

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NT page 1150)

Sermon

The text verse for the sermon is verse 26: "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air."

In New Testament times, philosophers used athletic illustrations to describe their striving for truth and wise living. Paul portrays the discipline and self-sacrifice necessary to live the Christian life through the analogy of races and boxing. The clause "but only one receives the prize" refers to a wreath for the head, which would eventually rot. It emphasizes how hard one had to work to win the race. A long period of intense discipline was mandatory for any who planned to participate in the events. For instance, participants for the Olympic games had to swear by THE GREEK god Zeus to follow ten months of strict training beforehand. Corinth itself hosted major games for all Greece.

Boxing was one of the major competitions at Greek games; boxers wore leather gloves covering most of the forearm except the fingers, and boxing was a violent sport. Shadowboxing or "beating the air" was insufficient preparation for a boxing competition; a boxer had to discipline his body better than that to win.

Our reading really struck a chord with me in the sense that we as Christian can talk so “aimlessly” about our true destiny which is the kingdom of God. And this really leads to a attitude of being laid back about everything concerning faith. I do not mean that everyone in this church must suddenly start to study to be ministers or deacons or become missionaries. I mean that we start to take our faith seriously and really focus on our true destiny which is the kingdom of God. We need to focus not on what we are doing now but where are we heading too. Someone once said that if your aim is mediocre, your goal will be mediocre as well. No always aim higher and remained focus on the final outcome. To illustrate this I would like to share a true story I read on the web.

A man who approached a laborer who was laying bricks and asked him, “What are you doing?”

The laborer said, “Can’t you see I’m laying bricks?”

The man then walked over to another bricklayer and asked, “What are you doing?” And the workman answered with pride, “I’m building a cathedral.”

Both were physically doing the same thing, but the first laborer was occupied with the present task, and the other was concerned with the ultimate goal.

If we forget the outcome of our task, we will become bogged down in what we are doing. If we want to win in life we must strive towards our purpose. A life without purpose is like a race without a finish line.

Yesterday afternoon I saw the boxing final for the lightweight title. I enjoyed it, especially when Scotland's Charlie Flynn, a postie from Motherwell won the gold medal. His interview by the BBC commentators was truly amazing. He emphasised the hard work and commitment to reach the gold medal, boxing only on a part time basis. On television he openly thanked God and gave Him the glory. He was so funny and with no airs and grazes, even giving another punch with humour when he said: "The Mail Man delivers again."

We can all learn a lesson from this because it is like Paul said in his letter to the Corinthians: No-one runs in a race aimlessly, without proper focus and commitment to reach the finish line. If we have faith in God we need to show it in the way we run. We must be determined in everything we do, say and think that we will indeed reach the finish line where God will await us all. We cannot give up – not for one second. We must run in the hope that the race of faith is not the common wealth games where there is only one winner. Everyone that has faith in the Triune God, and who runs in his Name to the finish line will inherit his kingdom that was not made by human hands.

In order for us to run energetically we need to train and keep to our training schedule.

We need to read the Bible each and every day, we need to speak to God as often as possible, we need to get involved with the life of the church, we need to sacrifice our time and money to help others, we need to talk to others about our faith, and we need to ask others to pray for us when we are feeling weary, and alone, when illness makes us to suffer, when our lives fall apart, when we need someone to hold our hands.

We need to look like people who knows their true destiny. We have to show the world through our deeds of love that we have faith in God. The world needs to hear our words of hope in the everlasting kingdom of God so that they too can come to faith. The world needs to see our certainty that we are indeed going to reach the finish line – no matter what.

May we all who attend the Holiday club with the very apt theme: “Jesus is the King” be mindful of this certainty when we work with one another and the children in our care. May we indeed run through the week with joy, celebration and a living hope towards Friday evening where we can also show and tell the parents about this certainty. Jesus is indeed our King who gave us all victory over sin, death and hell. The greek word for victory is “NIKE” or NAIK. So pardon the pun, lets put our NIKE trainers on and run in the race to reach the everlasting kingdom of God to receive our crowns of glory.

Amen