

June 9, 2013  
Church Planting

*Worth the Risk*  
Acts 3:1-10

**Opening words:** By now the story should be found familiar. Jesus was executed on a Friday. Everyone thought it was over. However, everyone was wrong. It was just beginning. On Sunday morning a few women showed up at his tomb to pay their final respects. They made the discovery that changed the world. Jesus was alive! For forty days He walked the face of this world in his resurrected state. He did two things. First, he proved his was a bodily resurrection. In other words, he wasn't a ghost. Second, he taught about the Kingdom of God. At the end of that sacred time period, Jesus ascended into heaven and entrusted the ministry to the disciples. On their own, the task of evangelizing the world seemed impossible, but once the Holy Spirit came, all things did seem possible. The church was created and the divine helper was changing lives. On a single day, 3,000 people claimed the name of Jesus and were saved. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, the fellowship and to worship. That leads us to today.

This is sermon number three in my sermon series, *Church Planting*. We find ourselves in the third chapter of Acts. The once confused disciples have been spiritually activated. They are embracing their new role as Apostles and they are learning to trust the Holy Spirit. In our scripture lesson for today, Peter heals a man who had been crippled from birth. It is a story for anyone who is serious about ministry in the name of Jesus. Let me call this message *Worth the Risk*. May God give you ears to hear this morning's scripture lesson, Acts 3:1-10.

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**Acts 3:1-10** <sup>1</sup> One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. <sup>2</sup> Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. <sup>3</sup> When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. <sup>4</sup> Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" <sup>5</sup> So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

<sup>6</sup> Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." <sup>7</sup> Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. <sup>8</sup> He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. <sup>9</sup> When all the people saw him walking and praising God, <sup>10</sup> they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

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How many of you know the name Felix Baumgartner? You may have forgotten the man's name but you remember his feat. He longed to hold the world's record for skydiving. So on October 14, 2012, he soared twenty-four miles up. He found the place where space begins. You know what happened. We have seen the clip countless times. He jumped out and drifted down to the surface of the earth safely. Along the way he became the first person to break the sound barrier without vehicular power. I knew he would be safe because the whole thing was sponsored by the energy drink company, Red Bull. Can I ask you a question? Do you consider Felix a hero? Do you consider Felix a nut? We can all agree on the fact that he is a daredevil. Do the people in your life consider you a daredevil? Do you consider yourself a daredevil?

I found this little quiz on-line. It comes from the good folks at Quibblo. How you answer will help you decide if you are a daredevil.

1. Would you eat a cricket for \$50?
2. Would you bungee off a tower?
3. Do you hold on when you ride a roller coaster?
4. Would you drink out of your dog's water bowl for \$50?
5. Would you consider skydiving?

I will be honest with you. I would only do one of those five things. However, I would consider two more for the money because I am cheap. I guess I am not much of a daredevil. I would guess you are not much of a daredevil either. It is safe to say from the text this morning that Peter was a daredevil. After all, what is a daredevil? It is someone who isn't afraid to take a risk. Peter risked a great deal. With this in mind, let us look at the scripture lesson for today.

We are in the third chapter of Acts. According to the text, Peter and John are on their way to the temple to pray at 3:00 in the afternoon. It is not common for us to show up at church for pray in the middle of the afternoon, but it was not unusual for them. The devout came at scripted times. They came at 9:00 in the morning. They came at 3:00 in the afternoon. They came at sunset. The Hebrew faith has always valued prayer. As the devout come, they see the usual cast of characters lining the street, the beggars. Most did not come by their own power. They were placed there by their loved one, who knew of the generosity of the religious. After all, how can you world worship God and ignore the needy of this world? Just like regular Sunday morning worshippers, each one of the beggars had their own spot. Each one of the beggars had their own story. Some were begging because of some physical limitation. There were the blind, the lame and the deaf. Some were begging because of an accident or a disease. Some were begging because they were simply too old to work. The only thing they had in common was the odor of poverty. Did you know poverty has a certain odor? They sat there begging because they had no place else to go. They were the lowest of the low in that society. They were a in sea of hopelessness. Everyone had pity on them, but no one would have traded places with them.

As Peter is nearing the temple he does something unexpected. In the middle of that sea of hopelessness, Peter picked out one man. I have always wondered, why him? I have several answers. Perhaps he had been there the longest? The text tells us he had been lame from birth. Perhaps, his voice was the loudest or the most annoying? Perhaps he was the most pitiful. Or perhaps, the man just happened to be at the right place at the right time? Perhaps he just happened to be there when Peter mustered enough courage to do something new. This was his first miracle. It is always hardest to do something the first time. What happens if he calls on the name of Jesus to heal the man and nothing happens? The more I have wrestled with this text, the more I am convinced Peter was a risk taker. Are you a risk taker? I hope you are, because you are never going to make a difference in this world playing it safe.

