

Football Sunday
“13 Seconds”
February 13, 2022

Good morning everyone.

I'm so glad you've joined us for our "Football Sunday" service, which is something we started doing on Super Bowl Sunday many years ago.

And the reason we do it is because the Super Bowl is *the* most watched event in the United States every year.

Even those who could care less about touchdowns and field goals and GOATS, tune in to see the commercials and the half-time show.

... which is why, many years ago, we decided to ride that "natural wave" (so to speak) and use this cultural phenomenon ...

... as an opportunity to talk about Jesus in a very different way than we normally do – kind of like when we do a movie series.

And that's what we're going to do today: we're going to focus on faith in Christ through the lens of football.

Now, if you've attended a Football Sunday service in the past, you know that we always show a professionally produced, highly engaging, 30-minute video created by *Sports Spectrum* ...

... which features testimonies of current and past players, including some who are actually playing in the game that day. It's really pretty cool.

But we're not going to use their video this year because, for some unknown reason, they didn't make one.

So, I made my own.

It's *not quite* as good as what they do but, because I'm a huge Chiefs fan, it will have a little more of a "hometown flavor."

And instead of being one *long* video, I've broken it up into shorter pieces which I think will actually be better.

However, I *am* going to follow in their pattern of highlighting some of the players in today's game who also happen to be Christians – believers in and followers of Jesus.

Other Teams

So, let's start with two guys from the Los Angeles Rams (who are favored to win today). They're a *very* good team.

The first player we'll hear from ...

And by the way, one of the things I love about Football Sunday is that we get to see who these players are as people. They're more than just a number on a TV screen or an asset on a fantasy football team.

Anyway, the first player we'll hear from in this video is Cooper Kupp.

Kupp is THE best wide receiver in the NFL. He's number one in targets, receptions, receiving yards and touchdowns.

The second is Kendall Blanton, the Rams backup tight end.

- Blanton is from Blue Springs
- Played college ball for Missouri
- And is the son of Jerry Blanton, who played for the Chiefs in the early 1980s.

Just a couple of days ago, both were asked “what has God been teaching you throughout this season?”

Here’s how they answered.

Video Clip -

Kupp says joy and fulfillment comes from being rooted in God’s purposes and honoring Him with your life.

And Blanton is aware of and thankful that God is leading and guiding his life.

We’ll come back to those ideas a bit later.

Now, I thought about showing you how two of the players from the Cincinnati Bengals answered that same question ...

... but I decided that “the wound” (from losing to them two weeks ago) is a little too fresh for that.

So, you'll just have to take my word for it that there are some really great followers of Jesus on that team.

In fact, in preparing for this message, I discovered that *a lot* of players on other teams that we don't like very much (as Chiefs fans) are *also* really great followers of Jesus.

Like, for instance, *this* guy.

Video Clip-

I'm almost sorry I found this clip. Now we can't hate him anymore!

Dude is actually a very good preacher and speaks on a regular basis at ChurchLV during the offseason.

In fact, during the lockdowns, he even did a livestream message from his house on Easter Sunday! And it was very good.

... which is cool – and, also, very disturbing as a Chiefs fan.

Our Team

Of course, *being* a Chiefs fan, I'm a lot more interested in what's happening spiritually with *our* team than anyone else's.

And it turns out we have had a solid core of Christian players for many years.

One of those players is Stefen Wisniewski – an offensive lineman who played in *three* of the past *four* Super Bowls before this year:

- One with the Philadelphia Eagles in 2018
- And then two with the Chiefs in 2020 and 2021, after being cut by the Eagles (which, as we'll hear, was a pretty painful

experience).

Wisniewski retired at the beginning of this past season ...

... but I wanted you to hear what he said just before the 2020 Super Bowl about losing his job as well as the environment at One Arrowhead Drive.

Check it out.

Video Clip –

Wow, an attitude!

“Our job is to humble ourselves, follow Him, obey Him and wait for His timing, which is always perfect.”

If you’re a Christian, that’s pretty much it in a nutshell, right?

Now, Wisniewski also mentioned that “it starts

at the top with the owner.”

So, I did a little bit of research on Clark Hunt, and I discovered that he, too, is a serious follower of Jesus.

In fact, 10 years ago, he asked the team chaplain to start holding a chapel service at the Pavilion before each noon home game because he was concerned that so many people (who came early to tailgate) were missing church!

I thought that was pretty awesome!

I’m curious – have any of you ever been to the pre-game service at the Arrowhead Pavilion?

If you go to a game next year, I encourage you to check it out – especially if going to the game makes you miss being here on Sunday morning. Just sayin’.

Now, this next clip (which is a little bit longer) is about a guy who actually isn't a player but makes a huge impact.

He's on the field at every home game and you can't miss him.

He also makes a lot of appearances for the Chiefs organization in the community. In fact, several years ago, we had him come speak at a men's breakfast.

I'm talking about Dan Meers, who is also known as KC Wolf. And he has an amazing story.

Check it out.

Video Clip

Wow.

What an attitude! What a difference it makes to see yourself in God's hands and in God's plan ...

... which is kind of a theme we've heard in all of these testimonies.

It's the difference between rising to shine or rising to whine each and every day.

Now, again, part of the reason I wanted to show you that story and all of the others is to point out that all of these men we root for (and yell at) are *just people*.

- They're people like you and me who have to deal with "real life" like you and I do.
- And they come up against things they can't handle, just like you and I do. No one gets a pass from trials and tribulations just because they believe in and follow Jesus.

- And they have a choice of turning to God or away from God in those moments, just like you and I do.

Greatest Game Ever

Now, when we first planned this service (and realized we were going to have to come up with our own material), we *thought* that we would end here with that being pretty much the takeaway.

