

Strange Things

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[0 : 00] Melissa is a real risk taker. When she graduated from university, she decided to do this.

That's what she decided to do. Great. Cover the lights back. Now, Melissa is a bit of a risk taker.

When we went to Movie World last year, she was interested in only one thing. Lethal weapon. Now, lethal weapon is an insane ride for insane people.

You get strapped into this seat with no carriage around you. Your legs dangle down underneath you while you do corkscrew flips. And vertical dives that plunge you deep beneath the earth.

And all this is done at scorching speed. How can anyone enjoy that? Now, you'd gather from those comments that I'm not a risk taker.

[1 : 15] When I went to Movie World, I was interested in only one thing. Avoiding lethal weapon. I tried really hard when we got there to convince Mel that the Looney Tunes kiddies park was much more fun.

I also tried to convince Mel that the Batman car was worth a couple of hours of photos and jumping in and stuff like that. You see, I tried to avoid lethal weapon when I went to Movie World.

But in the end, Mel wouldn't be persuaded otherwise. And we started to walk off towards lethal weapon. And I began to hear the screams of joy as the monstrosity came into view.

And I completely freaked out. I just said to Mel, there is no way I'm going on that. Well, Mel just ignored my comment and gleefully skipped off and joined the end of the line, leaving me behind.

And for the next hour, I watched Melissa go on it three times. Her assessment of the ride after we walked away was tame.

[2 : 25] Lethal weapon was tame. You see, when it comes to jumping out of aeroplanes and scary rides, Melissa is the ultimate risk taker. I wonder, are you a risk taker?

Because Jesus met a risk taker. Once, when he was in one of the cities, there was a man covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed down his face to the ground and begged him, Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.

Last year, the neighbours crew were here filming here at Holy Trinity. I think it was a wedding or a burning down of the church, one of those. And there were lots of actors here, lots of famous people.

And I really wanted to go over and meet some of them and chat to them, but I'm not a risk taker when it comes to famous people either. I mean, what would I say to them?

Nice weather. What would I do? Can you sign this? I mean, what would they do?

[3 : 35] They'd probably call security and throw me off the set, even though I work at this church.

You see, it's a bit risky meeting famous people. That's why people sort of point and whisper as famous people walk past.

Few people actually have the courage to go up and approach them and talk to them. But this leper takes the risk, doesn't he?

You see, Jesus was really famous. He was a superstar in Israel. In Israel, prophets were a big, big deal. Jesus was a new mega guru on the scene, a new mega guru prophet that people wanted to follow around and listen to and watch.

Many even considered him the Messiah, the one to save Israel from Roman occupation. And as far as superstar status goes, Jesus was way bigger than David Beckham.

Way bigger. How dare a leper come up to anyone, anywhere near Jesus? How dare he?

[4 : 47] You see, lepers weren't allowed to go near anyone, let alone an important prophet and superstar like Jesus. You see, lepers had to yell out, unclean, unclean, when people approached them so that people could go the other way and not be infected.

You see, lepers were to be avoided at all costs. And because they were to be avoided, they couldn't go to the temple to make sacrifices. They couldn't join in worship with other people.

They couldn't enjoy a close relationship with God because they were to be avoided, like the plague. I don't know if you've ever seen a person with leprosy.

I've got a couple of pictures. And it's not nice. And if you don't like seeing this sort of thing, turn away or close your eyes, but here they are.

It's not nice, is it?

[6:01] Can you understand? Can you understand how gutsy this leper is? How much of a risk taker he is?

To approach Jesus, the superstar, like that. You see, he sort of makes Melissa look like a little bit of a wimp now, doesn't he? But this guy's desperate.

He's desperate to be healed. You see, he knew that Jesus could heal him. That's not the problem. He knew that Jesus could do it. The problem is this.

He's not sure whether Jesus wants to heal him. Listen carefully to what he says. Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.

If you choose. You see, he thinks, why would Jesus want to clean me, make me clean and heal me? I'm a leper. I'm a disgrace. I'm to be avoided at all costs.

[7:02] Surely Jesus will avoid me like the plague. Surely Jesus will avoid me like all the others have avoided me in my life. Ignore me and reject me.

And even though he thinks that, he still approaches. He still takes the risk. Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him and said, I do choose.

Be made clean. Immediately the leprosy left him. Who's the risk taker now? You see, Jesus doesn't avoid the leper.

He doesn't ignore him like the plague. He doesn't avoid him like everyone else. Because Jesus is the ultimate risk taker, isn't he? He reaches out and he touches this leper.

The untouchable leper. Who's the risk taker now? You see, the point of this passage is that it's never risky approaching Jesus.

[8:09] Never risky. Because he's the ultimate risk taker. Because Jesus will always say, I do choose. I do choose to make you clean. I do choose to accept you.

I do choose to love you even though you're untouchable. I do choose to touch you even when you think you're untouchable.

