"Spread both your wings, / O Jesus, my joy, / and take your chick. / If Satan wants to devour me, / let the angels sing: / This child shall be unharmed." These words come from an evening hymn by Paul Gerhardt.

Paul Gerhardt was a Protestant-Lutheran theologian and is considered one of the most important German-language hymn writers, during the Thirty Years' War. His songs bear witness to deep faith in an unreal world. In a world that was characterized by war and suffering in Europe. A world in which half of the population was killed by the consequences of war, such as epidemics and famine. A world from which he could not escape.

Perhaps you know the saying: No life without risk. I think that applies to all of us. Just as it was for Martin Luther, Paul Gerhardt or Jesus. Because Jesus also took a risk when he could not and did not want to escape his fate.

As children, we took it even further to the extreme.
No risk - no fun. These words were a kind of motto in my youth. No risk - no fun. If our parents or grandparents wanted to warn us about something, this was a popular answer.

Other examples: A friend says to his friend: If you keep working like this, you'll soon burn out. He replies: I have to keep working like this, otherwise I'll lose my job. - A meteorologist says to an extreme mountaineer: If you want to climb that mountain today, you'd better make your will beforehand,

because there's a storm coming. He replies: I love the risk. A doctor says to a famous pop singer: You won't make it through this tour; you're only keeping your head above water with stimulants. She replies: If I stop the tour now, I can forget about my career. Some Pharisees said to Jesus, who had come dangerously close to Jerusalem: "Get up and leave here, because Herod wants to kill you." Jesus replied to them: "I must walk today and tomorrow and the next day, for it is unacceptable for a prophet to perish outside Jerusalem."

The question is this: When is it worth taking a risk? This question always arises particularly urgently when there is a risk to life and limb. Anyone who finds themselves in such a situation should not avoid this question, but should face it seriously. So when is it worth taking a risk to life and limb? Some people answer: Never! But then no one will become a firefighter or a police officer. Even Jesus would have acted irresponsibly recklessly when he traveled with his disciples to Jerusalem, where his enemies were just waiting to kill him.

The answer "never" is therefore not correct - nor is the answer "always". Anyone who throws every warning to the wind and always goes to the limit is tempting God, and that is bad.
We therefore need a differentiated answer to the question: when is it worth taking a risk? We can first ask our reason, with which God has equipped us not least for such cases.

Reason answers: it is always not worth risking your life if it is only to satisfy your sporting or artistic ambitions. And it's probably not a good idea to work yourself to death just so that my boss earns more and my job is secure. It's more worth the risk if you can help people in need and possibly

save them from mortal danger. If we look to Jesus, there is also an answer that goes beyond the answers of reason. Jesus said: "I must walk today and tomorrow and the next day" - that is, I must continue walking until I reach Jerusalem, right in the lion's den. Behind the word "must" is the will of the heavenly Father. Jesus could also have said: It is the will of my heavenly Father that I travel to Jerusalem now and lay down my life there for the redemption of mankind. Jesus knew the divine imperative behind his mission, and this clearly answered the question of whether he should put himself in this danger or rather flee from it.

Of course, Jesus couched the reasons for his decision in such strange words that we need to take a closer look at them. Because he was on a journey, he used the footpath as a parable for his entire life's journey or for God's path of salvation with us humans. He said: "Behold, I cast out evil spirits and heal today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will be perfected." Jesus has already been able to work, preach and heal in public for two years. Now, in the third year, it is his turn to suffer and die according to God's will. "I will be perfected", said Jesus, using the same vocabulary that came out of his mouth as the last word on the cross: 'It is finished' or 'it is finished' (John 19:30). Jerusalem had to be the place where he completed the work of salvation - not only through his death on the hill of Golgotha, but also through his resurrection on the third day and his ascension into heaven. The city of Jerusalem is a symbol of God's people in God's presence.

Jesus completed his path of salvation in Jerusalem so that all people could be reconciled with the Father through him and belong to his people forever. When a Jew made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at that time, he was traditionally greeted at the temple with psalm 118:26: "Blessed is he who

comes in the name of the Lord!" Jesus himself was also greeted in this way when he finally entered Jerusalem after a long journey, riding on a donkey: "Blessed is he who comes, the King, in the name of the Lord!" is written in Luke 19:38. This is why Jesus predicted to the warning Pharisees who had come to him from Jerusalem: "You will not see me again until the time comes when you will say, 'Blessed is he who is coming! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" But here, too, there is a deeper meaning beneath the parable of his journey: At the end of his entire journey on earth, he returns triumphantly to God's eternal temple, to his heavenly home, where he is received by the angels. And because he has then completed the work of salvation, he will bring all those who trust in him into this heavenly temple. After the Last Judgement, he will say to them: "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world!" is what we can read in Matthew 25:34.

What a glorious goal! Jesus took his difficult path of suffering upon himself for this goal. However, what troubled him most on this journey was not the impending torment. Rather, it was the knowledge that many people would reject his redemption - including people from God's ancient covenant people Israel, including inhabitants of the holy city of Jerusalem. He said: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you, how often have I wanted to gather your children together like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing!"

Yes, prophets had often announced God's Redeemer and called for faith in him. Now that the Redeemer was really there, the leading Jews rejected him and even sought his life. We experience the same thing today in the so-called Christian West, but especially in Central Germany, the cradle of

the Reformation: Jesus has to put up with a lot of disrespect, contempt or mockery. Yes, he suffered and suffers from this most of all.

But greater than the suffering is the joy that he has redeemed us. Out of love for the heavenly Father and for us, he walked the difficult path to the bitter end. He did not give up until what brings us to God and lets us live with him forever was completed and accomplished. He takes us with him on a journey that is often difficult and painful, but which will end where it says: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" So, if it is God's will, we will confidently walk even those paths that pose a danger to life and limb. And when we are completely despondent, when our faith is small and our worries are great, he comforts us with this wonderful image: he gives us security with himself, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. That is why we can pray undaunted throughout our lives, as Paul Gerhardt wrote in one of his evening hymns: "Spread out both your wings, / O Jesus, my joy, / and take in your chick. / If Satan wants to devour me, / let the angels sing: / This child shall be unharmed."