

No More Mr Kiasi (Ecclesiastes 11) 24 May'15

You know, there are many today, many world views and philosophies that are anti-God or anti-biblical. For example, you have atheism – the belief that there is no God. There is gnosticism, there is pantheism, there is materialism. These are philosophies that are unbiblical, that are anti-God.

I'm going to introduce to you today one other world view or way of thinking that is anti-God and it is kiasi-ism (laughter in congregation). What is this, pastor? I say kiasi-ism. You say, "What is kiasi-ism?" Well, some of you are not local, I realize that; and some may be hearing us on the internet and you're not from Singapore. Let me tell you that in Singapore, there are three cardinal features of Singaporeans. Singaporeans typically are kiasi, kiasu, kiabor. You can Google what they mean, but today I'm going to focus on kiasi.

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Now, kiasi is so well-known that it is even officially captured on Wikipedia. Don't believe? Look at the screenshot (laughter in congregation). Wikipedia... kiasi from the free encyclopedia. You say, "What is kiasi? How do you define it?" I love the way they define it – so simple, so clear, so accurate.

Kiasi (Chinese: 驚死, 惊死 "jīng1 sǐ3"), hahaha, correct, that's the Chinese reading of it. Hokkien, of course you call it kiasi. It's a Hokkien phrase, it's a language and dialect of the Chinese. It literally means afraid of death, to describe the attitude of being overly afraid or timid. Kiasi is commonly compared to kiasu, which literally is the fear of losing and both are commonly used to describe behaviour where kiasi or kiasi-ism means to take extreme means to avoid risk.

Now, that's where I'll stop. I want to focus on two things about this definition of kiasi. Number 1: Kiasi means you're overly afraid or timid. Number 2: Kiasi means you take extreme means to avoid risk. I believe Solomon is saying to us in Ecclesiastes 11: Don't be kiasi.

You say, "Pastor, are you sure?" Yeah, I think Solomon is telling us, "No more Mr Kiasi. Don't be kiasi anymore." But, are you sure he's going to say that? Well, not really. He didn't use the word kiasi but I'm sure if he came to Singapore and lived amongst us, he will say, after a while observing God's people, "I think this church cannot be too kiasi. It's not a wise way. To live life under the sun, you cannot be overly timid; you cannot take extreme means to avoid risk; you cannot be Mr Kiasi." I

think if we were to get him to share with us his observations, this is what he's going to say. You say, "Pastor, are you sure?" Well, you don't believe, let's look at what he says, alright? In verses 1 to 4, Solomon tells you:

Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.

Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you know not what disaster may happen on earth.

If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth, and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. (Ecclesiastes 11:1-4 ESV)

I'm sure this is not an easy passage on the first reading but let me just bring you verse by verse. It says in verse 1: "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days." You say, "What in the world is this?" The image I have in my mind reading this verse is of my son going to Botanic Gardens pond and throwing the slices of Gardenia bread onto the waters for the turtles to feed on. Is that what it means – getting your bread soggy? Cast your bread upon many waters, upon the waters. No, not necessarily.

Solomon here is talking about agriculture. He's bringing us to the fields. This bread is not your "loti", is not your slices of bread ("loti" is bread in Singaporean Hokkien; it is a Malay loanword). This bread is the corn, the bread corn, wheat that you can actually use for food or you can cast it out, sow it so that after some time, it brings forth a harvest. So he brings us to a time when the floods have subsided; the mud, the soil is wet and ready. So cast your bread corn, you'll find it after many days.

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He is bringing us to the farmer but this farmer is a little bit conservative, in fact, ultra-conservative. This farmer says in verse 4: "He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap." He is someone who is very tentative; he is waiting for the conditions to be absolutely perfect before he will sow. In other words, he's finding all kinds of excuses not to sow.

Solomon says, "Don't be so kiasi; don't be so timid; take some risks." You say, "Why is there risk in sowing?" Very simple. The bread corn is used for food, but if you want to have a greater return for your food, you've got to cast it out. So, if you use the food right now – you consume it, you'll have no more left for the harvest. But if you suffer

a little loss right now – you cast it out, later on, you will have more than what you have in the beginning because you reap what you sow.

