

# Taking Risks for God

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Preacher: Nick Louw

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, as Alan introduced earlier, 500 years ago today, Martin Luther was probably quite nervous applying his finishing touches to a document soon to be nailed up on a church door on the 31st of October, which was about to change history.

Because it wasn't just any document. You see, his famous 95 theses nailed up to the Wittenberg church door were a bold attack on the beliefs and the practices of the established church. And it wasn't just any church. It was a powerful, scary, established church. And by publishing these words, not only was Luther going to cause a world of trouble for himself and for others, but he knew he would be risking his life, literally.

And so as we reflect this month on the events of the Reformation, it causes us to wonder why. Why did he do what he did? Why did he and other reformers take the risks they took knowing what it was going to cost them?

What was their motivation behind rebelling against the might of the Roman Catholic Church? And that's what I want us to think about this morning as we reflect on these events.

[ 1 : 20 ] What was their motivation? What was behind it? Especially as we come to our passage in John 4. Because what we'll find is that the motivation of the reformers to do what they did 500 years ago is not that different from the motivation that Jesus had to do what he did in John chapter 4, in going to Samaria and having a conversation with this woman.

The conversation we've been looking at for the last two weeks. Because here we see that Jesus' disciples now, at the end of this conversation, Jesus' disciples are now coming back from their shopping trip in town.

And when they arrive, they're shocked to discover what Jesus has been doing while they were gone. Can't leave him anywhere by himself, they're probably thinking. And even though they say nothing, it's clear in verse 27 that they're wondering why Jesus risked his reputation as a Jewish rabbi to talk to this Samaritan woman.

What would cause him to do such a thing? What would cause him to take this risk? And so he tells them, when they offer him some food, listen to his reply. He says, I have food to eat that you know nothing about.

Then his disciples said to each other, could someone have brought him food? My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

[ 2 : 43 ] You see, the work that Jesus is referring to is what he's just done, having this conversation with this woman. Speaking to this woman, Jesus is saying, is the work of God.

It was the will of God because she needed to hear his words about eternal life that we've been hearing about ourselves. She needed to hear them. And God wanted her to hear them.

And that's why Jesus had to have this conversation with her. And not just her, the whole town needed to hear, which is what we see happens next in the story. That was Jesus' motivation for having this conversation.

It's the reason he didn't just sit at that well and keep quiet when this woman came to draw water. It's the reason he didn't just watch her silently and let her walk away.

It's because she needed to hear his words. She needed to, and he knew she needed to. So he opened his mouth, no matter what the consequences might have been.

[ 3 : 42 ] But you see, that is the same reason the reformers 500 years ago did what they did. It's the reason they didn't just keep quiet. It's the reason they took the risks they did because they were also convicted that ordinary people like you and me need to hear the words of Jesus.

And it's because of what they did that we actually have the Bible in our own language this morning that we can read for ourselves. And that we can read these words because they took the risks they

took 500 years ago.

And the reason they did that, the reason it's so important we have these words in front of us, is because people can only be saved when they meet Jesus for themselves.

That's what we go on to discover in this passage. People can only be saved when they meet Jesus for themselves. In fact, look at what the townspeople say in verse 42.

They said to the woman, Okay, so this woman had gone into town.

[ 4 : 55 ] She had taken the risk because to her, it was quite a big thing to go into town and talk to these people. Because, if you remember from previously, she had come in the middle of the day to draw water, to avoid the crowds, to avoid the people, because she was living a shameful life.

She didn't want to confront people. She just wanted water. And how does the conversation end? She leaves her water jar behind. All of a sudden, that's not her priority anymore.

And she goes and does the very thing she was trying to avoid doing, and speaking to these people in town, and sharing her testimony about what she had discovered about Jesus.

And that was important. It's what led these people to come to Jesus. And they even came, we're told, to believe things about Jesus through this woman's testimony. But notice, they only came to believe in him fully, and realize who he truly is, the savior of the world, when they encountered him for themselves.

And more specifically, when they encountered not just him, but his words. They say, now we have heard for ourselves. Verse 41, because of his words, many more became believers.

[ 6 : 08 ] And you see, that is the point that John, who writes this, wants to make for us here. And it's also the reason that he goes on to the next seemingly unrelated story in this chapter, about a man back in Galilee.

