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Title: High Risk Faith

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Text: [Luke 9:33-38 CEB](#)

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One of the paradoxes of life is that most people greatly admire people who take risks, but we are hesitant to take risks ourselves. We are inspired by others who take risks, but we are hesitant to take risks ourselves. The people of faith that we admire the most, those we seek to emulate, are risk-takers. But when it comes to our

faith, we hesitate to take a risk.

I was reading this week about Rosa Parks who took a risk to sit on a bus where she was not supposed to sit. We all are aware of that risk that she took, a risk that would play a role in changing history. But the book I was reading made the point that this was not a singular moment in time, rather the culmination of the daily risks she took living as a black woman in the segregated South without losing hope. The risk she took to pursue a legal case against segregation, the risk she took to register to vote in 1945 in the state of Alabama. Her life which was lived faithful to God's call upon her was only lived that way because she, in faith, took risks. And yet, we are risk-averse.

I've long resonated with this quote from Erica Jong. "If you don't risk anything, you may risk even more."

We are preparing to enter the season of Lent, a time of reflection and examination. We examine what in our life needs to change or needs to go away so that something new may be born within us. I know we are all looking forward to Spring and in the church, we are busy making our Easter plans. However, before we get there, we've got some work to do. That's what the season of Lent is for, the 40 days that begin this Wednesday on Ash Wednesday.

Today, I want us to consider what it is we are willing to risk living the life God has in store for us.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all talk about an event that is known as Jesus' transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain to pray. While praying Jesus' appearance changed, his face changed, and his clothes flashed white like lightning. In addition to this, Moses and Elijah appear, and they are clothed with what is described as heavenly splendor. The two figures begin having a conversation with Jesus. It is a moment where it is clear not only to others but to Jesus as well, just who Jesus is. He is the Messiah, God's chosen one, sent to us in a new day and a new kingdom. Moses and Elijah represent the law and the prophets, the beginnings of God's work in the world. Let's pick up Luke's Gospel here

"As the two men were about to leave Jesus, Peter said to him "Master it's good that we're here. We should construct three shrines; one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah"- but he didn't know what he was saying." Luke 9:33 CEB

Peter wants to stay right there on that mountain. He's there with Moses, Elijah, and Jesus and he wants to stay there, construct dwelling places and dwell at this moment. You've most likely heard the phrase mountaintop experience. Mountains are important in scripture. In Exodus, Moses and Joshua ascend a mountain to talk to God. Mountain experiences are important in God's story.

A little over a week ago, I had the pleasure and blessing of meeting the Afghan refugee family that Geist Christian Church is sponsoring. Deb and Kyle and our volunteer team have done amazing work leading this effort and the family is wonderful. Four-year-old Zeenot will melt your heart. We read in the news, and we see on television, and we hear political debates about people who come to the United States from other countries. As I stood in the doorway of their apartment on the west side of Indianapolis, an apartment that you are helping to pay for through your generosity, I was thinking about this family. Just a few short months ago, they had a life in another place and had to leave that place through no doing of their own. If they stayed in Afghanistan, their lives would have been in danger. Now, here they are in a new place, an unfamiliar place, starting over. It made me realize that when you put flesh on something, when it's not just something you read about or watch but is something you see right in front of you, it changes things.

For those on the mountain that day, this is what happens.

"Peter was still speaking when a cloud overshadowed them. As they entered the cloud, they were overcome with awe. Then a voice from the cloud said., 'This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to him!'" Luke 9:34-35 CEB

This is a moment when things get real. If you were up on that mountain and you had any lingering questions about who Jesus is and what Jesus has come to do. Maybe you have had an experience like this, an encounter, or a moment when God seemed so real. For me, one of the most powerful things in life are these types of moments, when God is real. Those moments that change things.

It's why Peter wants to build shrines and stay. He wants to build dwelling places and stay. He says to Jesus, "it is good for us to stay here." We may get to a place and think, "it is good for me to be here." And sometimes it is. But there are other times when a particular place or stage or station in life is good for a moment, but God is calling us forward.

An article came out several years ago about a phenomenon called Helicopter Parents. Helicopter Parents are parents who have sent their children off to college but still manage their day-to-day lives. Calling to wake their kids up, contesting grades with professors, doing their laundry, managing every aspect from afar. It has become a growing problem for college administrators. One of the psychologists studying this new phenomenon remarked "in taking over, they are sending a profound message: You are not capable of handling your life." Reading the article, I wondered if we don't try to manage our relationship with God in this same way. Are we telling God that we are not willing to let God call us out of our comfort zones and take the risk of having a faith that has been transformed? Are we saying to God, "I don't think you are capable of handling this, so I will handle it for you?"

We all have moments where God is calling us out of our comfort zones, calling us from a place that is easy to places that are right and true for each of us. If we were to look back over our lives, we can probably recognize these moments when we had a decision to make. Did we follow God's calling, or did we stay in place?

There are risks to both. Moving into something new, taking a risk. Or staying where we are. Even on a mountaintop experience.

Peter wants to stay. If moving forward involves risk, staying is risky as well. Jesus and the disciples leave the mountaintop, leave this incredible experience

"The next day, when Jesus, Peter, John, and James had come down from the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus. A man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher I beg you to take a look at my son, my only child." Luke 9:37-38
CEB

Jesus and the disciples could have stayed on that mountain. Instead, they come down from the mountain to a large crowd, to a world and a people in need. He meets a man whose son is ill, a man who has tried everything to heal his son, and now Jesus is the one who can heal him, can bring him new life.

We need to have a high-risk faith. When we move out of our comfort zones, even our own mountaintop experiences, we move to a place of need. In following God's call upon his life, Jesus encountered people and experiences he would have never encountered had he not followed God's leading. In following God's call upon our lives, in a willingness to move out of comfort zones and come down from the mountaintop, we find the places of need where we make a difference.

Jesus gives an invitation to the disciples. Jesus gives an invitation to us today: Give up on our agendas and follow him down the mountain and into ministry, into life. It is a grace-filled invitation. May we be bold enough to say yes.

Amen.