So Solomon says, instead of being ultra-conservative, being kiasi and timid, go out and sow. He says, “Give a portion to seven, or even to eight.” (Ecc 11:2) Sow as much as you can; take the necessary risks if you have to. You do not know what disaster may happen on earth (Ecc 11:2). Because you do not know what’s going to happen, take some risks. You are never going to know everything that's going to happen. That’s his point.

If you are this farmer who is always waiting for perfect conditions, you will never get going because you never know when conditions are absolutely perfect. But you ask, “What happens if something goes wrong?” Well, Solomon gives you a very practical advice: *Que sera, sera*; whatever will be, will be. There are a thousand unknowns and if it goes wrong, it goes wrong. But don't let this be an excuse for you not to take risks.

You see, he says, if the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves (Ecc 11:3). There's nothing you can do about it. If the tree falls to the south or to the north, where it falls, there it will lie (Ecc 11:3). You can't do anything about it. That's the way life is. So, if you’re waiting for the perfect condition, or you’re hoping that you can control every circumstance, you will never get to do what you are supposed to do. So Solomon says, in life, you've just got to take some risks. Go cast your bread. He goes on to say:

As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.
(Ecclesiastes 11:5 ESV)

He brings us down to earth. You see, we think we know a lot of things, and this farmer probably thinks, “I got to know a lot of things.” But Solomon says, you don't know a lot of things. You don't even know how pregnancy comes about; you don't even know the foetal development, how it is. Now, I studied medicine and one of the most difficult things to study is the embryonic development. It’s absolutely mind-boggling, seriously. What this that, the blood circulation, twist and ... It's so complicated and it’s just simply describing the process. We don't even know how it really works.

So Solomon says there are so many things you don't know, don't pretend and don't try to be someone who has to know everything. There is someone who knows

everything and that is God. So go, take some risks. Instead of trying to play God, instead of trying to have control and absolute knowledge, take whatever risks are necessary, trusting God through it all.

In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.
(Ecclesiastes 11:6 ESV)

So, in the morning, sow your seed and at evening, withhold not your hand. Do it as often as you can because you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good. So Solomon here is speaking to those who analyse till they paralyse. You know how it is, right? “Errr... I'm not sure whether I should do this. I'm not sure whether I can really take that step. I must be absolutely sure, I must make sure everything is proper.” Solomon says you'll never get doing if you live life that way. You'll never have a fruitful, abundant life. Go, take some risks. Don't be Mr Kiasi. Now, what does this mean to you and I in our lives? Well, I'll come to that soon. But let me end off the exposition in chapter 11 before we come to some conclusions and applications.

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Solomon goes on in verses... Sorry, I need to share with you some modern ways of looking at this (i.e. Ecc 11:6):

“Nothing ventured, nothing gained”

“No risk, no reward”

“You'll miss 100% of the shots you don't take”

And that is Number 1: Nothing ventured, nothing gained – very simple. In life, if you don't try new things, you'll not gain new things. Nothing ventured, nothing gained; or how about this statement: No risk, no reward. We're all familiar with that.

And I like this basketball illustration: You will miss hundred percent of the shots you don't take. Can you imagine that? Aiya, must make sure I'm very near the basket, no defenders around then I shoot. If I'm not like that, I won't shoot. You know what, you can play very well in basketball, pass very well, dribble very well. But you will never win a game if you never take a shot. Agree? I mean, every shot is a risk. But every basketball player knows the more shots I take, the higher chances I will have of winning. You will miss 100% of the shots you don't take. So Solomon says, go sow seven or eight times or twice a day, as much as you can.

Now, let's look at verses 7 and 9. He says:

Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth...