So, Jesus leaves Samaria. He goes back to Jewish territory, and suddenly, he comes across this guy whose son is dying. This guy comes up to Jesus, and he wants him to do something.

He's obviously heard that Jesus can do powerful miracles. But then Jesus says, again, something strange. He says, unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe.

It's quite a harsh thing to say to a guy whose son is dying. But you see what he's doing. What he's doing here is he's challenging this man to do something very important.

He's challenging this man to believe in his words without seeing. Without seeing a miracle. Jesus is challenging him to have faith in his words alone.

[ 7 : 10 ] And then the story goes on, and we realize it was Jesus' words alone that healed this man's son. Without the man realizing that until later.

But the man only discovered his son was healed when he got back home. After he put his faith in Jesus' words. And that's what's important about this story.

Because the point is, it is Jesus' words that give life, not signs and wonders. It's his words. That's the centrality of his words.

In both these stories. Jesus' words are what give life. Just like when God created the whole universe. And everything that we see. And everything we experience.

And the life we have. How was it created in Genesis? Tell me. How did Jesus create? With his words. Exactly. And so, just like God created life originally with his words.

[ 8 : 13 ] New life, spiritual life, salvation comes through God's words as well. Spoken through the prophets and apostles. And ultimately in his son Jesus Christ. All recorded for us here in scripture.

It's these words that give life. And you see, that is why the reformers did what they did. That's why people like Martin Luther were so passionate about making the Bible accessible to all people.

And so many people gave their lives so that this Bible today could be translated into our language. You see, in his day. If you were here on Friday.

If you watched the movie with us. You would have seen that in his day. In the 1500s. In Europe. And all over the world. There were very, very few Bibles. Very few Bibles. And the Bibles that

existed. Were only allowed to be read. If you had a license. And only popes and priests. Had licenses to read the Bible. It was illegal. To own a copy of and read the Bible for yourself.

[ 9 : 14 ] And besides. They were so expensive. That you wouldn't have been able to afford one. And then these popes and priests. Who were the only ones allowed to read the Bible. Would then mediate it to the people.

But sadly. They changed what it said to benefit themselves. And to get money. For the church. And that's what got Martin Luther so angry. That's why he. He.

Went on the course that he went on. And. Even at church services though. Even when the priests. And the popes and stuff. And the cardinals. In their fancy clothes.

Came to the church services. They wouldn't even read the Bible. In a language. That people understood. They would read it in Latin. And the people wouldn't know what's going on. And so the average person.

500 years ago. Had little. To no access. To God's words. Themselves. And so that's why Martin Luther decided. To translate the Bible.

[10:09] Into German. The language of the people. And it was a. It was a new thing. It was a. A brand new experience. That people could actually. Open the words of scripture. And read it for themselves. See what it actually says.

Without the popes. And the priests telling them. What it said. But of course. They weren't too happy about that. And the emperor. Wasn't too happy about that. And so it was highly illegal. To do what he did.

It was highly illegal. To translate the Bible. Into. German. And he got into a lot of trouble. Because of it. But he didn't care. Because he knew. That for people to come.

To true saving faith. They needed to meet Jesus. For themselves. Not through seeing statues. Of him at church. Not through the ceremonies. Of the priests. But through hearing his words. And believing them.

That and that alone. Is the way that people. Can be saved. And he knew that. And he risked his life. To make it possible. But you know what. That wasn't just true.

[11:04] 500 years ago. It's as true. Today. In our world. Where sadly. The Bible. And people reading the Bible. Is becoming. More and more.

Rare. As it was. 500 years ago. Even though. It's so accessible. The fact is. That people. Can only come. To saving faith. By meeting Jesus.

For him. For themselves. And not by meeting him. Visually. Not by seeing him. But by hearing his words. That's how people. Meet Jesus. Today.

And it is absolutely. Vital. For each and every person. To do that. And they'll only do that. Of course. By hearing and reading. The Bible. Where God has caused. Jesus words.

To be preserved. And by the way. Jesus words. Aren't just. The words. He literally says. The whole Bible. Is his word. Because Jesus. As the word of God.

