



"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10

There were, amid all the evils of the Holocaust, those who dared to go against the terrible tide and help one another. This is just one of those stories as it was told to me many years ago.

"Three Dutch children were hiding in a hut in the woods. Suddenly there was a knocking at the door; fearing the Nazis, they were terrified to answer – they knew what the concentration camps held. But they also wondered if it was someone needing help. So, they decided to answer the door and discovered two soldiers, their enemies, badly bleeding. Even though they had only a tiny bit of food, they shared what they had and gave aid to the soldiers. When the soldiers were strong enough they used their knowledge to help their rescuers escape to safety."

Imagine sitting in the home of someone and hearing this story unfold. My ears couldn't believe what I was hearing. I had never been touched so deeply by someone's sense of bravery and determination as I was that day. I was deeply touched by the risk that was taken.

This past week I thought a lot about that story as I received news that the man who shared it with me had died. All of a sudden, I was back in his living room listening more intently than I had ever before. All of a sudden, I was thinking about one person's unbelievable journey and how many lives he had touched and changed throughout his own lifetime. Once again, I was reminded of his tremendous faith and the ability he had to share all that he was with the world. This man was a person of strong Christian conviction who never shied away from taking the chances that were laid in front of him; not when it came to living-out his faith and his love for his Savior. That was a risk he was always willing to take.

I believe we are constantly faced with choices in life. Most will force us to choose between safety and risk. However, the risk in our lives is usually not as dramatic as it was for the people in this story. But it is a risk nonetheless.

When we choose to open our hearts to another, we risk great pain and heartbreak. When we offer something of ourselves to another, we risk rejection. When we choose to stand up for what we believe, we risk ridicule or persecution. Sometimes, particularly in the moment when we must choose, the fear can be so strong that it seems that we should simply retreat, choose to be safe. Yet, in the instant we choose to be safe, we have already done ourselves the greatest harm, for we have cut ourselves off from the potential of warmth and comfort from others.

I was reminded once again this week that many are brought into this world feeling helpless and alone; making our task one that will continuously build the connections that will return us to the all-embracing heart of humanity. But here's the thing – often we can only find our way if we are willing to take the chances we are offered.

Right now, in our world there seems to be a lot of opportunity for chances and I wonder how it is that we will see that which lies right in front of us? What chances are we willing to take – what stands will we remain firm and unmoving on? What are the risks that we are willing to take?

In confirmation class when we talk about Martin Luther with our 7th and 8th graders we address the whole topic of risk as Luther is a prime example of someone who took many risks during his lifetime. Our curriculum presents the whole topic in a rather unique way as it quotes Peter Drucker's approach to risk; asking students to consider what risks they take and will take as they continue to grow in their faith.

Today, in the face of all the realities that surround us I would like to ask that we take some time to think about those same questions as we continue to move forward; as we continue to grow and develop within our faith – within our relationship with our Lord and Savior. So here goes: "What are the risks you can afford to take; the risks you can't afford to take; the risks you can afford not to take; and the risks you can't afford not to take?" I hope that you find this to be some food for thought as you continue to listen, pray, and move forward into the days ahead.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, each day is a struggle against sin and temptation. Give us the strength to overcome cruelty with grace, and hatred with love. God, remind us that our actions matter. Help us to remember that with each act of compassion we build your kingdom. Help us to take the risks that need taking when it comes to sharing your love with this world. Amen