

Team – Player or Spectator

Prayer

Good Morning!

This morning I want to ask a question right off the bat.

Do you feel like a part of the team here at our church or a spectator?

Let's think about that for a minute. Am I a team player or am I just a spectator?

If I am a team player... Why?

If I am a spectator... Why?

Consider in May of 1953 the team of Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. If these two names seem familiar there is a really good reason. They were the first men in history to climb to the top of Mount Everest. They ascended and upon reaching the summit, achieved international fame. Most people know of this famous event, even if the details are a bit sketchy in their minds.

Now on the way down from the 29,000 foot summit, Edmund Hillary started to fall. He most certainly would have fallen to his death, but Tenzing Norgay seeing Hillary start to fall immediately dug in his ice-axe and secured the rope between them and thereby saving Hillary's life.

At the base camp the international press made a huge fuss about Tenzing the Sherpa guilds heroic action that undoubtedly saved Hillary's life. A lot of people would have soaked up the adulation of the media, but this was not what Tenzing did. He remained calm and professional. In fact, he hardly understood the fuss. He was asked repeatedly what happened and why. Tenzing had one simple answer to all of the questions. He said: "Mountain climbers always help each other. To him it was a simple reality..."

Now when we consider what Tenzing did and said we as Christians should observe the lesson here. Just as there is a reality that mountain climbers must help each other so too we in the body of Christ have a simple reality. We who are in the body of Christ MUST help each other... I would go even further and say that we must help others regardless of religious affiliation, philosophy or belief.

- 1) When someone has slipped and fallen we must take action
- 2) We must help those around us bear their burdens, problems, issues, struggles and so on
- 3) We must maintain a proper perspective on who we ourselves are

Let's look at the first point... Just like the mountain climbers, when someone has slipped and fallen we must take action. The real question is what action should be taken?

Let's examine Tenzing's approach...

He decides to dig in and secure himself. He then takes action to secure the one falling. No condemnation results, no ridicule for slipping, no glory seeking. No he just saved his team member because he should.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 13 starting at verse 1 and proceeding from there down to verse 8 (CEV)

*What if I could speak all languages of humans and of angels?
If I did not love others, I would be nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

*What if I could prophesy and understand all secrets and all knowledge?
And what if I had faith that moved mountains?
I would be nothing, unless I loved others.*

*What if I gave away all that I owned and let myself be burned alive?
I would gain nothing, unless I loved others.*

*Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude.
Love isn't selfish or quick tempered.
It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do.*

*Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil.
Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting.
Love never fails!*

Now I want to focus here on that fact that this is a lesson on how we treat, communicate, instruct and correct others. Let's examine Verses 4-8a again, this time from another translation. After all we don't want to be biased by our paraphrase, let's examine a direct translation of these scriptures: (HCSB)

Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not conceited, does not act improperly, is not selfish, is not provoked, and does not keep a record of wrongs. Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Let's say one of our friends is struggling in their walk and is backsliding a bit.

Do we in our fit of righteous indignation use the scripture to save the brother from hell by our moral pronouncements? Do we whip them back into line with our vast knowledge of scripture? Humm... look again.

We serve the God of love.

What are the characteristics of Love?

It is Patient

It is kind

It endures all things

It believes all things

It hopes all things

It rejoices in the truth

It never ends

It does not envy

It is not boastful

It is not conceited

It does not act improperly

It is not selfish

It is not provoked

It keeps no record of wrongs

It doesn't rejoice in others failings

Short pause here to look deeper at what this really means...

First what is love in this sense?

Patient is bearing pains, trails calmly and without complaint. It is bearing up and remaining calm when you are being provoked or are under stain. You remain strong regardless of opposition, difficulty or adversity.

Kind is a group united by common traits. In this case the characteristic of love. But even more so it is represented by having or showing a friendly, generous, sympathetic, agreeable or warm hearted nature.

Enduring is simply remaining firm when undergoing suffering or misfortune without yielding.

Believing is to have belief in an individual. It is to consider that a person, in the absence of evidence to the contrary is honest. Most importantly, belief is to simply have confidence in the truth. It is having confidence in the existence or reliability of something without absolute proof.

Hope is to cherish a desire or an outcome with anticipation. Hope is an optimistic perspective based on an expectation of positive outcomes

Rejoicing in the truth is not what many think... it is not simply being happy about a truth. It refers to being happy in the truth. It is a rejoicing that we have the word of God, his promises and precepts to depend upon. It is faith in knowing that the truth will set people free.

Love never ends... Unconditional (Agape) love never has an ending. Real unconditional love does not depend on anyone else or their actions. It depends on you enduring and having a loving perspective.

Now what isn't love?

Envy is from the Latin word "invidia". It is an emotion which occurs when a person lacks another person's superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it or and here is the kicker wishes that the other lacked it.