Today, I want to talk about two things that Peter risked on that day. They are the same two things we must risk today. Both are extremely practical. First, is anyone here willing to risk their **personal security**? It isn't just true of Peter. It is true of us. We live in a sea of hopelessness. Our world is filled with hurting people. God expects us to help them. They are not going to come to us. We are going to have to go to them. God expects us to meet them. God expects us to interact with them. God expects us to get emotionally involved with them. That is the difference between missions and charity. Yes, there is an element of risk. Are you willing to risk your personal security? Second, is anyone here willing to risk their **personal pride**? There are no guarantees in the ministry. In the history of the church we have known great success and we have known great failure. When ministries fail, egos are damaged. However, the worst thing we can do is nothing. Are you willing to be a risk taker for Jesus, or are you happy playing it safe? Don't ever forget the words of Helen Keller. She said, *"Life is either a wild adventure or it is nothing at all."* If you are ready to begin, say, **"Amen!"**

### **Personal Security**

In December of 2011, Kathryn and I were getting ready to travel back to Russia. We were traveling to an orphanage we had visited in the past, the Renewal Orphanage in Dmitrov. We were excited about that trip in particular because our youngest daughter, Anna, was going. It was her first trip and she was a little apprehensive. I couldn't blame her. She had never done anything close to this in the past. She had seen a mountain of pictures from past trips, but going is different. Anna has always tried to hide her emotions and she is not always easy to read. That is why when she came home upset just a few days before we left, I was surprised. I said, "Anna, what is wrong?" She responded, "Someone asked me if my will was up to date. You may need it if you are going to Russia." She asked for the first time, "Dad, are we going to be safe?" I said, "Yes! Do you really think I would put you in danger?"

Have you ever noticed how many cowards there are in this world? You know it is true. You don't have to go to Russia. Try to do something in the name of Jesus off of our little piece of property. Annually, we send our young people on mission trips. This year they are going to Jamestown, New York.

Annually, someone will tell me it isn't a good idea because the highways are dangerous. Try to help people in the once-proud city of Youngstown and people will try to discourage you with some dated crime report. Try to save the souls of the incarcerated and people will wonder about your sanity. Have you ever tried to discourage someone from doing something in the name of Jesus? On my most critical days, I am convinced our pews are filled with cowards!

Are you willing to risk your personal security? The group that was responsible for killing Jesus was still in power. Peter healed this man in the name of Jesus. He was aligning himself with Jesus and putting himself in danger. You can say a great deal about Peter, but you can't call him a coward. Do you consider yourself a coward? If that makes you think, say, "**Amen!**"

### **Personal Pride**

Listen to this list of names:

1. Bill Gates
2. Abraham Lincoln
3. Isaac Newton
4. Ludwig van Beethoven
5. Frank Woolworth
6. Walt Disney
7. Thomas Edison
8. Winston Church
9. Henry Ford
10. Albert Einstein

Each one these individuals knew great success. Each one of these individuals had also experienced failure. I can give you a story of failure about each one. For example, Thomas Edison's teacher once told him he was too stupid to learn. I respect them all because they worked through their individual failures.

Have you ever been part of a ministry that failed? It is not an easy thing to admit. We hate to admit failure for several reasons. There was the waste of time. There was the waste of money. However, there was also the public humiliation. You stood in front of your world to promote it. You said it was going to be a great success but it wasn't. Nobody came. Nobody cared. No one was helped. The feeling never really goes away. Years later, you are standing at a church picnic reminiscing. Like an unwanted visitor, someone asks you, "What happened?" There are a million ways to say it but the same thing comes out. You failed and your pride was damaged. You have to admit it. You can't do everything. You are just like Thomas Edison, a failure. This is the question: Are you willing to risk your personal pride? I love this story because Peter lays everything on the line. Verse six says, "*Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.'*" It is one thing to say the words. It is another thing to have a miracle flow through you.

I don't care how you turn the story. Peter was risking his personal pride. What would have happened if the man wasn't healed? Peter would have looked like a fool. How foolish are you willing to look for Jesus? If that makes you think, say, "**Amen!**"

I love this story. A clergyman from New York called on Abraham Lincoln at the White House during the darkest days of the Civil War. He said: "I have not come to ask any favors of you, Mr. President; I have only come to say that the loyal people of the North are sustaining you and will continue to do so. We are giving you all that we have, the lives of our sons as well as our confidence and our prayers. You must know that no boy's father or mother ever kneels in prayer these days without asking God to give you strength and wisdom." Lincoln was moved by his words. He replied, "But for those prayers, I should have faltered and perhaps failed long ago. Tell every father and mother you know to keep on praying, and I will keep on fighting, for I know God is on our side." As the clergyman started to leave the room, Mr. Lincoln held him by the hands and said: "May I consider this a pastoral call?" "Yes," replied the clergyman. "Out in the country," replied Lincoln, "when a parson makes a pastoral call, it was always the custom for the folks to ask him to lead in prayer, and I should like to ask you to pray with me today. Pray that I may have the strength and the wisdom." The two men knelt side by side, and the clergyman offered the most fervent plea to Almighty God that ever fell from his lips. As they arose, the President clasped his visitor's hand and remarked in a satisfied sort of way: "I feel better." I love that story because it humanizes one of the great figures in American history.

I don't care if you are president of the United States or a preschooler, we are need of prayer. If you are going to make a difference for Jesus in this world, then you better collect as many prayers as possible. It is not easy risking your **personal security**. The sea of hopelessness is out there! It is not easy risking **personal pride**. Sometimes we fail. It is not easy serving in the name of Jesus, but it is worth the risk. Albert Einstein once said, "*A ship is always safe at the shore – but that is NOT what it was built for.*" Neither are you! And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"