(Ecclesiastes 11:7-9 ESV)

Now we come back to this commonly repeated motive in Solomon's writings in Ecclesiastes. In essence, he says, go enjoy your life. Go for this grateful enjoyment of life under the sun before God. God has given you life; go and enjoy it. Now I think in this chapter, this enjoyment of life linked to what we are looking at, at risk-taking, tells us that part of a journey to the fulfilling life is the willingness to take risks, or to put it another way, to live a life of faith. A life of faith is a life of adventure. A life of faith is one that brings you to its fullness. That's how it is. Our lives are enriched as we take on new things, take on new adventures.

My son, as you know, I bring him to the ..., at least Shawn, in the earlier days, I bring him to Universal Studios and we go to Transformers Ride. Initially, he's very scared but after a while, he enjoys the Transformers Ride. For those who have not been there, it is the best or one of the best rides in USS, for sure. It is so cool. I mean, you have robots that come on, Megatron and Starscream that come on at unexpected times. I mean you thought you have escaped then he comes in front of you. You thought you're gone... you've gone backwards and he turns up behind you. It is scary, it is exciting and there are all kinds of surprises like... water spraying on your face, like heat emitting as he shoots a fireball. There's a great plunge. There's a sucking into this funny mon... (could be monster but pastor probably got caught up with other thoughts and didn't complete the word). All these twists and turns make Shawn so excited. After a while, when he overcomes his fear, he screams, he laughs, he enjoys himself. Why is it so fun? Because the ride takes you on a lot of unexpected thrills.

You know what's life, what's the enjoyment of life, what's the adventure of life when we take risks and not be Mr Kiasi and God takes us on unexpected thrills? When we step out of our comfort zones, when we stop playing God, when we stop saying "I need to know everything", that's where we trust God and that's when God takes us to places we have never been. It's when God says to Peter, "Come, walk on the water."

and he steps out and experiences the supernatural. A life of faith is a life of adventure and excitement.

So in all this, if Solomon is to be sitting on the stage here and we ask him, “Solomon, what advice would you give to Singaporeans today?” Solomon will say to you, “Don't be Mr Kiasi. Go cast your bread upon the waters, you will find it after many days. You'll reap of it after many days.”

Don't be Mr Kiasi. You see, Mr Kiasi talks like this. Mr Kiasi says, “I've got to know everything.” You can't know everything. You don't even know how you are formed in your mother's tummy. “I can't take any risks.” Then you'll never reap anything. “Let's wait for the perfect conditions.” You don't know when it will be. “I must be in control. I've got to depend on myself. We can't just trust God entirely. I've got to stay on top of things. Let's play it safe.” Now, if you talk to Mr Kiasi, this is how he's going to talk to you and speak with you.

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And when I think about Mr Kiasi, I think about the time where the Israelites were at Kadesh Barnea and there they had a very important decision to make. They had sent spies into the Promised Land and a spy said, “Wah, that is a great land, man. ‘Tok kong' ah (means “best” in Singapore colloquialism). You got the milk and honey that flows, the grapes are big and luscious. Beautiful land. God is correct, it is the Promised Land.” But, they go on to say, “The giants are big. The enemies are many. We will not be able to get in.”

Now, there are two there who speak differently. Joshua and Caleb say, “No, God will give it to us. Let's go in but there were ten Mr Kiasis there. The ten Mr Kiasis say to the rest of Israel, “We can never do it. Don't take that risk. We've got to get things right. We've got to know everything. We've got to be waiting for the perfect condition. We can't trust God. We got to stay on top of things. So let's play it safe.” Well, the ten voices outnumber the two voices and the whole of Israel decided on that momentous time. They will retreat in fear. They won't risk it going forward because they've listened to Mr Kiasi.

God is heartbroken that day. God is angry that day and none of them except for Joshua and Caleb would enter the Promised Land subsequently. The whole generation wasted their 40 years wandering in the wilderness. Their carcasses died in the wilderness. You say, “Why?” Because they would not believe God. They would rather believe... They would rather follow the philosophy of Mr Kiasi – extremely

timid and not willing to trust God and take some risks. That's why Solomon here says today, "No more Mr Kiasi. Go cast your bread. Go take some risks." And this is important.

