TITLE: IT’S A RISKY BUSINESS

TEXT: Heb. 11:1-2; Acts 2:22-23; 2nd Co. 11:23-29;

2nd Tim. 2:10; 2nd Co. 12:7-10

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about risky business.

 Have you discovered that Christianity can be a risky business?

 In fact, if we are going to be the disciple, the follower of Jesus Christ that God has called us to be it will often require, and even demand, that we take risks..

 In the book of Hebrews there is an entire chapter devoted to men and women of the faith. One thing that all of them had in common was that they were all risk takers as far as their faith in God was concerned. Men and women of God who understood the importance of being willing to take a risk.

**Heb. 11:1-2 (NIV)
1Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. 2This is what the ancients were commended for.**

To have a faith that is sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see will require that you take risk at times.

 Here in Hebrews 11 Scripture it talk’s about Noah and Abraham and Moses and Gideon and Sampson and David and many others.

All knew the importance, and even necessity, of taking risk in their relationship with God.

 Noah was commanded by God to build an ark because God was about to send a flood upon the earth. To be obedient to God and do what God had called him to do Noah had to take a risk. He had to start to build an ark in the middle of the desert. His neighbors most probably thought he was crazy. He had went off the deep end. He probably faced ridicule and was made fun of every day.

Yet he willingly took the risk because his faith was in God not in what other people might think of him.

God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, the son he waited an entire lifetime for. Abraham was a split second from plunging his knife into his son Isaac before God stopped him, but Abraham proved to God that he was willing to take the risk of blind obedience to God.

Moses was a risk taker because of his faith in God.

 God had commanded Moses to go back into Egypt to deliver his people who were in hard bondage to Pharaoh.

 Moses had escaped death from Pharaoh’s hand years earlier and yet by faith he took the risk of going back there.

He went before Pharaoh, and standing toe to toe with him, boldly proclaimed the word and the judgments of God.

Gideon took a risk when he went against a much larger army with just a few men at the Lord’s command.

David took a risk when it had seemed that God had delivered Saul into his hand, yet even though he had the opportunity to take the life of the one who was so diligently seeking to take his life, he wouldn’t lay his hand upon him because at one time Saul had been the Lords anointed.

The early Disciples of Christ were all risk takers.

Peter, the one who actually coward in fear and three times disowned even knowing who Jesus was, went on to be a great risk taker for God.

 When standing before many of the very people who had just weeks earlier crucified Jesus, the same rulers who he had previously fled from and disowned even knowing Jesus to, once filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up before them and boldly said…

**Acts 2:22 -23 (NIV)
22“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.**

 Peter risked his very life by proclaiming to them the Gospel message of Christ.

The Apostle Paul was a great risk taker for God.

Because of Paul’s proclaiming the Gospel of Christ he lived his life taking risk….

 In proclaiming the Gospel in Corinth, just listen to Paul’s personal testimony….

**2 Cor. 11:23 -29 (NIV)
23Are they servants of Christ? I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?**

After Paul was introduced to Christ he became a great risk taker for God.

 Why? Why does it seem that all of this great cloud of witness of Hebrews chapter 11, all the great hero’s of the faith in both the Old and New Testament, once they came to believe in God, they became willing to take so many risk for their faith?

Steve Sjogren is the pastor of a Vineyard Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. One Monday morning he was feeling particularly discouraged and announced to his wife Janie, "I'm quitting the ministry! And this time I mean it."

 Janie had heard this kind of talk before so she suggested, "Why don't you go for a drive and think things through? Usually that helps when you're stressed out. And while you're out, could you be a sweetheart and pick me up a burrito?"

 Steve drove around for about an hour, complaining to the Lord the whole time. Finally, he was in the fast-food drive-thru to pick up Janie's burrito when he sensed the Lord speaking to him. ... Now the Lord’s voice didn’t come over the drive-thru speaker but in a subtle, quiet way he sensed the Lord impressing this message on his heart,

 "If you open your door I will give you a gift."

