

Quest 28th Feb 2021



I've started this week with 4 cartoons of things not turning out quite the way we expected. At this time last year I'm sure none of you expected to spend half the year ahead not in school but learning from home! We have all had to learn in an enormous way how to be adaptable - how to cope with disappointments, how to change plans, how to just live in a very different way.

In our Gospel reading this week, Jesus starts to prepare his disciples for some very unexpected events to come.

Mark 8: 31-38

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

By this point in time, Jesus had performed many miracles, had travelled around quite a lot and the number of his followers was growing very large. Peter and the other disciples by then must have been thinking “We’re onto a winner here; this man is amazing! He could go on even to help us fight against the Romans....”

But Jesus knew he had to prepare them gently for the totally unexpected - that he would be rejected, arrested, put to death and then come back to life, but in a different form. He knew, too, that his disciples would face a life of suffering and danger after he was gone. (In this he was right as tradition has it that only one of them, John, was not killed in some way). Even Peter, the disciple who perhaps knew Jesus best of all, has no comprehension and understanding of what is to come.

It is interesting that Jesus then addresses both his disciples and the crowd following them when he tries to warn them of tough times ahead; we are like the crowd, so he is also warning us. It sounds a hard undertaking with phrases like ‘deny themselves’ and ‘take up their cross’. But Jesus also says that although to be a Christian may mean putting other people before ourselves, being prepared to give money away, caring for the sick, elderly and needy and following other such unselfish actions (in other words “giving up our lives”), we will find rich rewards in doing so - we will “save” our lives and our souls.

Have you noticed that it can be just as pleasurable to give someone a present as to receive one yourself?

But it also takes courage, especially if our friends and perhaps ‘society’ is pressing us to move in the other direction. The disciples were prepared even to face death in carrying out Jesus’ wishes; in the UK we are lucky we don’t face this threat, but it can be hard to go against the grain of a “me, me, me” culture.

Things to do:

1. Use this poem like a prayer. Say it out loud to yourself. Read it through quite a few times to help you understand it.

Risk poem - (Author unknown)

*To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.
To reach out is to risk involvement.
To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self.*

*To place your ideas and dreams before the crowd is to risk their love.
To love is to risk not being loved in return.
To live is to risk dying.
To hope is to risk despair.
To try is to risk failure.*

*But the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
The one who risks nothing does nothing and has nothing –
and finally, is nothing.
She may avoid sufferings and sorrow,
but she simply cannot learn, feel, change, grow or love.
Chained by certitude, he is a slave; he has forfeited freedom.
Only one who risks is free!*

(From p.33 in The Spectacular Stinking “Rolling Magazine” Book, Pip Wilson (1991, Marshall Pickering)

2. Can you think of any risks you might take this Lent?

Think about a situation or a friendship where you may need to take a risk, and you don't know what the outcome will be.

Write your own version of the risk poem, offering up your challenge to God. Ask him for help if you feel nervous - he will help you.

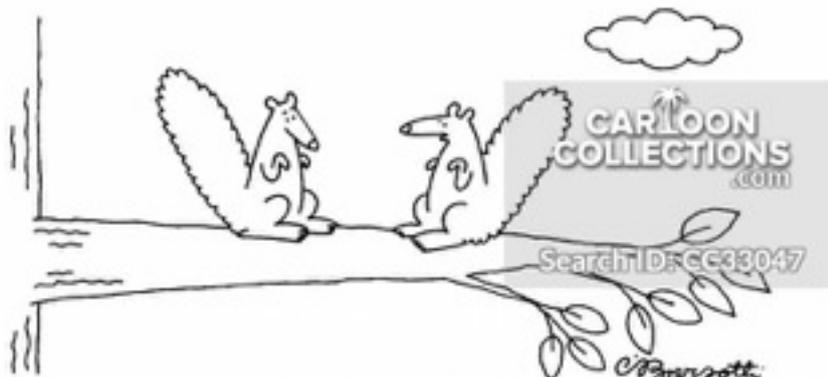
And here to finish are some more pictures and cartoons about taking risks.



"Let's try it without the parachute."



"There always seems to be ONE trouble-maker in the company who gets a sick thrill from rebelling against our corporate culture!"



"How will you ever know whether you're a flying squirrel if you don't give it a shot?"

