

Sermon 020115 Superbowl
Scripture John 6:1-13
Sermon Title- The Biggest Game

Okay, raise your hand if you will be watching the Superbowl tonight. All right! Now, raise your hand if you will be rooting for the Patriots. Great, I'm in the right church. I gotta tell ya, I am so excited about this game tonight. This is unbelievable. Personally, I have, let's say, a long history with the Patriots. In 1960, the very first time in their history, the Boston Patriots of the old AFL took the field was in a preseason game at Veterans Memorial Stadium in Quincy and 9-year-old Jimmy Conley from Weymouth was in the stands with my Dad. They were trying to drum up interest and gave out free tickets in local bars and my Dad got two tickets. It's hard to remember after the last 15-20 years, but I followed the Pats through the times when they were the laughing stock of the league. I was there in 1986 at Superbowl XX in New Orleans when the Chicago Bears squeaked out a victory over the Pats.

Now, maybe the biggest bust on my local sports Mount Rushmore is TB 12, along with old number 9, Larry, Russell, Pedro, and Bobby Orr. What a great ride it's been. Tonight will be tough but don't bet against the Pats.

Now, a question to be asked on this auspicious day is, "Why do we care?" "What's the big deal?" Should we care about sports and who wins and loses? Non-sports fans and even casual sports

fans laugh at people like me and say, “It’s only a game.” Well, it’s not. Why are sports so important?

Some kids play in sports leagues that don’t keep score and don’t have winners and losers. I’ll tell you right now, I disagree with that. In this life, there are times when all of us, will have the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. We learn more from our failures than our victories. Failing at something does not make you a failure. Losing does not make you a loser. In life, it is not the falling down, it’s the getting back up that counts the most. We don’t get better if we don’t make mistakes. It happens in school, which is why they have grades. It happens in college, in the workplace, and in recreation. Competition is a huge part of life. The playing field is a place where we can learn how to win and learn how to lose at a young age.

Practice your game and you’ll get better. That’s the way it is, my friends. There’s a word that some people don’t like but is one of the best words in the English language. The word is discipline. It means controlling what you do and how you do it. If you are disciplined in your practice, not just in the time spent but also in concentrating on correcting your mistakes and improving your game, you’ll get better. You may never be great at the game, but you will improve. But if you learn discipline in one thing, you can apply discipline in other parts of your life and you’ll get better

there, too. There are a million stories about great players practicing over and over and over... Michael Jordan shooting hoops under a street light, Tiger Woods, putting until he couldn't see the cup, Tom Brady throwing a football through a tire hanging from a tree until he couldn't lift his arm. It's not just sports. You want to be good at playing the piano? Play the piano; learn from your teacher and then play some more.

Another big way to get better is to absorb coaching. Coaches and teachers are there to help you get better. Listen to them and try to do what they say. It will definitely help. A famous line from coaches is, "Keep your eye on the ball." That works. One of my favorite coaching stories was from the great sports movie, *Hoosiers*, starring Gene Hackman. He was the coach of a high school basketball team in Indiana, where high school basketball is king. The team got to the state tournament, which was played in the Hoosier dome, where the NBA Indiana Pacers played. The team had only played in high school gyms and then they walked in to the arena. Their jaws dropped at the 16,000 seats and they looked scared to death. The coach had someone get a ladder and a tape measure. He had them measure the distance from rim of the basketball hoop to the floor. It was 10 feet, the same as the court in their home high school gym. They were there to play basketball on a regulation basketball court. They knew how to do that.

That's all they needed to focus on. Listen to your coaches and teachers.

Another important thing in sports is teamwork. Sometimes you do things on a team that you don't necessarily want to do but helps out the team. When you sacrifice yourself to help your team, it feels great. You become part of something bigger than yourself. When you give your all, when you do your very best to help your team, there are very few things that feel that good.

It is called team spirit. There are some amazing players on the New England Patriots whose names you may not know. Dan Connolly, Nate Solder, and Sebastian Vollmer are some of their names. They are offensive linemen that are among the best in the world at what they do. What they do is protect Tom Brady so that he can throw those amazing passes that win games. Those guys are in the trenches, getting beat on by big and mean guys without people knowing their names because they are part of a team with a job to do. They contribute to something bigger than themselves, the team. Even if people don't know their names, they give of themselves to the best of their abilities and the team wins. We heard the story from John's Gospel of the feeding of the five thousand this morning. A boy gives all that he's got, two fish and five barley loaves. When he gave all he had he inspired others and guess what, a miracle happened? Everyone ate and there was lots

left over. When we give of ourselves for the greater good, we contribute to something bigger than ourselves. When we do that, we become more than ourselves, we are connected to something that lives beyond. That's when we win as people and as a team. You don't have to be the star to be an important part of the team.

Not only that, you don't even have to be on the team. You contribute when you are a fan of the team. When you root for the team, when you support them you somehow make them do better. This is true when you root for your school and it will be true tonight.

Now, what does all of this talk have to do with church, or being a Christian? Everything. The biggest game will not start at 6:00 tonight. The biggest game starts right now. Maybe it's time to ask yourself, "What kind of a person am I? Have I learned discipline in my schoolwork and practices? Do I learn from my mistakes or do I continue to repeat them. What kind of a teammate am I in the game of life? Do I help others whenever I can? Do I feel that I'm connected to something much bigger than myself?"

Do I live like Jesus calls me to live? Do I help others in need? Am I giving and forgiving? Am I compassionate? Do I love people that I don't necessarily like? Do I live up to the title Christian?

I'll tell you; I'll be rooting like crazy for the Patriots tonight to pull off an amazing victory. But, I'm rooting for you even more. I'm rooting for you to become the person that God wants you to be. I'm rooting for you to give of yourself, to lose some, to win some, but to be connected with others. To live a strenuous life, to meet life's challenges and to believe in whom you are and what you are doing. I'm rooting for you to get into the game and give it all you've got. I'm rooting for you to be a great teammate. The biggest game is the game of life. And when you decide which side you want to play on in the game of life, you want to be on God's side. Oh, and one more thing... Go Pats! AMEN