You see, John Piper had a book called "Risk is Right". It's a whole book by the way, but it's a very short book. You can finish it in a couple of hours, it's 64 pages, just a short one. But, it's so interesting. He talks about risk is right. You say, "Why?" Because it's better to lose your life than to waste it. So many of us waste our life, because we just want to play it safe and we don't want to trust God. Piper says it's better for you to lose your life. Take risks, trust God even if it means pain and a cost to yourself.

Tim Challies, on giving an introduction to the book, he says:

"The best life is a risky life.

Really, I am convinced there is not much worth doing that doesn't involve at least some measure of risk.

A lifetime of always making the safest choice is an unrealistically boring and plodding life.

We risk when we love, we risk when we live. To love any person is to risk—it is to risk your heart, to make yourself vulnerable to another. (Added by pastor: "Have you thought about that? To love someone means you have to risk.") To love God is to risk—it is to risk your very life, to make yourself willing to do whatever it is that the Lord commands. (Added by pastor: "That's faith. That's risk. Playing it safe will never please God.")

Simply to live is to risk; we do not know what the next day, or even the next moment will bring. Yet we value our safety and so often run from risk, living our lives within the most comfortable boundaries.

The best life is a risky life."

Now, am I... or you may be asking me, "Pastor, are you telling us to be foolhardy and reckless and careless and laissez-faire?" No, no, not at all. This principle must not be taken in isolation, of course. There is wisdom involved. But what Solomon is addressing is the heart of faithlessness, the inherent temptation for us to want to play God and be faithless in all our ventures. So certainly, a risky life doesn't mean you

unnecessarily endanger yourself or you take unnecessary risks. But if the Lord has led you to it, would you then be willing to step out in faith?

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So Mr Kiasi says a few things, but the people of faith in time past say... talk in a very different way. For example, William Carey, he says, "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." There's risk. Of course, it's life-modelled risk, modelled faith in being a missionary for the kingdom.

Well, that's what Solomon is saying and let me just end by giving you a few closing thoughts on application. So pastor, what kind of risk can I take today? I don't want to be kiasi but what does this look like? If I'm no more Mr Kiasi but I'm more like William Carey, what would it be?

1. Evangelism – Abundantly Sow the Seed

I say to you, take some risk today in evangelism. Take some risk today in evangelism. Evangelism has its risks. You say, "What risks?" Social relational risks, do you know that? I suspect that's why most of us don't share the gospel because we are afraid that when we share the gospel, it may hurt relationship. We may have the ridicule of people: "Ah, you're just a holy man. You're fuddy-duddy in the spiritual things. Oh, you can actually believe Christian teachings?" We are afraid of people laughing at us, mocking us for believing in Jesus Christ. So there are risks you may be persecuted, you may be treated unfairly. But these are risks that God has called us to take.

Some of us excuse ourselves from evangelism by saying, "God, I'll do evangelism but later on, when I have a better relationship with the person. I must wait for the perfect moment, but you know the perfect moment may never come. In fact, your time with your father, your time with your mother, your time with your loved ones may never... may not last that long. But you're still waiting for that perfect moment. Solomon says, go, cast seven or eight times, twice a day, because after many days, you may find it.

God has commanded all of us to be witnesses. You know, sometimes I think our church is too conservative and not be willing to take risks of evangelism. You're so comfortable coming to church, you're so comfortable going through the routines of the Christian life, there is little risk involved in your life, little risk. You play it safe in your office, you play it safe at home, you play it safe with your friends. You don't want to spoil relationship so you don't say a word about your faith. Now, I'm not

saying you become a spoilsport every time you gather with your friends; you say, “I need to preach to you about Jesus. Everybody, listen to me first.” No, I’m not saying that; there is wisdom involved.

What is at hand here is the issue of the heart – the willingness to go out and cast that gospel seed. He’s commanded us; God has given us the great commission. We are the ambassadors of Christ. It is funny when the ambassador for a country is not willing to speak about his own country. Do you know that you’re ambassadors for the kingdom? Represent your kingdom well. Speak well for the cause of Christ.