But then ... three weeks ago ... THIS happened.

Video Clip

Many have said – and, as an old guy who has seen *a lot* of football games over the years, I would agree ...

Many have said that game *was the greatest game ever played*.

I'm curious ...

- How many of you saw it?
- How many of you stopped watching after the Bills scored with 13 seconds left?
- If you *didn't* stop watching, how many of you *stopped believing* the Chiefs could win?

There's no shame in any of that. Lots of people turned off the TV or simply gave up.

Now, one of the things that happens to me from time to time – and I don't know why this is – but God speaks to me through things that happen in the world of sports ...

... which is why:

- After the Royals won the 2015 World Series, I actually did an entire message

series – four weeks – on what we had experienced collectively, as a city, throughout that whole postseason ...

... beginning with that incredible wildcard victory over the Oakland Athletics. Remember that?

- And then, three years ago, when the Chiefs lost to the Patriots in the AFC Championship Game (because “the player who shall not be named” lined up offside), I did a message on *that one game*.

I called it “Black Sunday: if it’s just a game, why did that hurt so much?”

Why did it crush pretty much everyone in this town? None of us *played* in the game but we were all distraught for weeks!

Remember that?

Anyway ... the same kind of thing happened to me three weeks ago after I watched the greatest game I've ever seen.

I think God said something to me through that experience, and I felt like I should share it with you all in hopes that it would be as encouraging (and challenging) to you as it has been to me.

And I know we lost a heartbreaker two weeks ago which has somewhat dulled the "shine" of that game.

However, that does not diminish the incredible experience that it was *in the moment*.

And I don't mean just the experience of those final 13 seconds of regulation, because the *last eight minutes or so* of the fourth quarter – as well as overtime ...

... were riveting as the lead went back and forth, as each team made incredible play after

incredible play.

Now, I don't know about you but, during that whole experience (which lasted almost 40 minutes), I was sitting on the edge of my seat.

And I was a nervous wreck. I was alternately way up and way down depending on the circumstances.

“Oh, we're going to win!”

“Ohhhhhh, we're going to lose.”

“No! We're going to win!”

“Nooooo, we're going to lose!”

I wasn't on the field for a single snap, but I was physically exhausted and emotionally drained when it was over!

And I bet you were, too, if you watched the

whole thing.

So, again, it was just one of the most incredible 40 minutes of sports *ever*.

In fact, it was *so* incredible, *so* unbelievable that, about an hour later, *I decided to watch those 40 minutes again*. I just had to see it one more time.

And that's when I discovered something else – also incredible – that I want to share with you.

But instead of telling you about it, I want to let you experience it for yourself.

I don't have time to show you the entire 40 minutes, so I'm just going to show you the final 13 seconds because that was the culmination of the whole thing.

That was the “do or die” moment where all of the anxiety and the tension and the emotion were, at least for me, at their peak.

So, here we go. Let's watch.

Video Clip

Now, here's a question to think about.

Watching that again, how did you feel compared to how you felt when you when it was happening in real time?

How did you feel watching it right now compared to how you felt three weeks ago in the moment?

If you're like me, it wasn't anywhere near as tense or anxious.

In fact, when I watched the entire 40 minutes for a second time, I noticed that whenever Chiefs did something dumb or the Bills did something great, I didn't get upset at all.

I never said, "Oh, nooooo, we're going to lose!"

Because I already knew the outcome of the game.

And because I knew, I wasn't tossed about with every changing circumstance.

I had no fear, no anxiety.

In fact, when the Chiefs did do something dumb, I smiled and said, "That's no big deal. They're going to overcome that. It's all going to work out in the end."

And that's when God said to me: "Rick, that's the story of your life and of the life of every person who belongs to Me. I guarantee it will all work out in in the end. I guarantee you will overcome. So, fear not."

- "In those moments when it feels overwhelming, fear not."

- “When it feels like there is no way you can handle it, fear not.”
- “When it feels like the mountain is too high or the valley is too low, fear not.”

“Regardless of what it looks like right now in this moment ...

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Isaiah 41:10

And I promise you, I will work *all things* together for your good ...

... just as I do for all who love me and all who have been called according to My purpose.

And that’s what I want to tell you today because that’s where some of you are right now. Your life is like those last 40 minutes of that game.

You're constantly being tossed up and down emotionally, physically, spiritually, by every wave, every change in your circumstances.

And God is saying, "you don't need to experience that. If you trust Me, if you believe in Me, then the outcome is secure. In fact, it's already happened which is *why* you can trust Me."

Wait, Rick, what do you mean it's already happened?

The Apostle Peter put it like this:

In his great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1
Peter 1:3 (NIV)

What Peter is saying is that our confidence in God's promises – our living hope – is not based in wishful thinking.

And it's not based in some woo-woo spiritual experience.

Our confidence, our hope and the reason we can "fear not" is rooted in an historical event – the resurrection of Jesus.

In a miracle far greater than "13 seconds" God began to undo what evil had done and was doing to his creation and to us.

So, regardless of whether or not the enemy throws you for a loss or you fumble in some way, if you belong to Jesus, the outcome is already determined. So you can relax and just breathe.

You can trust in the Lord with all your heart and not rely on your own understanding of your circumstances. And he will direct your paths.

He will ultimately lead you to victory.

And it might happen in this life or it might not.
But for sure it will happen in the next.

No grave whether figurative or literal is going to
hold you down.

So, whatever it is you're facing today, fear not
because fear is a liar. God is with you. God is for
you. God has already overcome in Jesus ...

... which is why you ought to know him, love
Him, and follow Him.

And Lord, that's what I pray would happen for
all of us.

Amen.