

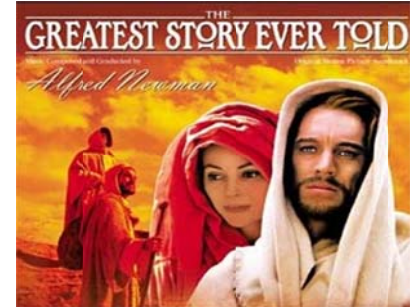
## “Sometime When You Win, You Lose”

Dr. D. Jay Losher

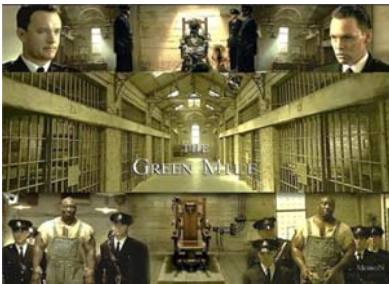
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Luke 23:44-49 = Losing to Win

In the production of the award winning 1965 film *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, John Wayne was having trouble with his one line in the whole movie. Wayne was the Centurion in charge of the execution of Jesus.



After more than two dozen takes, the frustrated director said to Wayne: “There’s something missing, John. Is it wonder? Yes ~ that’s it! Awe. John, can you give us some awe.” Wayne’s next attempt: “Aawwww, truly this man was the son of God.”



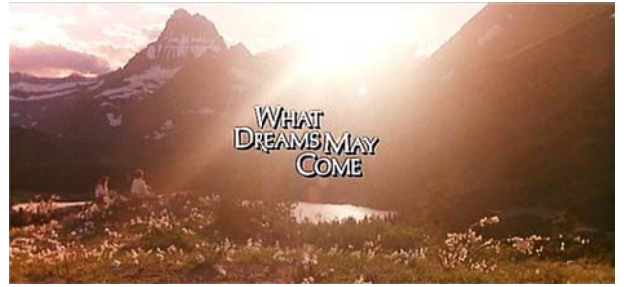
While this is the dramatic climax of the movie, and indeed of the Gospels, John Wayne’s one flubbed line has nothing of the impact of say, the turnabout of Tom Hanks in *The Green Mile* as the guard watching an innocent man executed. The actual event of the crucifixion is beyond compelling. The eyewitness accounts leave us knowing we cannot avoid it, cannot diminish it, cannot deny it.

**O**ur natural inclination is to prefer winners. How many of us cheer the teams which lose, I mean besides us few Cubs fans? Yet the long drama depicting Jesus’s crucifixion is indeed about winning and losing ~ and cheering the loser. In a grand reversal of common logic, the winners are actually losers and the apparent loser is the actual winner.



The Gospels depict all the major players conspiring to crucify Jesus: the Roman leaders, all the leaders of Israel, the priests, the council, the scribes, the Pharisees, the lawyers, Pilate, Herod and “the crowd,” all of them. They all conspired together to nail Jesus to the cross ~ and in seeming to win they actually lose ~ big time.

**W**hat *Dreams May Come* has proven to be a powerful, though provocative film. In it a man named Chris played by Robin Williams meets a woman, Annie played by Annabella Sciorra, and knowing immediately that they are soul mates, they court and marry. They have two children, and they settle into a conventional life.



That is, until their children are killed in a tragic automobile accident. Chris grieves deeply and eventually moves on. Annie cannot let go of her grief and her depression drives her into an asylum.

The story has many twists and turns. Annie does recover enough to leave the asylum. Then in the film, Chris dies, selflessly trying to help victims of an accident. He finds himself in a beautifully textured heaven of his own creation reflecting the positive trajectory of his life.

Annie on the other hand, after losing family and then losing her beloved husband, is so very devastated, so very lonely that she eventually takes her own life. She goes to a hellish afterlife of her own creation.