Go cast some seeds. You know, it may be a tract you give to someone, it may be a word of prayer for someone, it may be a word of witness. But after many days, you may find it. Look back at your lives, how you came to Christ? Isn't it because someone bothered to cast bread, that's why you today are saved and enjoy salvation in Jesus Christ? Somebody cast bread. Would you be the one to cast bread for someone else?

Take some risks. I wish this church, I pray our church, I pray myself, I pray all of us would take more risks. I’m not asking you to go to stock exchange and take risk there. I’m saying, take risk here in what God has commanded you, go share the gospel. Share the gospel in our outreach ministries. Share the gospel in your own Jerusalems. Be casting it liberally.

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2. Community Groups

I say to some of us here in this church, you need to hear this, you need to take risks in community groups. I think in our church, we are very thankful for many of you who are involved in community groups. And in these community groups, you live out the purposes of God: to love one another, to serve one another, to care for one another, to edify one another. You’re living out God's purposes.

But I speak today to the rest of you who are not in community groups. Would you take some risks today in being in a Christian community? Let me say this, this (referring to the church congregation) is not the Christian community we’re talking about, because this is sitting in rows, facing front. When we talk about community, it’s sitting in circles, interacting and supporting one another. I ask you today, do you have these circles in your life?

Now, I know coming into a community group is risky because it's going to cost you time. Singaporeans are so busy. Asking you for one, two hours is like killing you, I know that. But the Bible tells us that we are to practise the one another's. So would you take risks to spend that time? Would you take risks to love? To love someone is risky, to open your heart in the community is risky. But I tell you something, God has called you to risk.

You know, sometimes we are very good at excusing ourselves? At the back of our mind, we know that it is right, it is biblical to be in community groups but we say, "Let me wait for the perfect CG to come along, care group to come along, then I join." There is no perfect care group. Of course, the joke that we always say is, even if it is perfect, after you join it, it is no more perfect.

Or we wait for the perfect moment. You know, I know that it is important to join a care group, but you know my son is now in P1 (primary 1), let me finish his PSLE (primary school leaving examination) first then I join you. Are you serious waiting for the perfect condition? After PSLE, got O-level. After O-level, got A-level. After A-level, got U-degree. After U-degree, got marriage, and after marriage, got children. You'll never, you'll never go out to do things if you're always waiting for the perfect moment. But that's how we are. We are so kiasi – kiasi to spend that time, kiasi to open up our lives that we never get to doing it.

Now, I'm not here trying to sell a program. I've no agenda to say by what time, what percentage of the church must be in care group. That's not the purpose, that's not even my thinking. The question for you today is not about the program, is about the purposes of God for you. Are you living out this aspect, this dimension, this dynamic in your Christian life? You say, "I'm a follower of Jesus, I take his words seriously, I want to be a good Christian, I want to grow, I want to be loyal to Him." Then I ask you today, are you doing this?

My friends, if you go and cast this bread, yes it's risky, you may be hurt in the care group. You will have friction in your care group, but it is worth the risk. After many days, you may find it. You'll find support, love, relationships, encouragement, spiritual guidance, care, like you could never get outside. Why? Because the gospel unites us and gives us a dynamic we would never have anywhere else – where I can be who I am, I can be a sinner, I can be someone who is failing, yet I can receive this unconditional acceptance. This is where in community group, I can serve and give and experience the love of God in me and through me. If all this is foreign to you, it's time for you to take a risk.

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You know, Mr Kiasi will never take Transformers Ride. Mr Kiasi will say, “Eee, so scary. Eee, I may go... I may die in the ride. I may faint in the ride. I may vomit in the ride so I don’t want to go to Transformers Ride.” and whole day, just stand outside Universal Studios. I say to you, are you standing outside the Universal Studios where God has designed you to enjoy and live?

So don't just listen to this message and say, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, don’t be Mr Kiasi.” Take some steps today, folks. Your Christian life has been like this and you’re wondering what more. You’re saying, “God, why can't you do more?” I'm asking you, the Scripture is asking you today, “Why won't you obey more? Why won't you risk it?”

