

May 18 08 Graduation Sunday 2 Cor. 13:11-13

WHAT ARE YOU AIMING FOR?

Every Sunday when we have visitors they generally receive popcorn. Now, we just don't give it to them thanking them for 'popping' in. No! I toss it to most of them. Now as you all know my aim isn't like it used to be so, on occasion I tell those who are close to beware because I might miss my mark.

When I think of King David I think of how he wiped out Goliath with one shot from his slingshot. I picture him taking dead aim at the giant seeing one tiny little place on the giants forehead that had no protection. He winds up, takes dead aim and the next thing you know the giant is lying face down on the ground as King Saul's army gives a roaring cheer. I'm sure he prayed "Lord, direct this stone to that one place I am aiming at. And Lord, just in case it's off just a little, may it give him a good jolt."

I think of golfers like Tiger Woods who aim their shots to hit fairways, clear bunkers and cross over water to land within 2- 5 feet, or even inches from the pin. I think of my aim at golf is to better my score from the last time... stay close to the fairways, stay out of the sand and water, and try and finish a round with the same golf ball. If I get a par or even a birdie it's a plus. And by the way, the Monday before I had my surgery on the very first hole I chipped one in for a birdie from about 30 yards. But then it all went downhill.

Some of the Bulls fans miss watching Michael Jordan do a fade away jumper and beat the buzzer to bring a championship trophy to Chicago. They haven't had a championship since he left town.

Pitchers on any baseball team aim at this plate where the ball has to cross within a certain area of the batter to be called a strike and hopefully not get hit into another state.

No matter what sport. No matter what you do in life you are always taking aim at something. Even today people are aiming to get the best fuel economy because of high gas prices.

Even in our spiritual lives we need to take aim as well. The Greek word for sin is "harmatia" which means "missing the mark." It means that the aim of every Christian is to be Christ like and when you fall short of that goal you are missing the mark. Jesus wants us to take aim at leading a good, pure, Christian life, being like minded for the sake of the Gospel and being at peace, dedicated to God and to bringing the love of the Father to those who feel unloved or even unwanted. Our Goal as followers of Jesus is to be just like Jesus in all that we do and wherever we go. We are to aim high. We are to focus on that goal and then press on to complete it.

Let's hear some words from the Apostle Paul to the congregation at a church in Corinth. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 as we hear God's Word for God's people today: **READ**

No matter if you are a teenager getting ready to graduate and move on to higher education or the working world, or you are a college graduate ready to take on the world, or you are someone who is older, there is always something to aim at and there is always much one can learn. I know some of you have seen those bumper stickers that say that the person who is driving that car is "still under construction." And that is true not only as Christians but as a person. We should never sit back and do nothing. A friend of my son David was surprised to know that I was still serving a church while I was retired. He asked David if he thought one day I would give it up. David told him I'd drive Carole nuts if I was home all day.

Paul, in his final letter to the Corinthians wants to leave them with words of encouragement and a challenge. And I believe these words are for us now this morning as we move into our own future.

First, he says, **aim for perfection.** What is perfection? I guess if I looked it up in the dictionary it would say, "be perfect." Now let me ask you, is there anyone here this morning who is perfect? You may not know this but my wife Carole is a perfectionist. Now she is far from perfect, perfect, for we all have our

flaws. But in many things she does, she is a perfectionist. While in high school she worked one summer in an office in downtown Chicago. Those were the days when you had to use carbon to make copies. Well sometimes things didn't turn out well the first time so she would type it over again. Being such a perfectionist, she sometimes would not turn in her timesheet because she believed she wasted their paper where she had, do I dare say it, made a mistake, so she felt she owed the company for wasting so much paper. We are kind of opposites when it comes to being perfectionists. I roll with the flow. But this one thing I know. God has blessed her with skills that have helped me in our ministry. She has been a blessing to God and to me. Though at times it's hard to live with a perfectionist, we have found a way to make it work for this year we will celebrate our 45th wedding anniversary, and as someone said just the other day, they were glad we were still holding hands.

