

Risking for God in Being Faith-filled in an Upside Down world

We are living in an upside down world. The last 5 months have been the craziest ever. Slow paced, fast paced, uncertain and difficult times. Major impact on finances. Upside down Crazy world – so many changes and for most that has meant us battoning down the hatches and being really conservative in our life, holding onto our job and money for dear life. But is that the Biblical response to our crazy COVID-19 world? How are we to live in this situation? Risky decisions and I am not talking about not wearing a mask. I mean asking the Lord – how can I capitalise on serving your purposes during this topsy turvy world in which we find ourselves? How can I fulfill the purposes of God for this now generation and time? You know what that answer – take faith filled risks for God.

There is a story told about a guy, who was in a hot air balloon which went to the highest heights that a hot air balloon will go to. And then with no parachute on his back, he jumped out of this hot air balloon basket and he fell 3000m, then he fell another 3000m and then his bungee cord kicked in. The guy had just risked taking the world highest bungee jump – 6100m and he only had 30m between him and the earth when the rope kicked in. Crazy? Yea, I think so. You wouldn't catch me doing that. Risky? Very. But the man had a passion to get into the Guinness book of records, and a passion and adventurous spirit to take a risk.

And there is a *lot we can learn in the Christian life about taking a risk for God*. Taking a faith challenge for God. Some people spell the work Faith 'CANT'. Can't! 'I don't think God can do that! What if God doesn't come through'. I personally prefer to spell the word faith 'RISK'. Take a risk for God and see God come through. **God is calling you to trust Him to do great things for you as you attempt to risk great things for Him.**

God says to you today “step out, get out beyond your little comfort zone and risk for me as you seek to develop a passion for me and compassion for people”

The Bible is full of risk takers, there are amazing risk takers. AS a church we have just been through Hebrews 11, and we are going

to go there in a minute, but *Hebrews 11 is normally called the Heroes of the faith, but could be called 'the Bible's risk takers'*. Nehemiah, Esther - what a woman! In a crazy, upside down time, when her nation was facing wipeout way worse than COVID-19 she put her life on the line. She could have had the king axe her, but she took a risk for God. Daniel, he wasn't content with average passion for God and in a terrible upside down time of trial in Babylon where his life was on the line to die, he said 'I don't care what the king has to say, I don't care what the law is about worship- I'm going to worship with my hands raised in front of an open window. I will worship for God'. Paul, Peter, Jesus himself – a great risk taker. And I want us to look tonight at five aspects of risk in **Risking for God in Being Faith-filled in an Upside Down world**

Come with me to Hebrews 11, the great chapter of the heroes of the faith. These are the guys who on a human level, as far as God is concerned, got it right.

1. Faith is an absolute certainty of what God is going to do

And there is definition here of faith. **Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.** Just take that verse slowly.

Faith is being so sure that God is going to come through for you that it is no longer a risk. Faith is saying 'I know it has happened already, it is done – it hasn't happened yet, but it is going to happen. *I don't have a millionth of a doubt that God is going to come through*'. That is what it says, faith is being sure, sure, sure of what you hope for. What are you hoping for? 'God if you can only do this, give me a job, open this door'. *Now let me tell you that if you want to become a sacrificial Christian you need to have 11 out 10 risky trust in God but keeping your feet grounded in the Word of God at the same time.* But now hear me – First **Get a clear word from God and then step out in risky faith.** I am still old fashioned enough to want to get a clear instruction from the Lord from Scripture. I want a verse to fall back on when times are tough. Get quiet in the presence of God. Hear His voice and step out in faith - Faith is 'Thank you God, I know I have got your Word - I am not sure of the way forward but I believe you and I know you are going to do it'. That is faith. It is not stupidity. It is '*God, you have spoken Your Word so deeply into my heart I know you are*

going to do it – it is only a matter of ‘when’, the ‘if’ is all gone.’ Faith is an absolute certainty of what He is going to do. And so really

