

Children’s Moment

Hello, girls and boys. Esperanza and I pray for you and your family. We love you and we appreciate you.

I hope you were able to plant some seeds this week. I know a few of you got kits. Please take a picture and send it to us so we can share.

Esperanza is with me. Let’s take a look and see how our seeds are doing.

We are surprised! Look at how quickly the bok choy has grown. And some we can see some of the basil sprouting as well. But we don’t see any sprouts in the other pots. You may not see sprouts yet, either.

Why don’t all seeds sprout the same way? There are a lot of reasons. Sadly, some seeds just don’t grow. Maybe they didn’t get what they needed to sprout. Other seeds take longer to grow. They need more time and care before they sprout. Some seeds are really good at sprouting, but may grow quickly at first but be more fragile. Lastly, there are the seeds that sprout and grow, steady and sure.

We’re just like those seeds. Some of us hear about Jesus and it doesn’t mean anything to us. We don’t know who Jesus really is and so we don’t grow spiritually. Some of us hear about Jesus, but we’re confused or not sure who he is. We need others to care and help us know we can trust Jesus and his love for us. Some of us love the idea of who Jesus is, but we struggle to know how he helps us in our day to day lives. When we’re faced with troubles, we need extra help and care. Finally, some of us hear who Jesus is, believe, trust God and we grow steady and sure.

No matter what kind of person you are, I want you to know this: Jesus loves you! No matter whether you believe in him or not, Jesus believes in you. He wants to be your brother. And he’s patient. He’ll wait and care for you for as long as it takes. There’s no pressure.

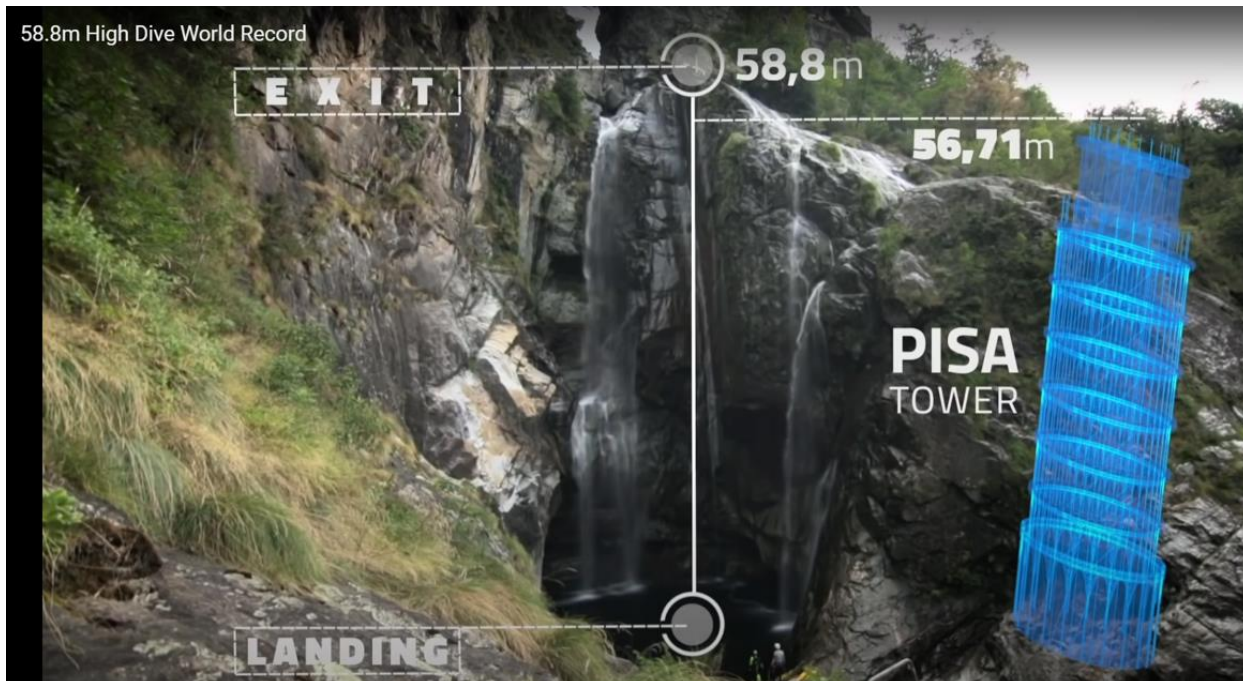
So you can relax and grow as God has made you without fear.