3. Ministry Opportunities – Don’t just go to church. Be the church.

Some of us today need to take risks in ministry – again, such a Gospel Light issue. You know, one of the things I always hear from this church, from our members, “Pastor, why so many people come but always the same people serving?” You all snigger because it's true, right? Amongst yourselves, you talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, “Why always the same people ah? Why the rest never do ah?”

Now, maybe some of us just want to play it safe. It's very safe to worship in Gospel Light, in our services, very safe, in fact, super “shiok” (an expression of satisfaction in Singapore colloquialism) – carpark free, food is provided, air-con place, hotel setting and I can come and go. So good! Better than cinema, cinema still \$10... How much is it now? \$12 or... weekend \$12. Wah, today weekend, you know? You don’t even have to pay \$12 to come! So safe! Is that church? No, totally miss the point. So many of us, so many Christians today totally miss the point. We always say we go to church. No such thing in the Bible. You don’t go to church – we are the church! It’s right, we are the church and the church serves one another.

How tragic it is that if the next decade, two, three decades of your life, you only come to church. You know, something is way off. All of us, the Bible says, are part of the body. And there is this hand that doesn't work at all; whole life of this body, doesn't work, just doesn't make sense. Take some risks to serve God. Serve in the ministries, serve one another. You say, “I don’t want to serve because if I serve, I got to spend time and effort and you know, I got to work with people again. I don’t like to work with people because always got problems. I just want to stay off. I don’t want to take risk. I want to play it safe.” I'm sorry but I don’t see that in the Bible.

I can understand why you would think like this because you might have bad experiences in the past. But isn't Jesus worth you taking risk and even suffering hurts again? Do you value your own life so much more than what Jesus has done for you? Step out, cast some seeds and you know what, you may be a big blessing to people and you yourself will be blessed. You will discover your gifts. You will grow. You will be able to... you make a difference for Jesus' sake, and you have that joy that you will never have, if you have not taken this adventure ride.

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4. Giving to God

I say to you, some of us need to take risk in giving. This is so relevant for us. Most of us give conveniently, don't you think? There are years of your life where we give easily, conveniently. So we look at our finances and we say, "Lord, this is what I need for my housing, my car, my holidays, my kids' tuition, the food, daily expenses and now I have this much left and out of this much, I just give you 10%." In other words, we are so prepared for everything else, and then we give what is safe to God. Now, that is not taking risks. That is not faith-giving. Faith-giving is not just about regular giving. It's about sacrificial giving. It's about saying, "God, I'm not sure how this is going to work. But if this is what you want me to give, I'll give trusting you.

Now, please understand, we are not a church that wants to fleece you of money, we're not here to squeeze you of money. I'm asking you to consider this factor or ingredient in your giving. Are you giving out of faith to a degree where you have to say, "God, you have to work, otherwise this is not going to make it. I don't understand how this is... how you have led me to give, but I trust you that you will make ends work, make ends meet."

I love the way Paul wrote to the church at Macedonia – how, out of an extreme poverty, they gave. And Paul says, not only did they give, but I am confident God will supply all their needs. That's faith-giving. Have you experienced God's provisions in your life, in a supernatural, amazing way? If you have not, maybe it's because you've never stepped out of your comfort zone anyway. It's all so padded. So this is a very challenging point from Solomon, isn't it, if we start to apply it to the various aspects of our lives. The Scripture tells us:

Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves

with him.

(Psalm 126:5-6 ESV)

“Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy.” You’ll never know the thrill of the Christian life until you're willing to sow in tears. You’ll never know the thrill of evangelism until you go out, risking your personal status or relationship. You’ll never know the blessing of that community until you open your heart. You’ll never know the blessing of serving God until you take that risk to try a ministry you’ve never tried before. You never know the joy of God being Jehovah-Jireh until you give in a way that takes you out into the supernatural. Take some risks, would you?