You see, it's never risky approaching Jesus. But Jesus does more than just clean this guy and cleanse him. He doesn't just restore this leper to health.

He does a lot more. Recently, I went to the motor show about a month ago. And the part I liked the most at the motor show was all the old restored cars.

It was fantastic. There were XU1 Tarans, which my dad had when I was only small. And it brought back these great memories of dad sort of bagging it up on the Mulgrave freeway while I was in the back of the car.

[9:12] There were GT Falcons restored. Old Fords from the 1920s that looked like they needed horses to draw them. There were Ferraris and Lamborghinis from the 40s, 50s and 60s.

Great racing cars. That was great. They were amazing because someone had found these old cars, probably in a junkyard somewhere, all rusted out. And they'd stripped them back.

And they'd handmade new parts because you can't get new parts anymore. And they'd slowly restored them back to mint condition, brand new, shiny. And then they proudly jumped in their car and drove it down to Jeff's shed to the motor show.

And with great joy, they presented their gleaming cars, their restored cars to anyone who wanted to have a look, everyone who came to the motor show, proudly showing them off.

Look at what Jesus does. And he ordered him to tell no one. Go, he said, and show yourself to the priests. And as Moses commanded, make an offering for your cleansing for a testimony to them.

[10:20] You see, Jesus doesn't just restore this leper. He doesn't just heal him. He presents him to the priests.

He presents him to God. And ultimately presents him to everyone. Restored. Able to go to the temple and make offerings to God again.

Able to worship with everyone else. But for us tonight, we often think it's risky approaching Jesus. We think our lives are so messed up that Jesus, well, he can't really handle it.

We often think that our lives are too ugly for Jesus to see. We often think that our lives are so dysfunctional that Jesus surely can't fix them completely.

But Jesus says to all of us who take the risk, I do choose. Be made clean. Go and show yourself for a testimony to them.

[11 : 27] It's never risky approaching Jesus for anything. No matter how messed up it is. No matter how ugly it is.

No matter how dysfunctional it is. Because he's the ultimate risk taker. He stretches out and he touches us, even when we're untouchable. And he shows this ultimately, most clearly when he dies. So that you and I can be cleansed of all our mess and our ugliness and dysfunction in our lives. He takes that on himself. And he dies so that we can be presented to God perfect again.

He dies so that you and I can be a testimony to others. Jesus doesn't only restore us. He proudly presents us to everyone.

Proudly presents us to God. Tonight, we need to be risk takers. That's the point. Just like the leper.

[12 : 34] We need to approach Jesus with all the stuff that's down deep in us. That we think that he can't handle. All the mess, the ugliness and the dysfunction.

Lord, you can make me clean. But now more than ever, the word about Jesus spread abroad. Many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases.

Tonight, if you're a risk taker, if you've already approached Jesus and asked for healing in your life. If you've approached Jesus and trusted in his death and resurrection for you.

Then you need to continue to be a risk taker. Just like Damien. Damien was a Roman Catholic priest at the turn of the last century.

Damien took the risk of serving in a leper colony in Hawaii on an island called Molokai. Here's a clip from a movie about Damien.

[13 : 45] frapl In the name of the Father, and the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Father!

Hello! Could I be your altar boy? In my village I was one. Yeah, that would be a wonderful help. I wouldn't have to touch the chalice, or anything. No, no. Should I come tomorrow? Yeah. Well, let's agree, formally.

Do it it, in God willing. Father!

[15 : 26] you see like Jesus Damien was a risk taker wasn't he he devoted his life to serving lepers he devoted his life to loving them he devoted his life to reaching out and touching them he didn't avoid them he didn't ignore them like the plague he didn't reject them like everyone else and many of those lepers on Molokai became risk takers as well they asked Jesus to heal their lives they asked Jesus to deal with the mess and ugliness in their own lives and he did and they were cleansed maybe not physically but emotionally and spiritually they were cleansed they were able to approach God again clean in his sight you see Damien was willing to take the risk he was willing to take the ultimate risk because in the end he dies in order to reach and touch the untouchable in the end that's exactly what Jesus does for you and me doesn't he he dies in order to reach out touch and cleanse the untouchable you and me you see when Jesus reached out and touched the leper look what happened more people than ever came to hear Jesus many crowds would gather and be cured of their diseases when Damien took a risk that same thing happened tonight are you a risk taker do you reach out and touch the untouchable in your lives do you reach out to the kids in the schoolyard who have no friends girls do you reach out to the girl who gets all the gossip slagged off at her behind her back guys do you reach out and touch the kid who looks different and gets picked on do we reach out to our work colleagues that everyone else hates and ignores do we reach out to the ones standing in the pickering room or by themselves after church do we reach out to the poor family down the street they're doing it tough are you a risk taker like Jesus tonight take the risk approach Jesus because he can make it clean he's the ultimate risk taker for you and me and continue to be a risk taker so at quick in the process don't you know what the time

Thank you.