Will you pray with me?

You are invited to be part of Sunday School online. Visit us at www.coronaumc.com/childrensministry to sign up.

Message: “Transplanting is Risky”

What kind of risk taker are you? I doubt very many of us are like Laso Schaller. In 2015, he set the world cliff jumping record of 58.8 meters (193’), jumping off a platform at the top of a waterfall in Cascata del Salto, Switzerland. This is equivalent to jumping off the top of the leaning tower of Pisa. Laso reached a speed of 123 km/hour (76 mph) in the 3.5 seconds it took. The force of the impact dislocated his hip and he had to be assisted to leave the water. That’s extreme. This behavior comes with significant consequences if there is a misstep. This is negative risk taking.

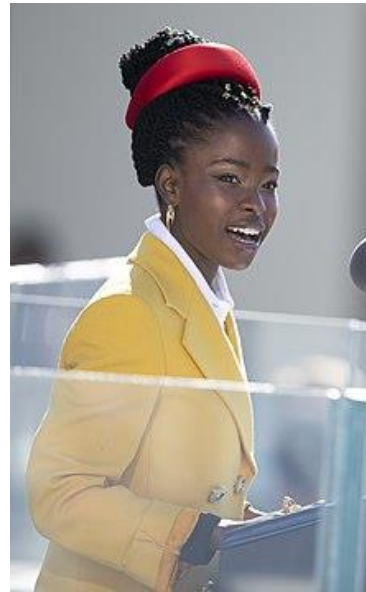




Actor and comedian Kenan Thompson, who is currently a cast member on Saturday Night Live, describes the greatest risk he ever took. “The greatest risk I ever took was giving President Obama my barber's business card because I noticed a few weeks before the election that his hair wasn't looking all that good. That was a risk because I didn't know if he'd be offended.”¹

Here’s another example of a risk taker, Amanda Gorman.

You may know her as the poet from President Biden’s inauguration. Ms. Gorman is 22 years old and the first person to be named a National Youth Poet Laureate. She was born in Los Angeles, raised in Watts by a single mom. What you may not know is that Amanda is hypersensitive to sound and has a speech impediment. She has overcome many challenges, is a graduate from Harvard University and she published her first book of poetry in 2015 at the age of seventeen.



Kenan and Amanda are good examples of positive risk taking. “Positive risk-taking is about learning new things and exploring unfamiliar territory. The risk is positive because, while it still evokes a feeling of uncertainty or fear, you develop a new skill or there’s a possibility of a positive outcome.”²

You don’t have to look for a cliff or try to get the president’s attention to take a positive risk. Other examples of positive risk taking include things like trying a new recipe for dinner, or taking the bus instead of driving, or joining a band or choir, or getting involved with a new sport, or taking classes on topics you know nothing about, or volunteering to help with a social cause. This list is endless.

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/2010/01/20/greatest-risk-they-took-entrepreneurs-management-risk.html?sh=2fe0d1aa3b2b>

² <https://parents.au.reachout.com/common-concerns/everyday-issues/risk-taking-and-teenagers>

Whether you realize it or not, everything you do has a positive or a negative risk associated with it. So the question we ask ourselves isn't “Will you take a risk?”

The question we ask ourselves is “What kind of risk will you take?”

Imagining the worst-case scenario and choosing not to take a chance is the easy thing to do. When we do that, we're letting fear take control. To be healthy and fruitful in life, it's important to learn how to step outside our comfort zone. When we take a chance, willing to have new experiences, that's when we're ready to grow, learn and thrive.

Following Jesus isn't safe. If we're going to follow Jesus today, we will take risks. We may put our comfort, reputation, safety or financial security at risk. Yet, the more we trust Jesus, the more we pay attention to him, the more we will be empowered to take risks for the sake of God's kingdom and for the people he has entrusted to our care.

Our scripture reading for today highlights the risk. The narrative is recorded in several gospels. Mark 8:27-38 records a conversation between Jesus and the disciples while they were on the road.

