

NO BAGGAGE REQUIRED

“For the Son of Man came...to give his life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:35-44

We see lots of baggage on carousels at airports. It’s like watching NASCAR. Around and around it goes, bags crashing into each other and sometimes veering off the carousel. But whereas visible baggage is needed on a trip, we also carry unwanted invisible baggage.

We lug around baggage from all sorts of experiences. “She has baggage from her first marriage.” “He comes with lots of baggage.” It’s like we could become bellhops for the Hotel of Life, always pushing or pulling baggage carts. But it’s emotional baggage, most of which falls into the two categories of regret or resentment. A regret has to do with your own misbehavior, doing something you wish you hadn’t. Resentment has to do with how you feel when you’ve been mistreated or matters didn’t work out your way. True, it wasn’t your fault, but at some point it can become your sin. Jesus said, *“If you do not forgive those who sin against you, neither will your Father forgive your sins.”*

And what might we do with all this regret and resentment other than lug it around? Treat it like the garbage it is and take it to the dump. Easier said than done. We can’t even get rid of the box our electronics came in. Why? We might need it one day. We need courses like Recycling Skills 101, “The Box That The Electronics Came in.” And Recycling Skills 102, “The Styrofoam That Came in The Box That The Electronics Came In.”

In ancient times, armies would conquer neighboring tribes and take people as prisoners or slaves. Family members left behind would then raise money to be used as a ransom to buy the freedom of their loved ones. A redeemer was a person whose job it was to travel abroad and buy back the people taken into captivity. And once the ransom had been paid, the prisoner was freed.

Jesus says (above), *“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* The way Jesus saw it was that humankind had been taken prisoner by sin. Furthermore, when we sin against others and against God, it can lead to regret. And when others sin against us, it can lead to resentment. Sin begets baggage. But because Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many, i.e., because a sufficient payment has been made, the matter is over. The slate is clean. No emotional baggage is required.

Did God say, “Their sins are forgiven, but I’m going to make them spend their lives lugging around regret and resentment”? Or did God say, “They’re forgiven, period.”

There’s a story about what God’s forgiveness is like. A lady is wishing she’d never done what she did or she’s hating the one who mistreated her, a suitcase by her side filled with regret and or resentment, when a big bird flies up with a clean slate in its bill, which covers the sin. It’s gone, the slate is wiped clean. And then the big bird takes the bag filled with regret or resentment, flies thousands of miles away to a secret ocean, and drops the bag, to which heavy stones have been attached, into the water. And as the baggage sinks, up pops a buoy with the sign, “No Fishing Allowed.” – DJ