

MAKE ME BOLD

Elon Musk is someone known for taking risks. He is becoming a household name, maybe some of you have heard of him. Last year I was able to take the family to the Kennedy Space Center and see how Musk is changing the game. I remember going on tour and seeing this building known as the Vehicle Assembly building. 40 stories tall you see the sides have doors you roll up so the Shuttle can come out, so they can assemble it upright. Elon Musk doesn't have one. Rather he figured out a way to build rockets on the ground, and tip them up when they are ready to go. He changed the game and made the people who came up with that other building look silly. But it came at a cost. SpaceX almost went bankrupt after three rocket failures. To do the Falcon 1 rocket came at a price tag of around \$90 million and almost never was successful. Then there is Tesla. Doing pretty well I'd say. Have you seen the stock price of it within the last 6 months? You may drive or have a neighbor who drives one. It's a game changer, but came at a cost. Tesla almost went bankrupt. To each of the industries he entered even he admitted, "If you were to do a risk-adjusted rate of return estimate on various industry opportunities, I would put building rockets and cars pretty close to the bottom of the list. They would have to be the dumbest things to do." He sighted the list of graveyard companies who tried the electric car business and those who warned him not to do space. Friends showing him videos of rockets blowing up. And after it all he's still taking risks. Some of you know his truck that came out this year, failed the bulletproof test. And just for fun he sells flamethrowers. What you do with one, I'm not sure? That's one way to start a campfire. But yes if anything Elon Musk is a risk taker living by the principle. *High Risk, High Reward*

And this is something maybe you've learned in life. It's the reason you started your own business, or took the new job. You knew the risk was high, but so could be the reward. It's the reason you said, "hey you want to do something Friday night." Knowing you could hear I have plans, but also knowing you could hear "Yeah what were you thinking?" It's the reason you bet the farm on that new venture, moving out there, pursuing that dream because yes it could be risky but the reward could be great.

You've come to Amazing Love on our 11 year anniversary. Woo Woo. Welcome to the family if it's your first time here. You came on a great Sunday with Aurelio's pizza. And I consider how we started. Just a couple of people meeting in a basement dreaming about the kingdom. And it was a time of all risk. Where should we go and what should we do. Is any of this going to work. Ok we had synod subsidy so that helped. But I heard of church plants that came and went in this area. You don't start a church if you want to be comfortable. And what God has done in 11 years is reason to give him great praise. But it's also a reason for us to be bold to have courage to consider his track record. For he brought blessing.

And there is a part of me that is envious of Elon Musk. When I considered his story. Not the money, not the success, not the notoriety. Ok, maybe the fact that I bet he has a flamethrower and I don't. But what I really envied was his boldness and courage. The kind of ice in the veins

you have to have - to be on the brink of bankruptcy and push for it anyway. The kind of courage it takes to hear friends who love you talk you down and you still go into the car industry and you still go into making rockets. And I look at Elon Musk and who I am to be in Christ, who we are to be in Christ.

Because I've heard from the Father, I know what God says. And he says to you and to me you can be bold because - you're untouchable. Here's why. You don't have strength, I give you mine. You don't have wisdom, I'll guide you. You don't have loved ones, you have my unfailing love. You lose everything, I'll provide. You get sick, I can heal. And if you die, I just raise you meet you and say what's up my friend. Yes I hear my Father and I have every reason, you have every reason to be live as if we're untouchable. But instead often I want to live untouched. Untouched by pain and sadness. Untouched by uncomfortable situations and inconvenience. Many times I want to live a life he never promised and escape experiences his Son had. So often I get disappointed when instead of believing I'm untouchable because he is with me, I find myself weak when touched by the things he warned would touch my life.

So what is the remedy? You know I love the premise of the series we are beginning called Dangerous Prayers. Drawn from life church and Pastor Craig Groeschel. And this is a series that will call you up when it comes to your prayer life. Now if you're not in the habit of praying the first thing is to start. God promises to hear you and answer. And it's good just to start the conversation. And as Christians have common prayers. We pray a lot for food - which I think the Lord has heard. We pray a lot about our cars and health - and we have better cars and are living longer. Praise God. But this series is about calling our prayer life up. God loves to hear you so I don't want to get in the way of the conversation, but could the conversation improve? Could we move the needle more from let nothing touch me move the needle from safety, to let me live untouchable and dangerous for you. And what would happen in us and through the church if it did? Would we see a people move from the safe and convenient to the noble and significant things he wants us to do if we pray dangerously.

