he does. Eventually, he is comfortable playing some distance away because he knows that his secure base, his mother, will be there if he needs her.

Last week I preached on our need for security and the fact that we as Christians get our security through our faith in Jesus Christ. When we have faith in Jesus, we KNOW that God loves us and nothing in heaven or on earth can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

However, there HAS to be more to life than security. In our text for this morning, Jesus says: "I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and [they] will come in and go out and find pasture." ...E. Stanley Jones writes: "When Jesus says, 'and go out' he means you'll find adventure" (*In Christ* p. 41). We each need adventure, as well as security, in order to be able to enjoy the abundant life that Jesus promises.

1. Security without adventure and creativity

A life with security without adventure becomes an empty, boring experience.

I once knew a man named George who, as a young man, had set a goal to be independently wealthy. I met him just before he retired and after a couple double martinis, he used to say, "David, the world's a brutal place, BRUTAL, and you have to look out for yourself first." He had worked hard all his life and retired as the vice president of a large insurance company in Boston, having reached his goal of independent wealth.

Even when he was working, he was not close to any people in his office. As he said, "They all respect me not for who I am, but for what I can do." His wife was confined to a wheel chair after a stroke and my mother used to help take care of her. George had one friend, a retired restaurant owner, who lived in a huge remodeled farmhouse on the top of a mountain in Vermont. I met him; he and was just as hard boiled as George.

George and his wife lived in a beautiful home on a hill overlooking a salt water marsh. He had no hobbies other than eating expensive beef and drinking an astonishing number of very dry martinis. He belonged to no organizations and didn't go to church. But, as he said, "I reached my goal. Everything I have, house, cars, everything is bought and paid for, and I have more money than I know what to do with."

One day we were talking in his living room when we heard a vehicle with a loud muffler. He leaped up, looked out a front window and we watched an ancient truck making its way up his long driveway. He said, "It's him! Hide!" And he stepped behind the drape, peering around its edge so he could just see the front door.

A guy dressed like one of the Beverly Hillbillies got out, came to the door and rang the bell. He said, "Shhhh, don't move." The guy started to walk around the house, looking in windows and he flattened himself against the wall, and motioned me to do the same. The man eventually left and he said, "This guy came and asked for money and I made the mistake of giving him 20 bucks. Now he keeps coming looking for more."

Here was guy who had what the world would call security, but because his security was NOT in the Lord, he was so INsecure, he couldn't even give a poor man another \$20.00. Now all that was left for him was to hide in his little castle and eat and drink himself to death, which he did. Security, by itself, is NOT the way to experience the abundant life Jesus promises.

2. Adventure without security

All adventure without security does not lead to an abundant life either. In 1974 I was working on an 86 foot shrimp boat out of Fort Myers, Florida and we pulled into Key West to fuel up before heading across the Gulf to fish off the coast of Mexico. There was a line at the pumps and one of the boats waiting was huge tri-hull sailboat. Our captain invited the couple from the sailboat aboard and we chatted while we waited.

They were part of a flotilla of 100 or so boats that had sailed from Tahiti to Hawaii, to San Francisco, then down the west coast, through the Panama Canal, across the Gulf. This couple was waiting in Key West for the rest of the boats to catch up before heading to the Greek Isles where they planned to spend the spring.

This couple had retired early, sold their home and bought their boat in Tahiti. Tahiti and Hawaii had been the magical adventure they had imagined it would be. However, half way between Hawaii and California a typhoon struck. The mast snapped, the boat almost foundered, and they drifted in heavy seas for days with just a sea anchor. They finally limped into San Francisco where they had repairs made.

We went to their boat, which the guy was proud to show us, but he seemed pretty nervous about his approaching trip across the Atlantic. In fact, both seemed pretty worn out and it was obvious to me that the thrill was gone. This was confirmed when she later said to me, "We really don't want to keep going, but what else can we do, sell the boat, go back to work and start all over again?"

Adventure with no security does not lead to abundant life any more than security WITHOUT adventure.

3. Security and adventure

What we need for an abundant life is security AND adventure. And when we are secure in our faith, God will add adventure to our lives. What do I mean by adventure? Adventure involves doing something you haven't done before that you are not sure you can do. Security is getting to the edge of a cliff, looking over, seeing a net, and then jumping off into the net. Adventure is jumping off the cliff without seeing the net and HOPING that the net will appear after you jump.

