

Voices: Whose praise do you seek?

January 23, 2019

“Nevertheless, many did believe in him even among the rulers, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, so they would not be banned from the synagogue. For they loved praise from men more than praise from God” (John 12:42-43).

In 1875, a two-mast wooden schooner—built just two years earlier—set sail on Lake Ontario. Its destination was Toronto; its cargo was 307 tons of coal.

After being blown about for two days and damaged in her rigging by a terrific gale and blizzard, the crew dropped anchor. The schooner dragged ashore and began to break up.

The skipper feared for the loss of his men. They could see lights on the shore, but they were three miles out, too far to swim for it. They needed help, and help was readily available. Any of the ships in the harbor could sail out safely and rescue them, but no one knew what trouble they were in or what danger they faced.

So the skipper tried to make it to shore for help. He went alone in a tiny yawl and was dashed upon the rocks and drowned.

While the rest of the crew spent a horrible night aboard the schooner, they were rescued in the morning. Had the skipper stayed on board, his life also would have been spared. But he chose to risk his life in an effort to save the others.

What are you willing to risk?

No one is asking you to give up your life. That's been done already. You are safe in the boat because another gave his life for you 2000 years ago.

Are you willing to leave the relative safety of this tiny vessel you are in, which admittedly is breaking up? As this vessel is being pounded constantly by the storms that rage all around us in this world, are you willing to risk being ostracized by your unsaved friends, your lost coworkers, or those godless family members of yours you see only at weddings and funerals to tell them what trouble they are in?

We believers all have our circles of influence. We gather in familiar "ports o' call" with mates and colleagues to exchange pleasantries and casual banter. Why not take the discussion deeper?

We're on common vessels with lost souls: our workplaces, our social clubs, even our homes. God places us aboard the vessels he chooses; it's not by chance we find ourselves with certain shipmates.

Many of those we come into contact with, perhaps most, are unaware of the trouble they are in. There is a storm raging about them—a spiritual storm—and their souls are in danger of being lost forever.

They think highly of you, these mates of yours. Your reputation is stellar. You are viewed as an honest, kind and caring person among them. Any one of them would gladly sing your praises. I'm certain of it.

But there is risk in sharing your faith, isn't there? They may reject what you have to say. Their opinion of you may change. They may no longer praise you so highly.

Instinctively, you know this is true. That's why you are afraid to speak up. You fear being dashed upon rocks of ridicule and scorn.

But do you value their opinion, do you cherish their praise of you so very much that you are unwilling to risk it to tell them about Jesus? After all, their souls are in danger of being lost forever.

Whose praise do you seek?

“For they loved praise from men more than praise from God.”

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