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Risking our lives to find them

BY THE REV. CHRIS HARRIS



*How do I find greater meaning and purpose in my life?
Why is happiness so fleeting and a lasting joy so elusive?
Who am I and what am I supposed to do with the rest of
my life?*

These are some of the big questions of life, and many of us begin to wrestle with them as we reach middle age and beyond. The best-selling book *The Second Mountain*, by David Brooks, suggests that we come to these questions most urgently when the “first mountain” of our life fails us either because we discover it to be ultimately unfulfilling (such as a life focused on financial success or career goals) or when it crumbles beneath our feet (as the result of a divorce or a life-changing health crisis).

According to Brooks, most of us don’t come looking for the “second mountain” of our lives until we’ve been thrown off the first somehow. Until then, when life is still going our way, we don’t have the eyes to see or the ears to hear. But when we finally are forced off our perches, we have the chance to discover for ourselves what Jesus has tried to tell us all along — that meaning and purpose come not from our accomplishments, our perfect families, or even perfect health, but by risking all that we are and all that we have for the sake of others.

If you are someone looking for the second mountain of your life, the question at the heart of our Gospel this week offers all the directions we need:

How will I risk the gifts I’ve been given, to do the work God is calling me to do?

Notice that the story turns on risk. Playing it safe, worrying about ourselves and what others will say about us, is the first mountain all over again. And a life of tepid generosity, one that is constrained by fear and our need for control, leaves us languishing in the valley.

Unless we are willing to risk it all for the sake of others – to take a leap into a Faith-Filled Generosity – we never reach the summit of a truly abundant life.

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