[11:59] Through the Holy Spirit. Inspired. All of scripture. To be written. That's why. If you have a red letter Bible. You know. Those red letter Bibles. Where Jesus words. Are in red. It kind of implying.

That those words. Are somehow more powerful. Than the black words. Well. That's not the case. Because all of. If you want it to be accurate. And put Jesus words. In red. Then all of the Bible. Should be in red letters.

Now. Don't throw those Bibles away. But just don't. Don't see those words. As any more inspired. Than the other words. Spoken through the apostles. And the prophets. See. Those were also the spokespeople.

Of Jesus Christ. And so. It says. People come to hear. God's words. Recorded in the Bible. That they can be saved. And only then. And so. If we want people.

To be saved. What do we have to do? It's quite simple. Isn't it? We have to put God's words. In front of them. If that's the only way. That people can find life.

[12:55] And salvation. And eternity. Then we need to find. Some way. To put God's words. In front of people. Who are not yet saved. And tell. You know.

Telling them your testimony. Is important. But it's not enough. The point of your testimony. The point of. Of how you met Jesus. If you are a Christian. Like this woman.

Should be. The point of it. Should be. To get people. To come in here. For themselves. So that they can meet Jesus too. Testimony is important. But it's not enough. People need.

To hear God's words. To see. To read God's words. For themselves. So how do we get people. To do that? If that. If that is so important. If that is what. 500 years ago.

Men and women. Shared blood. To enable. You and us. You and me. To do today. How do we do that? How do we continue. That legacy? How do we. Get God's word.

[13:49] In front of people. So that they can meet Jesus. For themselves. As was said there. God's word. Is powerful. That's something. We've got to realize. This morning. That's what.

Jesus wanted. Us to know. That's what John wants us to know. By writing this down. God's word is powerful. Because God's word. And God's word alone. Saves people.

When they hear it. And when they believe it. And that is why. If. If. If you're not yet saved. I'm not assuming. Everyone coming to church is saved. If you're not yet saved. I.e.

If you don't know. What's going to happen. When you die. Then. How do you get saved? Well you need to read God's word. For yourself. You need. To meet Jesus.

For yourself. Not rely on what I say about him. Not rely on what other people say about him. But you've got to engage with him yourself. You've got to open. The words of scripture yourself. And the. One of the best ways to do that.

[14:46] Is just. Through opening John. Yes. Use. These sermons. As a. As a way to guide you. To read the Bible. But don't rely on sermons. Read the Bible for yourself. And you can do it.

Very easily. Because the Bible. Is accessible to us. And you'll. You'll. Very easily. Be able to find a translation. That's. That. That. Works for you. That's easy to read.

Use these resources as well. Just buy them for yourself. If you. If you want to. So you can read through John. Yourself. But it's so vital. If you're still unsure. Of your salvation. Then.

The best thing. You can do. Is. Meet Jesus. For yourself. By reading his words. But that's also. Why. Jesus. Goes on.

To tell his disciples. In this passage. That their priority. In this life. Now needs to be. Taking. God's word. To others. And that's the next thing. We see here. The priority of word.

[15:39] Ministry. Look at what. Jesus says. From verse 34. My food. Is to do the will. Of him. Who sent me. And to finish his work. Don't you ever saying. It's four months. Until harvest.

I tell you. Open your eyes. And look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest. Even now. The one who reaps. Draws a wage. And harvests a crop. For eternal life. So that the sower. And reaper. May be glad.

Together. Okay. So what is Jesus. Talking about. Does he want his disciples. To become farmers. All of a sudden. No. No. Of course. He's talking about. The Samaritans. Which are at this very moment.

Streaming out of the village. To come meet him. And to hear his words. And what he's saying. Is. Is just like farmers. Wake up early. And work hard. During harvest time.

To gather the harvest. Now. This time. In the history. Of our world. Now that Jesus has come. Is the time. That God's people.

[16:35] You and me. Must be hard at work. Gathering souls. For eternal life. By taking God's word. To them. With as much vigor. And energy.

And importance. As a farmer. Harvesting his crop. The time is now. Jesus is saying. This is a window. Of opportunity. In the world's history. Where.

