

Live Bolder – Living COMMISSIONED

8.27.23

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Sunday AM

Back in the day – before time began, I was a (3) sport athlete playing *football, baseball, and wrestling* – and believe it or not, I wasn't too bad. Of course, I'm pretty sure that I was a much better athlete in my memories today than in actuality then, but since there's limited to no video footage to prove it – who can debate me?

Of all my sporting highs/lows, the one that often replays in my memories occurred on the gridiron. As a 9th grader, I had the joy of returning punts/kick-off for my team – and one afternoon, while playing against our arch-rivals, I had a terrible turn of events. W/ the game in hand w/ secs to play, I was sent back to field a punt. As the ball was launched into the air, I recall taking a few of steps back to prepare for the catch. But, as any good returner would do, I took my eyes off the ball momentarily to survey the field to see if I should call for a fair catch or try to return it – and then it happened! When I looked up to find the ball, it was nowhere to be found. Instead of seeing pigskin, all I could see was the sun – that is until the ball landed right on top of my helmet. bouncing 10 ft back up into the air, and landing inside our 10-yard line to be recovered by the opposing team. Of course, two plays later, our rivals scored a TD costing my team the game.

DYK – I had one job... catch the ball! That's all I had to do. I didn't need to return it – just catch it. Instead, b/c I took my eyes off my mission, it cost my team the game – b/c ***I didn't keep the main thing the main thing.***

The same is true for the Christian life. God has called us to fix our eyes on Jesus and to compete to win the prize for His glory! Paul wrote – *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, yet only one gets the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize.*

The **PRIZE** of the Christian life is knowing Jesus as Savior and living to complete the G.C. of His will.

4-weeks ago, we launched into the 3rd yr of our ***Aim Higher, Dream Bigger*** church initiative in which we've been focusing on the call to **Live Bolder**.

To **Live Bolder** is about consciously living daily on mission for God w/ ***courageous intentionality*** where we *live, work, and play* so that He might be able to use our lives to ***influence/introduce*** others to Him.

And in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Paul shared this calling to Christians to ***live bolder*** as ambassadors of Christ entrusted w/ the ministry of reconciliation.

Christ's love compels us, b/c we're convinced one died for all, and therefore all died. He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view, although we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Thus, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come – the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself in Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation – that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ by not counting people's sins against them. So now, He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors of Christ, as God is making His appeal thru us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God! He made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

As I've mulled over this text, I'm convinced that if we're ever going to ***live boldly*** for God it'll require (1) we're convinced Jesus was who He said He was and did what He said He'd do. (2) We're walking w/ God in the *abiding* life under the influence of the H.S. And (3) we know why we believe what we believe so we have the confidence to speak up and live out our faith.

As we close out our series today, I want us to consider what it means to live **commissioned** as Ambassadors of Christ and ministers of reconciliation.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself in Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation – that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ by not counting people’s sins against them. So now, He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. So, we are ambassadors of Christ, as God is making His appeal thru us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God! vs. 18-20

I God **INSTIGATES** Reconciliation

all this is from God – this is more than God taking the *initiative*, **He’s also taken *full responsibility*** for reconciling the creation back to Himself. Instead of leaving it to us and our *inability* to be good enough – that’s religion; **God nailed forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love to an old rugged cross!**

NOW – before we jump into this truth, I need to speak about the idea of **reconciliation**.

To **reconcile** is to restore a friendly relationship b/w two parties that have experienced a falling out due to some disagreement/offensive act. It is to EXCHANGE hostility for peace and separation for restoration.

SEE – way back in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve willfully defied God’s command not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge Good/Evil – we learn that *their eyes were opened* – and they immediately lost their innocence/intimacy w/ God. Instantly, b/c of this willful choice (*as by one man sin entered the world*) all of us were infected moving us from sinless/sinful, from harmony/enmity, from innocence/guilt, from intimate/alienated, from hopeful/hopeless, and from life/death. Our relationship w/ God was severed. The result is we’ve all become **castaways** – and our perfect relationship w/ God has been lost – and now, nothing mankind has done or will do can cover or take away this stain of sin – leaving us lost/needing help.