Boastful quite simply is praising yourself for what you have done. This is not the same as a sense of accomplishment. It is a display of action and attitude that exhibit self-importance. It can also imply one-ups-man-ship or putting others down to look good or in some cases more righteous than another person.

Conceitedness is exhibited when an individual exhibits false pride. It is endemic to having an exaggerated sense of self-importance. It is arrogant in its appearance.

It does not act improperly... Quite literally it isn't rude, abrupt, abrasive or cruel.

Selfishness is endemic in our culture, but it can be overcome. But what do we overcome? The characteristic of being mainly concerned with your needs, wants and desires. It is thinking only of yourself and what advantage you can find in any situation to the exclusion of others. It is having a central focus on yourself.

It's not provoked. This is not the same as being angry. This is a deliberate attempt to make another angry or frustrated. It can be confused with motivation, but the difference is in the intention of the individual.

It doesn't keep a record of wrongs. In other words... Each issue is dealt with and put to bed. A couple that harbors resentment and anger from past settled issues would be an example of keeping a record of wrongs. The bottom line here culminates in one word... Forgive.

It doesn't rejoice in others' failings... pretty self-explanatory. A loving person is not happy when another fails. An insecure person would use a failure to elevate himself or herself, to gain a moral high ground or sense of superiority. Love wants to see others succeed not fail.

So when someone falls, our response should reflect love not condemnation or ridicule. We should work with them to gently and patiently restore them.

Next point:

We must help those around us bear their burdens, problems, issues, struggles and so on.

This goes beyond not being nasty, mean, accusatory or judgmental to another person; this is putting love into action. We as Christians are called to show the love of God to others. We must help them bare their burdens. We must help them work through their problems, issues and struggles. We are not called to “do” it for them or solve their problems for them, but we can help them to solve them for themselves and we can point them to Jesus. It is about helping a person get past what they are going through not enabling them to stay in their circumstance.

We are to grieve with those who grieve and mourn with those who mourn.
(Romans 12:15)

Helping is not making someone dependent on you, but helping them become dependent upon themselves. The switch in dependence is accomplished by connecting people with Jesus. It is He who will be their strength, he will lead and guide them, He will walk with them.

There is an old adage that says: “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day, teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.” We MUST help but we need to be cautious that our help is exactly that... Help not enablement.

Let me tell you a story...

It was a hot day and a guy named Sam Aritan had just come from the swimming in the lake. It was very refreshing. He was all cooled off and enjoying the air conditioning in his car. He was driving along when he saw an exhausted and sweaty man and his two boys trying desperately to push their broken down car up a hill.

Like happens in many Christian’s heads he had a choice do I get involved? After all it isn’t really any of my business. It really isn’t my problem. I should stay cool and just drive on by. On the other hand, he also heard in his head: “This is an opportunity to show the love of God. This is an opportunity for service. You Sam need to get out and help push.

Sam had a choice... he chose to help. Good thing he did because he learned something that day. The man very grateful for the help put out his grimy car grease laden hand, shook Sam’s hand and said something that Sam would never forget... “I

am very glad you came and helped. With you on the team we had just enough strength together to make it...

My friends this morning there are so many people in this world struggling to get some heavy load over their personal hill and if your strength is added to their challenge, maybe it is enough to overcome the hill. So will you stand by and watch or will you participate?

Let me be clear... As Christians we are called to help those who are struggling with burdens that seem to heavy. Jesus says his burden is easy, his yolk is light. We must learn to cast our cares on him, and yet be obedient when he says: "Thanks for caring, now help them. Because whatsoever you have done unto the least of these you have done unto me.

Last point here:

We must maintain a proper perspective on which we ourselves are. Are we team or are we spectator?

In our church we are blessed that we have so many who donate their time, energy, love and resources. These individuals have no desire to be Stand-offish or rude. They know the value of love. They know that faith without works is dead! They don't have to have everything in the church run their way. Instead they are content to see others excel. To see others accomplish. To see others succeed.

When I taught martial arts for a living as a TKD master instructor, people may have thought I was crazy. I trained 8 hours a day, 6 days a week to be a top competitor and teacher. What I discovered was that I sincerely wanted my students to exceed my abilities. I wanted them to be better than me. I wanted their goals to be fulfilled. I never stopped my own goals, ambitions or training. I never had to put others down. Well not outside of the ring anyway (lol) I experienced a Godly perspective. Shortly afterward God would change my life forever. So Yay me right! Nope... It was just the simple reality that this is the way it should be.

Consider this:

Galatians 6:1-6

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load. Nevertheless,

the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

This morning the sermon amounts to this: We are told what is right by God. His word clearly details his expectations. What remains is simple... We all have a choice. Will we be part of God's team here in Salmo or will we sit back and observe as spectators.

Let's see God's plan for Salmo realized.

Prayer