Jesus asked, “*What are you saying about me? Who am I?*”

Peter said, “*You are the Christ, the Messiah.*”

Jesus warned them to keep it quiet. He knew the temple authorities and Pharisees wanted to kill him. So he told them he'd go through an ordeal, be killed and, after three days, rise again.

But Peter protested, grabbing him. Jesus saw the others wavering and said, “*Peter, get out of my way! You have no idea how God works.*”

Calling the crowd who was following to join the disciples, Jesus said, “*Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to saving yourself, your true self. What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for?*” (Mark 8:27-38, MSG) Powerful words!

I don't know about you, but I hear Jesus clearly calling us to step outside of our comfort zone. We have to deny our timid selves, our inclination to focus on our own safety and security, avoiding all risk. We have to be willing to take positive risks to follow Jesus.

Transplanting is taking a positive risk. When we leave behind what we know and are comfortable with, that's taking a positive risk. It's not easy. Sometimes, we have to make hard decisions on what to prune; the habits, behaviors or practices that aren't healthy for us, spiritually, mentally, emotionally or physically. It means acknowledging we are vulnerable in all the dimensions of our inner and outer lives.

Sound scary? It is, at first. But there's one, big thing that helps balance the risk: God is with us. God Almighty prepares the road. Jesus shows us the way. The Holy Spirit nudges us onto the path and gives us the energy we need every step of the way. Timothy said, *“God didn't give us a spirit that is timid but one that is powerful, loving, and self-controlled”* (2 Timothy 1:7).

Risk takers change the world and have an impact on others for Christ. When you take a risk by following Jesus, the impact will be felt by others – all the people you are in relationship with and the new people you will meet. Your significant other will see the change and benefit. Your household will benefit. Your family and friends will benefit. Strangers and people you haven't even met will benefit, sometimes without even knowing why or the source.

Taking a positive risk is a good, healthy practice. Here's some encouragement: Eleanor Roosevelt said, “Do one thing every day that scares you.” Jimmy Carter said, “Go out on a limb. That's where the fruit is.” Mario Andretti said, “If things seem under control, you are just not going fast enough.” Wayne Gretzky said, “You'll always miss 100% of the shots you don't take.”³

You get the idea. It's okay to break out of the pot that limits and binds us. We can be transplanted. All we have to do is have courage and trust in God as we take the first, risky steps.

³ <https://media.faith-bible.net/scripture/philippians/taking-risks-for-christ>

The Bible is filled with stories of people taking steps by faith that were risky. Esther risked her life to prevent persecution of her people. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego risked their lives telling King Nebuchadnezzar they wouldn't worship the golden statue. Paul risked his life, over and over again, to share the good news of Jesus. Early Christians were known for their compassion and care. They ministered to sick people and took in orphaned children others left untended.

What chance is Jesus asking you to take? There are positive risks we can take, even in the middle of a pandemic when our energy levels are low. I suggest three areas where you can start:

- **Personal life.** Take up a spiritual exercise like prayer walking or just spend time talking to God for 5 minutes a day. Or you can read a chapter of the Bible. I suggest starting with a Gospel, like Mark. This will connect you to Jesus, the source of life, and feed your soul.
- **Life at home.** Take up a spiritual practice in your household. It could be prayer before a meal or bedtime. Maybe you could read Bible stories to the kids. Or maybe it's having a family gathering once a week where everyone shares how they are feeling and they share any God sightings they had.
- **Life in community.** We aren't isolated and alone. We all live in neighborhoods with people who are struggling and exhausted, just like we are. Reach out and touch a neighbor. Just introduce yourself. Let them know you are thinking about them. Maybe you could invite them to take a walk (with social distancing).

I know these sound difficult. They certainly may take us outside our comfort zone. But that's exactly what Jesus is calling us to do. And, in case you missed it, Jesus calls us to live this way because he knows that not only will others' lives improve; ours will, too.

When we invest part of our life – our time, energy and passion, in the life of another person, there's a return. Truly caring for another person always bears fruit. Both of us are made better, healthier and our relationship grows. That's the power of Jesus' love in action.

What kind of risk will you take for Jesus?

Mark 8:34-38 (CEB)

After calling the crowd together with his disciples, Jesus said to them, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me and because of the good news will save them. Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives? What will people give in exchange for their lives? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Human One will be ashamed of that person when he comes in the Father’s glory with the holy angels.”