Enter God – when there was no **fig leaf** big enough to hide our failures/sins – God stepped in to do for us what we couldn’t do for ourselves. In Christ, God took the initiative to instigate a worthy sacrifice to pay in full the debt of our sinful failures. In Christ, like the animal sacrificed to cover Adam/Eve – God covers our sins thru the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross – to make it possible for us to be rescued/reconciled w/ God

Consider Paul’s words in **Colossians 1:19-20** – *For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, and thru Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace thru His blood on the cross.*

So, when we were helpless/hopeless, lost in sin, and separated from God – **God did for us what we couldn’t do for ourselves** – He took the initiative to instigate a mission of rescue/restoration by sending Jesus to be a satisfying payment to pay in full our debt of defiance.

The question is... Have you by faith discovered, believed, and received this gift of reconciliation?

It is out of our own reconciliation that God has called us into the ministry of reconciliation.

II God **DELEGATES** Reconciliation

So now, He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. So, we are ambassadors of Christ, as God is making His appeal thru us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God!

Have you ever been entrusted w/ anything of value? I have. W/in my family, as the 6th *Joseph* – I've been entrusted w/ a family inheritance of a number of items that are priceless (a diamond ring, a gold pitcher, a chalk portrait). And so long as they're in my care, I have a duty to preserve them for the next Joseph – who will be responsible for caring for these items until they pass them along to the Joseph after them – and so on.

The same is true for every Christian. You have been entrusted w/ a priceless inheritance – the grace/mercy of God that rescues/reconciles sinners w/ the Savior. As a recipient of this gift comes the responsibility of sharing this blessing and truth w/ others.

But it's more than that – **God calls us ambassadors!**

We know an ambassador to be one who represents their homeland in a foreign land – and in reality, that is what we do as Christians. The sec. we put our faith in Christ for salvation, our homeland changed. We became citizens of heaven – and yet, God has left us here on earth to represent His love/grace to the lost world around us that is still in need of His forgiveness.

But it's more than that. In Roman times there were (2) kinds of provinces. There were the *senatorial* provinces and there were *imperial* provinces. A Senatorial province consisted of citizens who were at peace w/ Rome and willfully willing to abide by rule of Rome. But the imperial provinces were not so compliant. In fact, they were downright defiant and dangerous. At any moment, they could be triggered to resist/rebel against Rome. So, it was necessary for Rome to send ambassadors to these hostile imperial provinces w/ the mission to help bring peace and to squelch any and all rebellion.

Paul uses this term to help us to see that while we once lived in rebellion against God, hostile to the rule of God – that now, since our lives have been transformed by His grace and reconciled w/ Him – we too are sent from heaven into the hostility of this lost imperial world w/ the mission of helping to bring peace and understanding to anyone/everyone so that all people might experience God's love/grace too.

I think of Paul's words to the Ephesians...

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, ...gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But b/c of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive w/ Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved... thru faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the free gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners/strangers, but fellow citizens w/ God's people and members of His household, built on the foundation of the apostles/prophets, w/ Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone. Ephesians 2:1-10, 19-20

Thus, we're saved by grace to serve/share by grace. We're God's representatives (His ambassadors) – called to **engage** our world where we *live, work, and play* to bring His peace, love, and grace to others.

Interview Coach Smith

- 1 – What does it mean to you as a coach to be an ambassador of Christ on a high school campus?
- 2 – How can we pray for you/others in the public area as we seek to be salt/light on a delicate mission field?
- 3 – What encouragement do you have to help us to represent Jesus more effectively on our mission field?
- 4 – Is there anything else you'd like to say to your players and these students/families pertaining to faith?

When George Shultz was Sec. of State in the Reagan admin., he kept a large globe in his office so that when newly appointed/returning ambassadors met w/ him – he could quiz them before leaving his office. Shultz would ask them to go over to the globe to identify their country. Consistently, each person would go over, spin the globe, and put their finger on the country where they were being sent. On one occasion, former Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield was being appointed as ambassador to Japan. When Schutz put him to the test, Amb. Mansfield spun the globe and put his hand on the USA – and said, "The USA is my country." To which Schutz replied, "You're correct. And you must never forget you're there to represent the USA – your home country. You're there to take care of our interests as you're representing the best country in the world."

As a follower of Jesus, we must never forget that no matter what country we set foot on – whatever piece of soil we're visiting/living, we're just passing thru, b/c as citizens of heaven, we're called to fix our eyes on Jesus and to keep the main thing the main thing – as we represent the interest/mission of Jesus in a foreign land that is no longer our home.

If you're a follower of Jesus – you're His ambassador. How you live, what you say... on the mission field of where you *live*, *work*, and *play* – matters!