2. Faith and risk taking are inextricably bound.

You can’t have the one without the other. If you are going to launch out in faith in your walk with God you are going to land up taking risks for God. They belong together. If you don’t take risks for God in an upside down world, then you have got a faith problem. Faith is being absolutely certain of what God is going to do. Imagine Pastor Neil were to say to you, ‘Guys, God has spoken to me and we are going to apply for permission to cause chaos here. What we are going to do is to close Ou Kaapse Weg and we are going to start building a ship. We are going to build this huge liner thing – it will be about 10 storeys high. And I want you guys to come every day after school and work come help me build this ship. Because you know what is going to happen? God is going to come and pick up that ship and we are all going sailing away.’ And you probably all be embarrassed to be aligned with him and this apparently crazy church. *God said to Noah, ‘build a ship I’m coming to pick up up – far from the sea’. Noah said ‘great, I’ll build it.’ And the people said, ‘you’re mad, you’re sick’.* That was a huge risk. Noah didn’t have anything to fall back on. He didn’t have one story somewhere in the OT to go to and say well God has done that before so he can do it again. But God said ‘Noah do it. And Noah took the risk, an absolutely crazy risk. If you look at **Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.** That is unbelievable risk taking. That is what I call, an ark risk. But it is actually unbelievable faith. **So in a sense when we are talking about risk taking for God we are just talking about faith.**

Leaders have to be risk takers otherwise you are a follower.

Missionaries have to be risk takers – it is risky to go to some place where you don’t have friends or family and the folk there speak a different language. Sheralyn our daughter, one of the first faith promise mission givers, moved to Berlin a year ago to be part of a church plant there and to learn German – but they are going because God said GO. As of 1st Oct they have nowhere to live but are trusting God in risk taking scary faith in an upside down world. Their kids are in a German and English school, but they don’t

know German. If God is calling you to missions, you have to be a risk taker but first get a clear Scripture and call from God.

Have you ever thought about the fact that while Noah had to build the ark or the ship, he had to sacrifice and make a huge sacrifice. *In fact whatever he was doing before God called him, he had to sacrifice, give up his day to day work and income and do what God had told him to. He took an Ark risk.* You see whatever God calls you to do is going to cost sacrifice. It doesn't matter whether you are in full time missions or going into missions or going to become a bigger giver to Missions than you are now – it is going to cost you sacrifice. You see I believe Missions is God's heart – everyone has to be involved – its go or give. And you are going to have to commit to giving financially in this crazy world if you are not going to go. But not only is faith being an absolute certainty of what God is going to do,

3. Faith is absolutely critical in pleasing God. Hebrews 11.6

Let me ask you (). *Who of you wants to please God?* About 80% and the others are nearly asleep! If you want to please God then I going to tell you, you need to be a risk taker. Look at verse 6.

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God. Without faith it is impossible to please God! This is not talking about saving faith, these people were all saved, they were the heroes. And the writer to the Hebrews says, you want to please God in your life, well then you got to have faith. You see you should never be content with the status quo – I get so mad in my heart with Christian leaders, pastors and missionaries who don't seize opportunities. God says to you Go into all the world and preach the gospel. He says it to you now! Yes you. You are retired you can do it. Nothing hinders you except your limitations you have placed on yourself.

Wherever there is great faith I tell you know that there will also be a great sacrifice. Sacrifice and faith is absolutely critical in pleasing God. **Faith is absolutely critical in pleasing God**

4. Pleasing God and risk taking are inextricably bound.

Its absolutely critical if you are going to please God you got to have faith and you got to take those risks. My friend, if God is able and you believe that, then you got to start taking risks for God. If you are a godly leader you will start to take risks for God.