Adventure is a little scary. It's like the guy who was walking along a cliff by the sea one night when the edge gave way and he started falling toward the rocks below. Grabbing frantically at the face of the cliff, he grasped a small tree and hung on for dear life. ...As his arms began to tire, he called out, "Jesus, SAVE me!"

A voice came down from the top of the cliff, "Trust me and let go."

He said, "Is that you Jesus?"

Jesus said, “Yes. Trust me and let go.”

The guy thought for a few moments and called back, “Is there anyone ELSE up there?”

There are a LOT of people “up there” who we can listen to. But there is only One who is the Way to Eternal life. And Jesus continually asks us to let go and trust God.

The world says, “Keep saving your money and when you have more than enough, THEN you can give some of the extra to God.” Jesus says, “Seek FIRST the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness and all the things you need will be given to you as well.” Giving to God is an adventure in faith.

Serving as an officer in the church can be an adventure. I mention this because we are still in need of an elder to serve on the Session finance Committee. I know the Lord has someone in mind to serve and I’m sure he or she is saying, “I just don’t have TIME to do that.” There is never time to do what the Lord wants us to do. When we follow the Lord, he GIVES us the time, and ability, to do it. That’s why serving God is an adventure in faith.

Why does God ask us to do things we don’t see how we can possibly do? ...Because that is what each of us will eventually HAVE to face. Each one of us going to get to the end of this life and then we are going to HAVE to let go and trust God. And the Lord knows that if we are faithful in jumping off little cliffs, we will be more ready to jump off that big one when the time comes.

Conclusion – “NEED WASHING?”

Not all the adventure God provides has to do with sacrifice and commitment. When we do what God asks us to do, God also provides us with adventures that fill us with joy and excitement. ...One of my colleagues in ministry recently said that she was examining her life by using these three questions:

What is it past time for?

What is it not time for yet for?

What is it time for now?

Carol and I are considering these questions and I recommend that you consider them as well.

Are there things that you used to want to do that you no longer want to do?

What do you want to do in the future?

What do you want to be doing right now?

Ask God to guide you as you consider these questions and who knows what adventures God may have in store for you! However, you may need courage; courage to leave your secure place and risk ...risk what? Let me tell you a story: ("NEED WASHING" from Reed 9-1-09 from moralsandethics September 1, 2008).

A little girl had been shopping with her Mom in Target. She must have been 6 years old, this beautiful red haired, freckle faced image of innocence. It was pouring outside. The kind of rain that gushes over the top of rain gutters, so much in a hurry to hit the earth it has no time to flow down the spout. We all stood there under the awning and just inside the door of the Target.

We waited, some patiently, others irritated because nature messed up their hurried day. I am always mesmerized by rainfall. I got lost in the sound and sight of the heavens washing away the dirt and dust of the world. Memories of running, splashing so carefree as a child came pouring in as a welcome reprieve from the worries of my day.

The little voice was so sweet as it broke the hypnotic trance we were all caught in "Mom let's run through the rain," she said.

"What?" Mom asked.

"Let's run through the rain!" she repeated

"No, honey. We'll wait until it slows down a bit," Mom replied.

This young child waited about another minute and repeated: "Mom, let's run through the rain!"

"We'll get soaked if we do," Mom said.

"No, we won't, Mom. That's not what you said this morning," the young girl said as she tugged at her Mom's arm.

"This morning? When did I say we could run through the rain and not get wet?"

"Don't you remember? When you were talking to Daddy about his cancer, you said, 'If God can get us through this, he can get us through anything!'"

The entire crowd stopped dead silent. I swear you couldn't hear anything but the rain.. Mom paused and thought for a moment about what she would say. Now some would laugh it off and scold her for being silly. Some might even ignore what was said. But this was a moment of affirmation in a young child's life. A time when innocent trust can be nurtured so that it will bloom into faith.

“Honey, you are absolutely right. Let's run through the rain. If GOD let's us get wet, well maybe we just needed washing,” Mom said.

Then off they ran. We all stood watching, smiling and laughing as they darted past the cars and yes, through the puddles. They held their shopping bags over their heads, but they got soaked. And they were followed by a few who screamed and laughed like children all the way to their cars. ...And yes, I did. I ran. I got wet. I needed washing.

Do we need security? You bet. But let us not stop there when we get it. God wants to give us some adventure in life and we need to be open to that. Does that mean getting soaked? Well, if that seems too much of a risk, maybe you, and I, DO need washing.

Amen.

John 10:1-10

‘Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷ So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.