

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

October 21, 2020



This painting hangs proudly in my office. I received it on my 40th birthday. It's entitled "The Boys of Summer," signed by three of the players. Left-to-right: Duke Snider, Gil Hodges, Jackie Robinson, Pee Wee Reese, Roy Campanella.

Risks & Rewards

Forgive the baseball reference again, but my team is in the World Series and so it's on my mind. It's not just about baseball, though. I feel that baseball, more than any other sport, reflects life itself.

Think about it. A baseball diamond is a finite world defined by strict borders. Baseball has certain "laws" (rules) and while there is no time limit, the duration is limited by a certain number of innings. You play until you are "out." Sometimes, the game goes into "extra innings" — reminds me of Psalm 90:10: *"the years of our life are 70 or by reason of strength 80..."*

The players who are on the diamond during an inning must operate within the boundaries and obey the rules. Beyond that, the game is one of risk, execution, rewards and failures. It starts when the pitcher chooses what pitch to throw to the batter (fastball, curve, slider, etc.). Most of the time, in the big leagues, the pitcher executes his plan and the batter must guess what pitch the pitcher will throw.* If it's a fastball, the batter only has only about two-tenths of a second (0.2) to decide whether to swing or not.

There is risk and reward for both the hitters and the pitchers. If the hitter gets on base, the risk/reward game continues. Last night, in the first game of the World Series, Mookie Betts got on base, stole** second base (he was safe by inches) but then almost got picked off*** second base. Many players would stay closer to the base (the "bag") after that. But Mookie took off and stole third base, too. *Risk and reward.*

Life is like that. God has created a finite world for us to live in. He has given us rules to live by in His word, the Bible. Some have decided not to go to get in the game at all, but those of us who come to the "ballpark" and aim to live by the rules consult God's word, pray and weigh risks and rewards.

Often, we make poor decisions ("errors") but there is grace in baseball. If a player strikes out or the pitcher makes a bad pitch, he "repents" and tries again. If he repeatedly fails, he may be sent to the minor leagues to work on his fundamentals — the leaders of the team don't give up on him. The only real failures are those who have the talent but who decide that a life in baseball is not for them and so they "fall away."

Maybe I'm stretching the analogy too far, but every day, we decide whether to swing or not, whether to try to steal that base or stay close to the bag, whether, in Jesus' terms, to bury our talent or put it out there to see what happens (Matthew 25:14-30). The Bible urges us to take the latter course, to take reasonable risks. Ecclesiastes 11:1 says, *"Cast your bread upon the waters for you will find it after many days."*

We live in a finite world, full of risks, but also of rewards. But those of us who have decided to "get in the game" have plenty of guidance to help us make good decisions (see James 1:5). When we ask, *"Do I marry this woman?" "Do I buy this house?" "Do I take this job?"* we are weighing risks versus rewards.

But, like baseball, that's life.

*This is mostly true. Major league hitters are remarkable since they can often pick up the spin of the ball out of the pitcher's hand. But the pitcher has tricks up his sleeve as well (this is fascinating discussion for real baseball fans but I won't risk boring you with that here).

** I don't want to insult anyone's intelligence but Mookie didn't actually "steal" the base. To steal in baseball talk means to run toward the next base while the pitcher is throwing the ball over the plate. The catcher then tries to throw to the fielder to get him out. But Mookie was too fast so he reached the base safely.

***To be "picked off" means the pitcher throws to the fielder before the baserunner gets back to the base. If that happens, the runner is out.