



## LASTING YOUR CARES!

by Mark Brunner

### *Cracked Pots!* (Luke 19:11ff)

Are you talented? I mean, do you consider yourself gifted in any way? It seems that these days it's easy to feel untalented or not much gifted. Perhaps it's because it's so easy to compare ourselves to others than it used to be. That thought was driven home recently as I turned on the TV and it happened to be tuned to American Idol. I was greeted by a slickly, dressed guy singing away with skill and a whole lot of professional panache. If he was my comparison, well, I would never measure up. I have a good voice but not a professional one. And my bald head and blue jeans would be at best a humorous contrast. It made me think less of myself for the moment.

Is that the way God wants you and I to feel? Or, does He have something else in mind?

Here's a story: A water bearer had two large pots, each hung on the end of a long pole she carried across her neck. One of the pots had a crack, while the other was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, and the cracked pot arrived only half full. The cracked pot was ashamed. After years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I want to apologize to you. I've been able, for years, to deliver only half of my load because this crack. You have to do all of this work, and you

don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said. The water bearer said, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For years, I've been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he wouldn't have this beauty to grace his house." (Author unknown. If anyone has a proprietary interest in this story please authenticate and I will be happy to credit, or remove, as the circumstances dictate.)

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots, so to speak. But if we will allow it, Jesus will use our flaws to grace His Father's table. In God's great economy, nothing goes to waste. So, as we seek ways to minister together, and as God calls you to the tasks He's appointed for you, don't be afraid of your flaws. We tend to put the gifted and talented on pedestals. God could care less about our pedestals. He measures everyone by His perfect, "just plain Christian" scale. We're all on level ground with God. As it turns out the weak, the obscure and struggling are just the type of "gifted" folks He's looking for. In that case, I feel I measure up pretty well. How about you?

*"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt 6:34)*

## *What If's!* (Isaiah 41:10)

There's an old adage that goes, "If 'what if' was all we had, all we'd have is a whole lot of 'if' and precious little 'what.'" There's a lot of wisdom in that thought. When you and I focus on the "what if's" in life we aren't able to find out the 'what's' we're so anxiously searching for. It's like little Frodo dog the other day. Sammy, our other Dachsie, was trying to steal a bone he was playing with. He kept moving from one end of the Great Room to the other, bone in tow. Finally Sammy lost interest but Frodo, being suspicious, kept moving the toy around from hiding place to hiding place regardless. He spent

so much time worried about the “what if” that he totally missed the “what” of being able to chomp on that juicy bone.

How DOES God want you and I to handle the “what if’s” that constantly push into our lives?

Here’s a thought from an unknown author: “I do a lot of traveling and recently a friend picked me up at the airport. Being delightfully bold, she commented, “You’re crazy, really nuts to go flying across the country without being able to see a thing! You’re always focused on getting there but you don’t seem to enjoy doing it.” “Sheesh, I love traveling!” I said, stifling my laugh at her silly concern. “Seriously, what if someone stole my bags? Or worse yet, I end up in the wrong terminal?” Ah! said my friend. The “what if’s” in life—so many of them—what if your career ended, or your work didn’t matter any more; what if your health failed or your husband died? What if’s; I guess they ARE important, aren’t they? (Author unknown. If anyone has a proprietary interest in this story please authenticate and I will be happy to credit, or remove, as the circumstances dictate.)

Focusing on the “what if’s” can really take our attention off the truly important “whats” in this life. Over the years I’ve learned this important lesson: knowing the difference between trusting and believing is the key. Anyone can say they believe in God. But it’s a whole different story to trust, completely trust in Him. The question is: When facing that dreaded circumstance, do we still trust that God is perfectly capable to bring healing, to strengthen us, to redirect our steps, and to turn it all to good? Often we’re just like Frodo, moving our problems around from one part of our lives to another because we keep getting better ideas on how to handle them; all along with God asking us to hold still and let Him handle it. If we truly trust God to handle stuff, big or small, we need to sit still and let Him do it. When we try too hard to do the work, we miss out on the pleasure of seeing Him get it done. Take a look around you. Perhaps He’s already taken care of the “what if’s” and He only asking you to settle down and enjoy the “what.”

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## *He's The Pilot; I'm The Ship!* (Philippians 3:7)

I was reading a magazine article recently that was full of charts and graphs. What the article was about wasn't really that important. As I reflect now I can't even remember whether it was political, social or economic. I just remember all the colorful graphs and charts. There were pie charts and line graphs reflecting a whole lot of numbers and statistics. That's what's stayed with me: the numbers and statistics. It seemed so impersonal as I reflected on the fact that I was one of those many millions of statistics all neatly packed into a nice, little chart. How small and insignificant I felt. I sure hope that isn't the way God looks at His elect; just a small statistic among the many saved?

Here's a story. George Mueller was a man known for building orphanages by faith in the mid-1800s. He raised literally millions of dollars for his orphanages, yet died with little in his own bank account. When asked about his conversion experience he commented, "I was converted in November of 1825, but I only came into the full surrender of the heart four years later, in July 1829. The love of money was gone, the love of place was gone, the love of position was gone, and the love of worldly pleasures and engagements was gone. God, God alone became my portion. I found my all in Him; I wanted nothing else. And by the grace of God this has remained, and has made me a happy man, an exceedingly happy man, and it led me to care only about the things of God. I can say from my heart, God is an infinitely lovely Being. He is the pilot and I'm the ship! That makes me singly significant to my maker." (Author unknown. If anyone has a proprietary interest in this story please authenticate and I will be happy to credit, or remove, as the circumstances dictate.)