 Even though he felt silly, he figured he had nothing to lose, so he opened the car door, looked down and saw embedded in the asphalt, a tarnished penny.

 This is what he wrote about the experience: "I reached down to pry out the coin and held it in my hand feeling less than thankful for this 'gift.' The Lord spoke to me again: 'Many people in this city feel about as valuable as discarded pennies. I've given you the gift of gathering people who seem valueless. Though these are the people that the world casts off, they have great value to me. If you will open your heart, I will bring you more pennies than you know what to do with."

 With this his heart changed and he went on whole heartedly gathering the penny’s of the lost of his city for the Lord.

 Why did all of the hero’s of our faith, all the great men and women of the faith seem so willing to become risk takers for God?

 Because of what is at stake! What is at stake is a world full of tarnished pennies. A world full of people who feel they have no value. A world full of people that are lost and headed for hell. What is at stake is the eternal destiny of the souls of men.

 One of the more heroic stories to come out of the Korean War involved a young sergeant by the name of Gardolibov. He had been engaged in the severe fighting on Heartbreak Hill.

 When the shooting had subsided, a rescue team was dispatched to the area to aid the wounded.

 The sergeant was found dying, but they discovered something very unusual. Although his hands were paralyzed, he had clenched between his teeth the two ends of a communication wire that had broken. Enabling the communication between the men fighting the battle and the needed support of long range guns far away…

 In that moment when one would expect his every thought and concern would be directed toward his own needs, he was still doing what he could to keep the messages going through. He was faithful unto death.

 Many so-called "soldiers of the cross" are put to shame by his noble example. Sad to say, when the going gets rough, the demands too great, the sacrifice too costly, or the shame of the cross too much to bear, we desert our post and flee back of the lines where it's more comfortable and secure. Some even may go AWOL.

 The apostle Paul says this about the why of his taking the risk that he took ….

**2 Timothy 2:10** “**I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ. —**

 Why did Paul willingly endure all the suffering that he endured for the Gospel?

 He was thinking in terms of eternal life and eternal death. He counted the cost of his not taking the risk. And the cost would have been some who heard about Jesus would not have heard if he didn’t take the risk of proclaiming Jesus to them. Some who he made an impact on with the Gospel of Jesus Christ would probably never had been impacted by Jesus and would have ended up in hell for an eternity of torment of their soul if he hadn’t been willing to take the risk that he did.

So, he counted the cost and gladly undertook the risk.

 And it was the very risks that he took, the very hardships that he endured that ended up leading many to the cross of Christ and into the Kingdom of God.

 Adoniram Judson, the renowned missionary to Burma, endured untold hardships trying to reach the lost for Christ.

 For 7 heartbreaking years he suffered hunger and adversity. During this time he was thrown into Ava Prison, and for 17 months was subjected to almost unbelievable mistreatment. As a result, for the rest of his life he carried the ugly scars made by the chains and iron shackles which had cruelly bound him.

 Undaunted, upon his release he asked for permission to enter another province where he might resume preaching the Gospel.

 The godless ruler of Burma indignantly denied his request, saying "My people are not fools enough to listen to anything a missionary might SAY, but I fear they might be impressed by your SCARS and turn to your religion!"

 I fear they might be impressed by your SCARS and turn to your religion.

 A lot of times it was the scars that Paul bore that attracted people to the one whom he had bore them for.

 For that reason Paul became proud of his scars. Because each scar reminded him of the Grace and sufficiency of his God.

**2 Cor. 12:7 -10 (NIV)
7To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

 Example: In 1969: From tragedy in the jungles of South Viet Nam came triumph for a man named Dave Roever.

 At 22-years-old Dave Roever discovered what General Sherman meant when he said "War is hell." A phosphorous grenade explosion six inches from his face and caused the loss of 60 pounds of flesh, 40% of his skin, but none of his spirit. The ordeal left him hospitalized for 14 months, where he underwent 15 major surgeries. His survival and life are miraculous.

 He was on a gunboat in Viet Nam going up one of the rivers when they started taking gunfire from the shoreline.