The work. Has been done. The Bible. Has been. Compiled. God has. Finished. Revealing himself. Completely. And now. That we have. God's word. We need to take it out.

That is what. This age. In history. Is all about. It is the most important. Thing. In this age. And therefore. It needs to be. Our priority. And that is why. Jesus says.

My food. Is to do the will. Of him who sent me. And finish his work. It is a weird thing to say. My food. Is to finish God's work. But. What he is saying there. Is.

[17:29] For him. For Jesus. The task of bringing. God's word to people. Was more important. Even than his immediate. Physical needs. Like food. Food. And that is what he is saying.

His disciples need to. Think about as well. They need to. Re-prioritize. Their lives. And so do we. His disciples today.

As Christians. You know. We spend our lives. Chasing after earthly goals. Don't we? What do we think about. When we wake up. What is. Taking our. Our resources. And our focus. Each day. It is. Home. Food. Security. Earthly goals. But. What we have got to realize. And this. Reformation Sunday. Is the best time.

To realize it. Because of all the people. Who have gone before us. Who realized this. What we have got to realize. Is there is a. Much more important. Task. To do.

[18:25] Than chase after. Earthly goals. And it is a task. That we all. Somehow need to be involved in. If we call ourselves. Christians. And it is the work of God. There is no. Better thing.

Than doing the work of God. Yes. There is a lot of work. To do in the world. There is a lot of things. To be involved in. There is a lot of pursuits. To chase after. But God. Is busy doing work. God. Is busy involved. In something. And so. The best. Way. To live life. Is to find out. What that is. And get involved. In the same thing. To do the work of God.

Is the greatest work. We can do. It is the best way. We can use. Our short. Time on earth. Even if that means. Giving up. Earthly goals.

Like. Homes. Food. Security. Or even our lives. Which is what so many. Brave men and women. Have done before us. So that we can do. What we are doing. This morning.

[19:19] How do we honor them? Well we. Reprioritize. We look at. What their priority was. And we ask ourselves. If that is our priority. As well. Luther was willing.

To give up his life. For that. If necessary. In fact. That was about to happen. After. His. Inquisition. The emperor.

And others. Sent a hit squad. To take him out. And. He would have died. For what he stood up for. If it wasn't for. His friend. German.

Prince. Frederick. Rescuing him. At the last minute. In fact. He. It was. It was a very interesting story. He staged. A kidnapping. Of Luther. In the forest. With his knights. And dragged him off. Into his castle. So that the government. Wouldn't find out. And so that. Luther could hide out. In secret. And translate the bible. In his castle. But why did Prince Frederick.

[20:13] Do that? Prince Frederick. He was taking a big risk. To side with Luther. And to help him. And to rescue him. From the hit squad. Why did he risk his throne. To do that.

Well because his priority. As well. Wasn't just his earthly kingdom. But. His. His primary priority. Was for people to come to God's kingdom. Through hearing God's word.

And he knew Luther was being used. As an instrument. To enable that. And so he prioritized that. No matter what the cost. You see. People are used in various different ways.

In this task. Of advancing word ministry. In this world. Not everyone teaches the word. For example. Some support. With finances.

Some are really good. At making money. And they support the task. Of word ministry. With finances. But even though they're. Out in the business world. Working. Those people. Their priority. Is still word ministry. They still realize.

[21:07] That is why they are here. As God's people. Some use their. Their gifts of hospitality. To. To bring people. To hear God's word. From others. And.

Some stage kidnappings. Of German monks. But whatever it is. However. It is. Have you come. To prioritize. God's word ministry.

In your life. Using the gifts. That he's given you. If. You have. Been saved. You need to ask yourself. That question. How are you going to be involved. In the mission. To take. God's word. To others. And there are various ways. You can be involved. In that great mission. But are you. Or are you just coming. Going to receive. God's word.

Ignorant. Of. All the people. Who have gone before you. All the lives. That were given. All that was risked. All that was given up. So that you can. Come and benefit. From God's word. Are you going to step up.

[22:02] And be used. In that task. Of bringing that word. To others. And of course. How are you yourself. Sharing. That word. With others. You know.

We just were reminded. From that video. You have. A circle of contacts. That is unique. To you. Friends and family members. That I don't have. Relationships with. That nobody else does.