You and I tend to see ourselves as only one small player in the spiritual scheme of things, so it is hard to release control of our lives. If we do release control, it usually is due to a process that God brings us through. That may mean pain, suffering and misfortune. Unfortunately, that is what it usually takes to wake us up and bring us to an understanding that we are not just statistics, we are important role players in this divine, spiritual drama called life. And, as important cogs in God's plan, we need to take our roles serious.

Today would be a good day to surrender yourself totally to God's plan for your importance, a place where your life is the life of Christ alone. It is a sacrificial life, but it is also a life of freedom, purpose, and meaning. Let God take full control and see His life lived fully through you. There may be many spiritual ships that God uses to accomplish His purposes, but there is only one pilot, Him. Makes you feel a lot less like a statistic and so much more like a treasure, doesn't it?

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## *Doing The Work With The Hurt!* (Exodus 23:22)

It was nail-cutting time again the other day here at Beech Springs; for the dogs, that is. Some dogs deal with it well, but most simply don't like it. I'm sure, from a dog's perspective nail cutting doesn't make a whole lot of sense. There's so many things that a dog could be doing other than being held down by two big people trying to cut off the ends of his claws. He uses those for digging, defending, scratching those hard to get at places and making some good noise on the hard, kitchen floor. But, it's nail cutting time and they're going to hold him down, maybe even put a muzzle on him, for sure put him through pain, and they don't even know when it's going to hurt because, well, he can't even tell them. Sometimes, if you're a dog, having your master do something for "your good" is something you'd much rather avoid altogether.

How about you and I? Sometimes it seems God is holding us down, allowing a whole lot of hurt, and we wonder why?

Here's a story. Five sons, all doctors now and in practice, visited their Mama on Mother's Day. She sat in the middle of them like a queen on her throne. Each of them had gone to college, graduate school and done their residencies; they also all had modern ideas, but they all still loved their old-fashioned Mama. A quiet discussion began among them about how strict their loving Mama had been when they were young. Never discussing in front of her how severe she was with them when they were boys and how she gave them the

works occasionally, one of the brothers, the oldest, said, “Mama, don’t you think, after all, that you punished us a little too often?” She straightened up and said, “Young man, when you raise five such fine boys as I have, come back and talk to me.” That was the answer. (Author unknown. If anyone has a proprietary interest in this story please authenticate and I will be happy to credit, or remove, as the circumstances dictate.)

God never lets anything happen to you if you’re trusting that He knows what he’s doing and the “what,” even if it hurts, is worth the hurt. God says, *“I’m handling it, thanks. By the way, when you put your hand on it in worry, you’re doing nothing to make it better, only worse.”* When God sends hurt our way, enemies that we weren’t figuring on or, for that matter, feeling we’re capable of dealing with, it’s good to remember this: Your enemies are His enemies. In fact you and He are on the same side and all of those unwanted, unmanageable enemies are on the other side. The fact is, He’s doing the work with the hurt because he has a whole lot more tools than we do. If only our dogs could get that through their heads. For that matter, if only we could as well.

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## *Ride A While!* (Psalm 145:14)

Many years ago my Dad owned a 1959 Plymouth Belvedere. It was a pretty sharp car by early 1960’s standards but it had one glaring fault. My Dad had real trouble with the rear leaf springs on that car. I remember visiting my grandparents up on Long Lake one late summer weekend. All six of us kids Mom and Dad piled into the Plymouth and off we went, driving through the Kettle Moraine. Things were going pretty well until “bang” out went one leaf and the whole back

end of the car slumped, kids and all. Then, “bang” the other one went and we were riding on the axle. As a kid I can still remember thinking if there was something that I could do to help the car make it to Grandpa’s house. So, I sat on my hands most of the rest of the way thinking I could somehow shift some

weight off that axle. In a strange sort of way, that seemed logical at the time as absurd as it sounds when you think of it.

But, you know, that's exactly what we do sometimes when we try to help God carry burdens only He can carry.

Here's a story. A country boy and his friend decided to go to town but they only had one horse between them. So, the one boy says to the other, "I'll tell you what we do Jake. I'll ride awhile and you can walk, then when you get tired of walking, you can walk awhile while I ride." Well, Jake, the country boy that he was, trusting and goodnatured, innocently agreed to that deal and that is the way it worked all the way to town. The other fellow rode awhile and Jake walked. Then Jake walked, and the other fellow rode awhile. After a while, Jake said, "Don't you think it's about time we ought to change off?" "Oh, sure, getting tired," said his riding partner, "sure we'll change, and you can walk awhile while I ride." (Author unknown. If anyone has a proprietary interest in this story please authenticate and I will be happy to credit, or remove, as the circumstances dictate.)

How often do we do this to God; we tell him, "You can carry the load, You can bear all of the burden." Then we turn around and walk away with it, all the while telling Him "thanks for carrying the load." Sure, our intentions are good from the start. We tell God that He can carry our burdens because we know He knows best. But, as soon as we're done telling Him, we turn around and walk away with that same burden safely draped over our shoulders. We keep walking always promising to "give God a turn," but that turn just never seems convenient or practical. It's easier to keep going. In a very real way it's like when I sat on my hands thinking that would take a load off that old Plymouth. The fact is, not only was that Plymouth not any the lighter, I was all that much more uncomfortable. I guess there's a lesson there.

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