Our Punggol dream is a story of risk, it is. It is a story that brings us back to Kadesh Barnea, don't you think? I've shared this before: Punggol is like our Promised Land flowing with milk and honey, flowing with hundreds of thousands of people, flowing with people who are young and dynamic and upwardly mobile, a population that we would love to serve. And I think God has prepared this church to serve. There are so few churches in Punggol in the northeast part of Singapore that I consider this a wonderful opportunity for any church here in Singapore.

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But we stand at the threshold of Kadesh Barnea and sometimes, we can hear the voices of Mr Kiasi: “Wah, \$40 million and more than that. Wah, do you know that there are other big churches with bigger accounts that could have outbid us? Wah, this church doesn't even have a building committee – no expertise at all, sure die.” You know when we visited other churches and we speak with their admin people, and when they asked us what's our set-up like – who are the people, they say, “Tsk tsk tsk tsk tsk, wah, you all really need to pray. You all ‘jia-lat’ (a Hokkien phrase which means very terrible)...” I mean, to be honest, at that point of time, we’ve never dreamt of this, we’ve never tried anything like this. So of course, we never assembled a team that has all the wah, this kind of... You know in big churches, they have people of all kinds of industry – construction line, owners, bosses of construction firms; we have zero. So they look at us and they... “All the best,” they say.

We have every odd against us, seriously. We have \$0 or maybe one or two million at that point of time, because of the previous bid, in our bank account for this whole project. And we hear of how... Aiya, why bother to get such an expensive thing and why don't we just rent for the rest of our life because it's safer that way?

But I'm thankful for a church where the leaders say, "We perceive this is what God wants us to do. This is the abundant land." I mean, it has never occurred in Singapore where a same piece of land for church is released in the same estate within a year, never. Now, of course, we failed in the first bid, but that makes it all the more miraculous, don't you think? We failed the first one, we bid so high, we went for the second one at 60% of the original and we got it. If God is not in this, I do not know what else. If God is not in this, we would not have raised the funds necessary in the various stages. If God is not in this, we would not have a great team today that manages this project. God is in this and I'm glad for this church that has followed the Joshuas, the Calebs into the journey of the Promised Land.

I say to you today, we're not quite there yet. We've been talking about the building, the cost but we're not quite there yet. I'm challenging you today to take even more risks. Would you be willing to take more risk together with us that in one and a half years' time when we go to Punggol, we will risk ourselves in serving the "Punggolites"? Each one of us stepping out of our comfort zone, not just coming for services, not just going to Punggol but we're there to serve people, to make yourself vulnerable, say hi. I know saying hi to people makes you vulnerable because the person may say... (pastor made a facial expression of silent treatment). There are some people like that. I'm sorry, there are just people like that but you took a risk, you took a risk for Jesus' sake. Yes, that person may not have reciprocated your affection, your kindness but that's fine. You do it for Jesus.

Would you be willing to be someone to serve tables when... You know when we go Punggol, we're going to have lots of meals being served? Hau Chun is going away for a year to rest so that after that, she'll labour and slog like a dog for the rest of her life. There'll be lots of meals to serve, there'll be lots of carpark needs, a lot of ushering needs, a lot of welcoming needs. I ask you, would you be willing to take risks like that? Give of your time – go to Punggol, don't just go for services, go for services and go to serve. Would you take risks?

Timestamp 0:43:16.6

You know I hear of people saying today, "Oh, Punggol too far lah, don't want to go already lah." I understand it is far, it is; there's no denying it is far. But will you take risk to say, even if it's far, it's fine. I'm not doing it for myself; I'm doing it for Jesus Christ. My friends, Punggol is about God, it's not about you. If we think Punggol is a nice country club for us, we have missed the point.

Punggol is for the gospel of Jesus Christ. I ask you, would you be willing to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel? No more comfortable, casual, convenient Christianity, but a cross-centred, Christ-centred Christianity. You say, "Pastor, wah, you're very demanding today. You tell us to evangelise, to go care group, to serve Punggol, give... This is too much." Is it really too much? Do we take Jesus' words seriously? I tell you, He's telling us to take a huge risk. In fact, I don't even think this is a risk. This is the reality. He says:

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

(Matthew 16:24 ESV)

"If you want to come after me, you must deny yourself and take up your cross." I don't think I'm asking too much because this is what Jesus tells us. Following Jesus is never easy, never pain-free, never that comfortable. You have to deny yourself. Jesus says, "Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Following Jesus is a downright scary thing, do you know that? If you really follow Jesus, it's scary. You can bid farewell to your casual, comfortable, convenient Christianity, bid farewell to all these earthly clutches you've been hanging on, these worldly things that you've been clinging on. You can say sorry, bye-bye to them.