Who can bring them. God's word. And you know what. God has put those people. In your life. It's not random. The contacts you have. How are you.

Using those contacts. To bring God's word. To bring light. Into darkness. As British evangelist. Rico Tice says. Not everyone. Can be a Bible teacher.

But everyone. Can be a Bible sharer. You can as well. No matter what. Your skills. Or resources. And so. Is that a priority. In your life.

[22:54] Is that more important. Than your earthly priorities. Because there is. No more important work. To be involved in. In this world. And there is.

Let me tell you. No greater joy. In this world. Than bringing. Someone else. To meet Jesus. For themselves. If you are involved.

In that task. You will. You will realize. That. It's a joy. That outweighs. All the costs. Involved. All the costs.

I want to end. This morning. By telling you. About some more people. Who made a priority. Of taking God's word. To others. Not long ago. Eleven.

Syrians. Who met Jesus. For themselves. After meeting Jesus. After finding salvation. And the hope of eternal life. In him. You know what they did.

[ 23 : 50 ] They devoted themselves. To sharing God's word. With others. And. They knew. They only had so much time. On earth. Especially in Syria. Where the life expectancy.

Isn't great. They knew. They had a limited time. On earth. And so. They didn't want to waste it. They got involved. In an international. Christian ministry. To take God's word.

To their fellow Syrians. They got equipped. To do that. And they started doing that. They started sharing God's word. With their. Syrian. Countrymen.

And women. And many came to faith. Because of it. Because they were just willing. Ordinary people. Young and old. The youngest of them. I think. Was. Was just short of his 13th birthday. But these were ordinary people.

Who had no special skills. They were just passionate. About taking God's word. To their fellow Syrians. Who no one else. Was reaching out. To. Well. In 2015. The ISIS terror group.

[ 24 : 43 ] Became more active. In hunting down. Christians. Christians. And the ministry leader. Of this ministry. They were involved in. Contacted them. And he told them. They needed to flee the country. Things were getting too dangerous.

You know what they said to him. They refused. And all 11 of them. Men and women. Young and old. Said this is what God has told us to do. This is what we want to do. We just want to stay. And share the gospel. Irrespective of the cost. Well. In October. 2015. All 11 were captured. Taken to.

The public square. And executed. In front of watching crowds. And crucified. For their faith.

Witnesses. Say that they kept on praying. And sharing Jesus.

Until their last breath. With smiles on their faces. Why? Why would they do that? Why didn't they flee. When they had the chance?

[ 25 : 38 ] Well. Because their priority. In this life. Their joy. Was to use. Their short time on earth. They were going to die sooner or later. We all are. And their priority.

Was to use the short time they had on earth. To do the most important thing. They could. And that is to take God's word to others. That was the priority. Of these reformers. Before them.

And it was the priority of Jesus himself. And so this morning. I ask you. Is it your priority? And if you are honest with yourself. And you know that it is not. Your priority.

Why don't you use this great opportunity. This reformation Sunday 2017. To commit yourself. To use whatever time. You have left on earth. From this moment forward.

To be involved in the work of. Sharing God's life changing words. Into a dark and dying world. Are you going to be involved in that? Well St. Mark's.

[ 26 : 35 ] This church. Is here for you to be involved in that. But all you need to do. Is step up to the plate. And be counted. I can't force you to do that. But hopefully. These reformers.

These men and women. Who gave. Their lives. To give you the word of God. Will inspire you to do the same. Will you? No matter what the cost involved. Let's pray.

That God would help us. To be bold. Like they were. Yes Lord. We thank you. We praise you. For those before us. Who you inspired. To risk their lives.

To make your word accessible. To us. We thank you. That you've preserved your word. Down the ages. So that we can find. Eternal life. In the words of Jesus. That we can put our trust in.

And find. The sure hope of eternal life. That the gospel gives. We thank you for that. We praise you for that. And we pray. Help us. Help us. To be used.

[ 27 : 31 ] In that great mission. In this age. The most important task. Of taking your word. To others. Help each of us. This morning. To find out. How we can be used.

To take your word out. And use us in a mighty way. For the glory of your name. And the salvation of souls. Amen.