**C**hris was devastated by the news he would be separated from her for eternity. Yet his love is so strong, his resolve so steely that he abandons his beautiful heaven and descends into her horrid hell. When he finds her, Annie is neither aware of where she is nor does she recognize Chris ~ indeed she does not even know who she is. She is in a complete state of desolation ~ and would remain so for eternity. Chris engages her by telling her own story in the third person. In hell we see:

<https://drdjaylosher.files.wordpress.com/2019/04/wdmc-sometimes-when-you-win-you-lose-amplified.wmv>

Chris is right. “Sometimes when you win, you lose.” Chris won the fight for sanity, but Annie remains lost forever. Sometimes when we win, it is actually a loss. Sometimes ~ indeed most times ~ when we think we are winning, we actually lose, and we don’t always know it until too late. In Paul Simon’s words,

“Believe we're gliding down the highway  
When in fact we're slip slidin' away”<sup>1</sup>



In order to find her, Chris has to enter fully Annie's hell and risks become lost in the desolation. He hopes to bring her out, but he risks succumbing to the madness infesting her. Either way he knows he will be with her. He risks all to be with the woman with whom he longs to spend eternity.

**B**ut the story does not end here, just as the Gospels do not end at the hellish climax at the base of the cross. By giving himself over to the hell Annie has created, Chris redeems Annie. His devotion is so strong that it wins Annie over to his world, rather than Chris being drowned for eternity in hers.

In heaven:

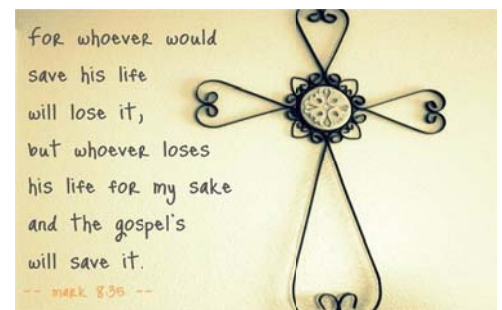
<https://drdjaylosher.files.wordpress.com/2019/04/wdmc-sometimes-when-you-lose-you-win-amplified.wmv>

“Sometimes when you lose, you win.”

Losing is not the last word in the movie, nor is losing the last word in God's plan. God is not yet finished. The plan is not completed with the crucifixion.

**T**his is nothing new. Like the grief stricken disciples, we too remember back that Jesus told us over and over again:

**“for whoever would save a life will lose it, but whoever loses a life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.”<sup>2</sup>**



Those who seemed to be victorious at the crucifixion actually lost. And those ~ make that we ~ who seemingly lost actually won. All the Gospel drama points to, through and beyond the cross. Jesus was crucified, dead and buried, but then something unexpected happened, something marvelous. Ultimately hell and death and destruction are themselves destroyed ~ vanquished forever.

In the movie *What Dreams May Come* Chris accomplished this with personal love. Just so God accomplishes this with transcendent, irrefutable, irresistible love.

Jesus on the cross even as he is dying, ever the good shepherd offering spiritual comfort to those around him:

**“Father forgive them.”** he says.

and to the thief:

**“Today you will be with me.”**



Jesus was even the good shepherd in death itself. The creeds declare that at death on the cross Jesus “*descended into hell.*” This means Jesus went to the abode of the dead for three days. Why? To accomplish God’s plan, to break the gates of hell and free the prisoners there ~ vanquish death for all time and eternally.

**B**y winning we lose, and by losing for the sake of the Gospel, we win. This turns the world on its head, turns human logic inside out ~ Jesus on the cross, the greatest winner of all time, losing life to save it, forsaking life to find it. Jesus on the cross, the Messiah, innocent yet convicted, the very Son of the living God submitting to a horrifying death.

Sometimes When You Win,  
You Lose



Luke 23:44-49

Indeed losing is not the last word in God’s drama ~ it is the penultimate, the-next-to-the-last word. Death does not have the last word in our drama ~ God has the last word and the word is ‘life eternal.’

On the cross, by losing Jesus won. By his loss, we gain. By the cross, all humankind wins. Winning by losing ~ the way of the cross.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Simon “*Slip Slidin’ Away*”

<sup>2</sup> Mark 8:35 & //’s Luke 9:24, Matthew 16:25