Today we dive in and find such a great prayer. A prayer for boldness. It's a prayer from the early Christian Church after they were under threat for preaching about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The threat and the danger were real. More pressure than going bankrupt, yet outdoing Elon Musk they simply prayed for boldness. Let's consider. Turn to your neighbor and say, "You are bold and beautiful in Christ"

A while back I was a VIP to a Cubs game. Through a connection of one of our members to Anthony Rizzo's Father I got this sticker. And the power of the sticker did wonders. It let me past certain security guards and gates. It let me stand behind the cage during batting practice, and that was a day everyone was out. It let me rub shoulders with Len Casper who told me what to do with my power. He said wait until they are done batting and call them over. In fact Len Casper called this guy over so I could get his autograph. Because of connection to Rizzo's father and this sticker I met ESPN sports announcers and got autographs from Dextler Fowler, Jorge Soler, and Jason Heyward. It was an amazing day. But it wouldn't have been possible without that connection. I would have passed no gates, and gotten no autographs were it not for that. But because I had the backing of Rizzo's Father I was confident to do all that.

The early Christian Church had great authority given by Jesus greater than a sticker. Not to get autographs or attend batting practice. Rather before Jesus ascended he told them what to

do, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matt 28:18-19) Their mission and our mission is to make sure everyone hears of Jesus and his unfailing love. That he lived, that he died, that he rose so that whoever calls on the name of Jesus will be saved. And so what we know is that *The church’s mission is to boldly proclaim Christ’s love.* You and I know this. It is why for the last 11 years we summed up this bold decree with our mission statement. What is our mission statement? We are *to Reach the Lost with the Love of Christ.* We are to go out boldly, we are to risk it. We sent with the authority of Christ himself.

But there are things that stand in our way. A generation ago Christians had good names. I consider growing up as a pastor’s kid a generation ago. I remember feeling the respect people had for my dad, and the pastor perks that went along with it. We got free movies at the movie theater because dad was a pastor. Now when I tell people I’m a pastor they apologize for the language they were using, and look at me curious like why would you do that and are you a weirdo. A generation ago Christianity had a bit more influence on our society. Church on Sundays prayers at work and school, even the 10 commandments hanging in public schools. Things have changed. Numbers of Christians are decreasing along with influence. Pew research reports the proportion of US adults who describe themselves as Christian has fallen to two-thirds (66%), a drop of 12 percentage points over the past decade. Even in our church body one of our leaders looking at the trends is seeing the decline in membership. That we may have peaked in 1995 and membership has been going down in a similar fashion to the rest of the country. And what we could do is lament. Say woah is us. Our time has come and gone, never again will we see such numbers. Let’s just resign ourselves to thinking the ship is going down.

But consider the story we have before us. Was what they were facing back then better or worse? Were their numbers bigger? Earlier in the chapter Pew research through the pen the Holy Spirit recorded these numbers, “The number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.” (Acts 4:4) 5000. We still have more than 200 million in the United States alone. Just a little smaller. And what about the threat? Now what had just happened is Peter and John were thrown into prison for preaching Jesus and healing a man. They were threatened not to share message anymore and that threat was about to take on some teeth. Stephen was about to be the first martyr. Stoned for speaking of Jesus. Nero was being raised up to lead Rome against the Christians. Everyone of the 12 disciples lost their lives, except for John, he was just exiled for sharing the message. Just a little more dangerous I have yet to be imprisoned or threatened for sharing Jesus. So what are we afraid of? *We can be bold because the numbers are greater, and the threat less severe and God is still with us.*

But is it possible the church today is pulling a Peter? Do you remember his story. Jesus was walking on water and he says tell me to come out there with you. I do what you do. And for a moment he is doing it, he’s got Elon Musk boldness, untouchable even by gravity as he looks toward Jesus. But then he sees the waves and hears the wind, he looks away and starts sinking. So I ask have we pulled a Peter, we’ve stopped at times looking at the superiority of the one who walks on water. We’ve stopped consider what faith the size of a mustard seed can do.