But I tell you, Jesus is worth it. You will find it after many days, like what Jim Elliot has to say, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." You'll never lose. You'll realise that if we seek first the kingdom of God, all these things will be added to us. We'll realise that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Take that risk. He strengthens you. You will realise that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and you will realise:

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

(Mark 8:35 ESV)

God's kingdom is often full of paradox. If you want to save your life, you've got to lose it. You say, "Why, why should I do this?" Because Jesus gave his life for you and Jesus took your cross for you. So dear Gospeliters, today, would you take the cross of Jesus in a sense, deny yourself, follow after him? Would you today take some risks and let God be God in your life? Let's bow for a word of prayer.

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The voice of Mr Kiasi is very, very loud in this world. It's loud even in our own hearts. And it's so difficult for us today to lose control, because we want to make sure ourselves. There is this incurable tendency to want to play God. But my friends, maybe this morning, it's time for you to say, "Let God be God. I am not God. He is and He's worthy of my worship, He's worthy of me forsaking myself to follow in his footsteps."

Maybe this morning, God would have you take some risks. What would it be, folks? What would it be for you? Is God placing you in a group of people that you know need the gospel but you've been afraid to say even a word for Jesus, because you are afraid that they will laugh at you, afraid that they may say you are such a bigot? My friends, when you share the gospel, they may really say that, they may and probably will. But Jesus is worth it. And I tell you, because of that seed you sow, maybe many days later, you will find it again. Today, many of you are here because someone was willing to sow that seed, you realise that? Someone was willing to take that risk for you. Would you be willing to take that risk as well?

I say to you, if you have been in church service for a long time but you're not in community, you're not being in the will of God, I know that because the Bible tells me so. Be committed to a community not just because you like that person or you are chummy with them, but you're in a care group, you're in a community group because the gospel unites us. And you live out that commitment to one another because of Jesus Christ. Yes, you'll be hurt. Yes, you may be laid vulnerable. But you do it for Jesus' sake and the beautiful thing is that when you take such risks, you will be the one who is better off at the end of it all. You'll be blessed, you'll be encouraged, you'll be supported, you'll grow, you will serve, you will be strengthened.

May Gospel Light be a church where everybody shines. I pray today, you'll take some risk in ministry. Let us know if you want to serve, let us know if you want to pursue some areas of ministry. Don't just sit on your chairs, on your blessed assurance week after week.

I want to challenge you on your giving. I want to challenge you on the way we give, for your own personal soul, to see the reality of God. It's not easy to see God in comfortable Singapore. We're so well-provided. We almost have to ask, "Why do I even need God?"

Maybe friends, you're here today for the first time and I want to speak a few words to you as well. You come because you want to know God. You have maybe even heard the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ dying for your sins. But you're afraid to take that risk to becoming a Christian, a follower of Jesus and so you say to yourself, "I want to wait for that perfect moment." I say, the perfect moment is now. The Scriptures tell us, "Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." The reality is you do not know what's going to happen tomorrow. So take that risk, repent of your sin, trust Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And may God bless you and draw you to Jesus, His Son.

Father, we come to you this morning. Simple message today, but help us to be doers and not just hearers. Help us today, not to be a people that are ruled by fearfulness, but a people of faith who will look at Your Word and trust You and obey You. Lord, radically change our mind-sets. Help us to step out into the adventure of life with You. Lord, You know the needs of our hearts this morning. I present, I pray, we pray together for each one of us that there will be changes in our lives, there'll be risk-taking in our lives, that as we step out of the boat of our lives, we will see You. We thank you for this hour. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.