 He had pulled the pin on a phosphorous grenade and was just about to throw it when it unexpectedly and prematurely exploded next to his face.

 He landed in the water and his companions thought that he was dead.

 When the helicopter came to carry out the wounded they found that Dave was still alive --but not by much.

 He shares how they put him on a stretcher to carry him over to the helicopter and some of the phosphorous within him evidently hit air and started burning and he burned right through the stretcher and fell to the ground.

 When he was in the operating room when they went into his crest cavity to remove the shrapnel, again the phosphorous material ignited within him and all the doctors and nurses scattered because they thought that it may explode the oxygen tanks in the operation room.

 When, after a few minutes they didn’t, they came back and got to work on him.

 Half of his face and one ear were entirely gone!

 When he was stable enough to ship back to the states and was placed in a hospital here he waited in agony for his wife to come and visit him.. Although he hadn’t seen himself he was told of all of his injuries and could imagine how horrifying he looked and images of his wife’s reaction to that horror terrified him.

 Could she look at him? Would she take one look and turn in horror? Would she run out of the room never to return?

 On the day that she came he shares how she came into the room, looked at her mutilated husband, came over to him, gently wrapped her arms around him and kissed the corner of his mouth and said how much she loved him…

 Today Dave travels the world preaching the Gospel in his own humorous style that includes giving testimony of his ordeal and the power of God that brought him through.

 I saw Dave Roever on a talk show several years ago and he was sitting at a piano and said that he had learned how to play the piano by ear-- then he would then take off his artificial ear and bang it on the keys.

Dave says that People said to me for years: "You were a Christian, how could you fight such an unpopular war?"

Dave said: No one ever told me Christians only fight in popular wars.

 I hate war. They can sign peace treaties when it's over, but do the dead rise from their graves? Do the missing in action come home? Do the prisoners of war that are probably still over there, do they come home? Is the suffering over? Do I get a new face? Do paraplegics get new limbs? I hate war and everybody knows I have the right to.

 War hurts, rapes, plunders, disfigures, and destroys. But there's something I hate even more than war. It's called slavery.

 I love freedom and this is one Viet Nam Veteran that's proud of his scars and stripes and I'll serve this country any time, anywhere to defend the freedoms of speech, press, religion, the right to pursue happiness, peaceful assembly together, where I can, without fear of government intervention, lift up the name of Jesus Christ and voice my pride for my country. I'm proud to be an American! When I was a boy I learned a lesson from my dad and that is to stand on Jesus Christ the Rock and that there is no other Rock and there is no other thing to stand upon than faith in God. I thank God that I also learned the lesson of freedom, no matter what it cost, it's worth it.

 Dave went on to go back and forth across this country to share his testimony of how God had intervened so miraculously in his life.

 It was his scars that gave him the platform to share the Gospel of Christ.

 It was through his scars that he was able to witness Jesus more effectively…

 He became a risk taker for Christ. He took the risk of being pitied, laughed at, stared at, ridiculed by those who don’t, won’t or can’t understand…all worth it if his testimony might reach just one person! Snatch just one soul from the fires of hell and deliver them safe into the hands of God!

 This morning, what risks are we willing to take for the Gospel of Christ?

 Will we take advantage of the opportunities that God has given us in the people that He brings across our path each and every day?

 Will we take the risk of the giving of ourselves to come to the rescue of people who need to hear the good news of the Gospel of Christ?

 Will we be willing to take the risk, whatever the risk might be, to advance the Kingdom of God?

 Are we filled with the same sense of purpose that caused Paul to endure all things for the sake of the lost?

 What are the risks that we will dare to take to tell others about Jesus?

 Physical harm-- Verbal abuse--- Rejection—Ridicule or Loss of possessions?

 Not just having the willingness, but the desire, to give of our time, talents and money to see that others hear about Jesus and the gift of life that only He has to offer?

A quote from the devotional “Our Daily Bread” a while

Back said:…

**It's risky to go out on a limb—but that's where the fruit is.**

Are we willing to take the risk of going out on a limb to bear fruit for God?