So today we repent. Of small thinking and taking our eyes off of Jesus. Of all the times we were too scared to boldly proclaim because of the threat of being looked down on, of being

made fun of, of being written off if we said it wrong. Too scared to do what was necessary for the kingdom because it meant inconvenience for us. Too pessimistic when it comes to what God might do through us!

And instead we look to Jesus. Can you imagine his boldness as he stood before the authorities that wanted to kill him in court. When they asked are you the Messiah the Son of the Blessed One. He gave the answer that would seal his fate. Simply saying I am. I am which reminds me of the Old Testament name of God. The bold confession that would lead to the cross. So why was he so bold. Because it was high risk and high reward. He knew without a doubt this risked and meant his life, but the reward was also that high. You and me. Millions of believers then and now who have the right for forgiveness. Who have the right to peace because of the boldness of God's Son. Churches and people who would have a message to rally around now and until he comes again.

So how do we get that bold? There's much we can learn here.

And to talk about it when is the last time you were struck by the immense beauty and power of nature? We haven't had much snow this year so when it was coming down this past week I just paused to wonder at the white. Yeah it is horrible to drive in, but it sure beautiful to look at. Ansel Adams knew that. The white snow on Thursday reflecting the sun so brightly on Friday. Or contrast our winters with the beautiful beaches in the south. One of our members posted this picture and it seems like a fantasy world really. And then to pause and know when our breath is taken away - it's evidence of God. There is a God so powerful and so beautiful he fashioned every snowflake and knows every grain of sand. There is a God above it all.

When the Christians needed boldness who and what did they look at? v.24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them." They are wrapping their minds around the galaxies filled with a billions stars, and the earth filled with every living creature, and the seas and every school of fish. They're marveling at a God who could do all of that. And after they put their minds there with God. With how far he stands above. What is it to be threatened by religious rulers? They were predicted anyway as a part of God's plan and purpose. And what do we learn. *Boldness comes as we consider the sovereignty of God.*

If you need some help considering the Sovereignty of God might I consider a book. Written by a WELS pastor and someone we've hear preach. Mike Novotny. He recently wrote a book called three words that will change your life. Those three words are God is here. He focused on the grandness of God. And one of the striking quotes from the book is this, "We don't think that much of God, and that is our biggest problem. This is the polluted spring beneath the water that keeps making us emotionally sick." For if we did. If we saw him reigning now above all things. If we new he had almighty power and also unfailing love for us. If we spent more mental energy considering his majesty, and less on the trite and trivial. Then why, why wouldn't we be bold.

So where does this land for you? Just curious. I wonder how many need boldness to do something for God right now. Perhaps it is moving your life in a different direction and it's going to take boldness to do it. Boldness to do something else with your free time spend more time with God, to stand up to the pressures of society that push him out of the equation. I love the boldness of parents that talk to their coaches about Sunday morning activities. Be bold. Or

maybe it's boldness to do it God's way. His plan for sexuality, his plan for generosity, his plan for treating people, his plan for forgiveness. That takes boldness. Maybe it's boldness to do what they were going to do. Share the faith. Work up the courage to tell people what you did this weekend. Went to church, want to come. Boldness to share about God. You know what I believe about God. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life.

This past week I was talking to a good friend over the difference between offense and defense in sports. You know if you've ever played a game you know what it is to be an offensive player or a defensive player. On offense you want to drive up the score through touchdowns and goals and slam dunks. On defensive you want to stop the advance of the other team. Get in their way, block a shot, defend the goal, make a tackle. On offense you play to win. On defense you play not to lose. Who are we to be for the sake of Jesus? I find that if he has given us the sword of the spirit. I find if the demons were terrified of Jesus and asked him not to hurt them. I find that if Jesus I will build my church and the gates of hell. Those defensive gates are there. Then we are on offense. So how should we be for the next 11 years as we have in the past? *Let's be offensive for the sake of God.* Let's go boldly forward, making great plans to proclaim Jesus' love.

If Elon Musk can risk it for the sake of cars and space, why shouldn't we risk for the sake of souls. If Elon Musk can have ice in his veins over going bankrupt to the tune of billions, why not us who have the power of the risen Christ. May God grant superior boldness to us his church as we pray for it and he answers. May it lead to his glory and the coming of his kingdom among us. Amen.