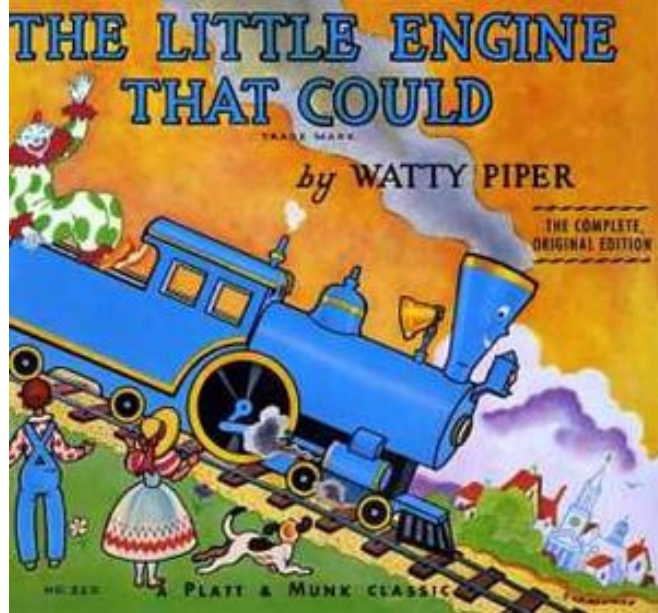


## WHAT WOULD I DO IF I COULDN'T FAIL?

Sermon for November 8, 2009

Have you ever thought about that? Take that thought one step further and ask what could I have done if I had known failure was not an option? Unrealistic thought here! Failures teach more than successes ever has and should not end your life of trying and experimenting. The question leads to a thought of what can I do?

Remember the story of the train that thought he couldn't make it up the hill?



In the tale, a long train must be pulled over a high mountain. Various larger engines, treated anthropomorphically, are asked to pull the train; for various reasons they refuse. The request is sent to a small engine, who agrees to try. The engine succeeds in pulling the train over the mountain while repeating its motto: "I-think-I-can".

The moral is to have an optimistic outlook and try rather than be a defeatist that doesn't try and complains that he can't. He can't because he won't.

We can be our own worst enemies if we fail to open our eyes to what isn't in our path at the moment. We face obstacles enough during the day that we don't need to invent them or look for them. However, we do need to be ready to confront them as they appear.

The power of positive thinking has been and continues to be a message that is taught and preached. Norman Vincent Peale was the first in America to preach the power of positive thinking. Later came Robert Schuller at the Crystal Cathedral. The message is more than having the right mind-set or being a positive thinker. There is one characteristic that needs to be recognized for true positive action in life.

The characteristic is the action of God that makes all things possible through Jesus Christ. Let's take a look at that as we review the lessons for today. In the Old Testament lesson from Jeremiah 33 we get a glimpse of being positive.

<sup>14</sup> "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup>In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup>In those days Judah will be saved, and

*Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'*

God will fulfill the promise He made by sending His Son who will be called: The Lord is our righteousness. In the midst of being carried off into captivity, the children of Israel heard this positive message.

In today's Epistle Lesson we see another positive message:

*<sup>9</sup>For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, <sup>10</sup>as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? <sup>11</sup>Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, <sup>12</sup>and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, <sup>13</sup>so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.*

Paul's message is a positive word of affirmation. The message itself is positive, announcing what God was being asked to direct the way. God's work of establishing our hearts blameless in holiness before Him is effective when our Lord comes on the last day. There is nothing to fear because God has given us the gift of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord came and was celebrated on His entry into Jerusalem, the Gospel lesson for today. Shouts of "Hosanna is He who comes in the name of the Lord" were being sung and proclaimed by the people. But, those shouts of gladness would soon be chants for death – His death by crucifixion. As Isaiah writes, with His stripes we are healed."

The positive message is that Jesus came down from heaven so that we might be taken up into heaven. As believers in Jesus we have the positive assurance that nothing can separate us from His love. The positive message is proclaimed continuously throughout the world for people to hear and respond in faith.

During this Advent season we look forward to the coming of our savior. Our theme is "Twas the Night Before Christmas." We are filled with anticipation for His coming – Our Savior-King. He's more than a Santa Claus and better than any earthly King. Our Lord Jesus Christ comes as wonderful Counselor, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

We, like the ancients of old cry out, "O come, O come, Emmanuel!" Amen.