

Series: Christmas	Reference: Luke 2:1-21	Title: Opportunity Cost	Date: 12.24.22
Website Writeup: Have you weighed the short term opportunity cost with the longterm benefit of life in Christ!?			

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We've read the Christmas story this morning, so I won't read it again. Let's pray...

Opportunity Cost is what a person sacrifices when they choose one option over another. For instance, a sous chef at a top restaurant makes \$50k/yr, but thinks he could do better.

So, he takes the risk of quitting to open his own restaurant. But in the first 4 years he only makes 25% of what he made at the other restaurant. Instead of making \$200k in 4 years, he makes only \$50k total. So, his opportunity cost is \$150k!

But in year 5 his restaurant explodes & he makes 5X what he made at the other place that year - \$250k! So, if he were still working at the other restaurant his opportunity cost would now be \$200k. So, although he sacrificed income & risk was higher in the short term, his opportunity cost would've been higher if he'd not opened his own restaurant. The risk of stepping out into the unknown was well worth it, especially if the restaurant continues to do well.¹

All the people in the Christmas story chose risk. Maybe Mary had the least choice, with a surprise pregnancy. But she didn't seem to try to avoid the inevitable shame. Instead, she chose trust & belief shown by her acceptance & subsequent obedience to the words spoken over her.

Everyday, Mary had to walk by something like this...(PICTURE UP). Daily passing by old gossip Jewish women as her belly grew! Imagine the scrutiny a teenage girl would face in ancient Palestine being pregnant out of wedlock! Joseph risked reputation & ridicule as well, trusting Mary over small town opinions. Despite the pressure to renounce God's plan, both chose to remain faithful & to believe Gods promises in Christ. That even in their lowly positions, God could do great things simply through their belief & obedience.

The Shepherds also could've stayed in the familiar safety of the fields - they risked shame as well, since who'd believe their outlandish story? It says...'*when they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child*'. Each person stepped up in this story taking personal risk to gain far greater value in Christ. They chose to forfeit safety & normalcy for short term loss which led to eternal gain.

¹ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/o/opportunitycost.asp>

We too can choose to believe the promises of God as found in Christ, promises & prophecies which came thousands of years before His arrival in the humble manger.

Prophecies going back to the Garden of Eden in the protoevangelium, the first gospel, when God announced a provision for a Savior from our willful sinful rebellion. A savior who'd take the curse upon Himself. In addressing Satan in Genesis 3:15 God said...*"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* A messianic prophecy stating the Messiah will crush the power of Satan & sin, but at a great cost to Himself in accomplishing it.

Or, prophecies like Isaiah 9:6-7 coming 700 years before Jesus' birth, rightly & often quoted during this season...*"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."*...

A prophecy & promise foreshadowing Jesus as Messiah. The sent & necessary Savior since sin was by human will; a debt we're unable to pay, nor do we desire to in our resulting spiritual deadness. Only God Himself has the perfect will, power & love to remedy sinful rebellion & reconcile us to Himself.

But sin, as a human condition brought about by our own willful rebellion against God, could only be paid for BY a perfect human sacrifice. That is the justice required & which we're unable to pay. So, as promised, God fulfilled Isaiah 9:6-7 by entering our reality as a child growing as Jesus, the perfect God-Man. The only one possessing both the divine power to save & the perfect sinless human record to accomplish it.

And that's Grace, that God would pay the price for us, satisfying the justice required which we could not. And the good news is that although the payment for sin is death, death couldn't hold Him, He rose again conquering sin & death forever, opening the way for reconciliation with God!

John chapter 1 tells us, to all who receive Him, to those who believed in His name, he gives the right to become children of God. Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. Because, the Word, which is God Himself, became flesh & made His dwelling among us.

So, as Romans 10:9 tells us, all that's left to do is declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead & you'll be saved. Because, Jesus as God with us by justice & grace, does for us what we could not do ourselves, the work of salvation which satisfies justice by way of Gods grace.

That's what we celebrate at Christmas, the long awaited, prophesied & promised Savior - Jesus, God with us, with divine power to save & the perfect human record to do so. One who satisfied justice by paying the death tax, but rose again victorious over it!

I had an artist friend years ago who'd make art from discarded 'found objects'. Junk, which he used to communicate the gospel & to image the church by combining them into one larger work.

Similar to this, in 2015, artist Bonnie Dillard made a Christmas tree in Washington, DC decorated with turtles, fish & jellyfish made from marine trash from a beach in Alaska.² Art from discarded found objects.

God used the faithfulness of ordinary people, Mary, Joseph & shepherds, to make way for Jesus' entrance into the world through their belief & obedience to His promises. They were simply found objects fashioned into art. Chosen unlikely individuals to usher in Jesus' birth. Like those ornaments, God can use broken individuals, young, old, or discarded by society, to radiate His glory. If you're only now counting the costs of following Jesus, and the opportunity cost seems too great in the short run, it's not!

There's eternal blessing, freedom & life to be found in Him as we're reconciled to God by His sacrifice. Don't settle for what the world offers, believe & act in obedience to the promises of God in Jesus now.

In Christ we're 'found objects' which normally might just live & die with no real lasting contribution other than the accumulation of wealth. Focusing our eyes on the prizes of money, power, or personal safety. But all the while, what could be sacrificed in the short term, would reveal the everlasting prize of God in Christ. In Jesus, God finds & fashions out of us a work of art through which He uses to restore & reconcile the world one-by-one, fashioning it into a greater everlasting kingdom of peace, justice & love.

We now, in Him have the greatest prize, IF we'd not look to the short term, but instead the greater longterm value of Christ! Merry Christmas, choose well, and enjoy Christmas morning with your family tomorrow!

² <https://hakaimagazine.com/news/trashing-capitols-christmas-tree/>