There is this incredible word 'able' in the NT and we translate it so easily, but in the original Greek it is translated – 'dunamai' It is where we get the word Dynamite from. *It is like saying God has got dynamite powerful, inexhaustible, unending ability to do stuff. If you do believe that God has got this unending ability then you have got to take a step and not say 'well I believe that, that is really nice'. You have got to take a step and say 'God I am going to please you, I believe you can do it' or else you are going to play it safe and disappoint God. I really believe that sometimes in our fearfulness we Christians disappoint God. We don't expect him to do a great thing; we don't trust him to do a great thing so he doesn't do a great thing! You want to please God? Without faith it is impossible to do. Low faith in my mind = I disappoint God. R9,2 million on food.*

5. Sacrificial living and risk taking are therefore inextricably bound.

Now how are you going to sacrifice for God today? Is it the sacrifice of your life? Are you willing to like Isaac lay your life on the altar – not knowing what your future is going to look like. Isaac bound on that altar must have, must have thought I am going to die and Dad I am willing to do that – talk about an upside down time in his life – a few breaths away from death! Abraham put the wood on the altar, bound his son on the altar, lifted the knife and there the curtain fell. Let me take you to another picture in the Bible – another father bound HIS son to some wood, tied him there on that wooden cross, the son was willing to sacrifice his life but unlike Abraham and Isaac, the curtain doesn't fall, the knife falls and Jesus sacrifices his life for you. Are you willing to climb onto the altar today, not knowing whether the knife will be plunged deep into your life? Are you willing to sacrifice for God, even if it costs you your life to reach frontline unreached people groups?

Are you willing to sacrifice your life if necessary for Jesus in some place where nobody wants to go, to some country which is unfriendly to Christianity or the Africa buffer zone.

I am so concerned that are settling for a Christianity that revolves around *catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves.*

But maybe you are almost thankful that you don't sense any call to sacrifice your life in some far away place, *then you are not off the hook*. The Lord calls you to sacrificially give over and above your tithes. Faith Promise is a fantastic way to trust God – in fact you could call it Risk promise. I mean sacrificially like a significant percentage of your monthly income. Actually sacrificially could for some be up to 50%. You see that is risky but that is what God is calling you to do today. There are times when Risk is right. **Faith, pleasing God, risk taking, sacrificial living is all the same thing. Risk means sacrifice and sacrifice is risk** – let me say that again – risk means sacrifice and sacrifice is risk.

Today, God calls you in the middle of this upside down world to risk, to sacrifice and to please Him. *He is infinitely worthy of your immediate and total surrender*. Today, God calls you to risk, to sacrifice and to please Him. Without this faith it is WHAT – it is Impossible to please God. You got to please God today –do what seems to be the impossible to you.

Answer the call today, lay your life down for him, lay your money down for him. Risk is right and sacrifice means risk. Are you willing to take an ark risk and say 'Lord I will sacrifice, NO MATTER WHAT. For some it is answering the call to full time missions and for others it is a massive financial shift of giving a huge chunk of your money? For others it is changing your life style to a much simpler lifestyle. It God says to you 'Your money or your life.' Risk is right. And I am so thrilled to hear tonight that you are venturing into Faith Promise – I want to encourage to give into that sacrificially.

You have got to give or go. If you stay - you give, because missions is God's imperative – no wiggle room, no negotiation -it is a risk and *for some it might be risky to stay because you might get convinced by yourself and the devil that your luxury lifestyle is more important than giving* – wow that is a huge risk. You are a risk taker of note if you choose that - because everything you have God gave you.

Try and picture the day of judgment, its your turn, you are in front of throne. And the Lord says to you – my child 'I called you to serve and to trust me with everything and you decided there was too much stuff happening in your life to go into missions. WHY?

Or the Lord says to you - I called you to give so others can go but you said you needed that new car and so you couldn't afford to give me anything? Really?? Do you remember that day in Sept 2020? Let me remind you – you had money and there were missionaries who were prepared to go but you held onto it, just in case, just in case, just in case you needed it somewhere.

It's your money or your life.

Risk is right and not to Risk, is wrong.