Paul says to aim for perfection. Like I already said, those who play sports know what it means to aim high. You will only be as good as what you aim for. If you aim low, then that is what you will achieve. If you aim high, then you have a higher goal that can be accomplished. You see, as Paul says elsewhere you press on to be the best that you can be. It's like the Marine motto I keep using because they stress that they want the best, and they demand the best from every Marine that finishes boot camp. They have to work hard just to achieve their goal.

A family from our former church Secor, has 2 sons who are Navy Seals. The first one made the grade with flying colors and has seen action around the world, even guarding people like Cheney while he was in Iraq. He has been with us when his family surprised me with a visit. The other, younger brother has finished his Seal training and got his badge of honor and is proud of the fact that he is numbered among the elite that finish Seal training. Many enter, but only a handful, ever achieve the wearing of the Seal emblem.

God tells us to aim high. He sets the standard high because he wants those who follow him to be perfect as Jesus is perfect. You can do it! How did David defeat Goliath? Well he didn't do it on his own, that's for sure. He did it because he had faith in his God. God gave him the strength, the wisdom, the gifts needed and the drive to be the best that he could be.

Tiger Woods, or Albert Pujols, or Soriano, or any sports star aims high. Tiger Woods wants to be the best golfer in the world and win more tournaments than anyone. Barry Bonds' goal was to hit the most homeruns of anyone. Last year he broke Hank Aaron's homerun record. A few years ago Mark McGuire broke Roger Maris' homerun record by climbing past 61 homeruns. That same year Sammy Sosa also broke that record. Today, Barry Bonds holds the record because he hit 71 home runs a few years ago in one season.

Folks, we aim high to be the best we can be in everything else. We need to remember we need to be the best we can be in our spiritual lives as well. Aim for perfection. Aim to be just like Jesus.

The second thing is **be of one mind**. Now this isn't the first time that Paul tells people about that. To understand this you have to know the Corinthian church. You see, they were at odds sometimes. They were like some churches today who have trouble getting along together. Some people like the old ways. Others like the new ways. Some like what the pastor does, and of course there are others who don't. Paul tells us to be of one mind. Being of one mind is to remember whose we are. We all belong to God. We are God's children, made in his image. Being like minded is to be able to unite together to help make this world a better place. It is working together, hand in hand to make things work out. It's team work.

You know I haven't seen too many teams who have lots of super stars always make it to the top. In basketball if the only thing LeBron James did was shoot the ball every time he got his hands on it his team would have never made it as far as it has. Michael Jordan was a super star yet he needed the likes of Scotty Pippen and Dennis Rodman to help him reach their goal of winning 3 championships in a row. Basketball, football, soccer, baseball are team sports. And so is life. Yes, there are

some who excel, but you still need the average player that helps win a game of two.

Be of one mind, Paul says, so that the cause of Christ can be spread throughout this world. Keep in mind the focus, the aim that you have in life, that is God's plan for you.

Thirdly, **live in peace**. You know there is so much turmoil these days in the world. We think of rising gas prices, soaring food prices, less jobs available, war, devastations like what has happened overseas with the cyclone and the earthquake, or even here in this country with the damages from record setting tornadoes in the south and Midwest. Then there are the floods, and fires. People from a city called Pilcher, who were waiting to have their homes bought out because of toxic poisons were wiped out by a tornado. The whole town is gone. Some have lived there 40 years or so and now it's all gone. They are waiting for money to relocate, but it isn't just the money they need, for now its putting behind the past and starting over. If you were to ask some of these people I'm sure they would say they didn't have much peace in their lives these days.

But Paul suggest that we live in peace. He learned how to do that while living as a prisoner chained to his guards. You see, we can be at peace no matter what circumstances we find ourselves under. As an old friend once said, get out from under the circumstance and get up and get going. We can be at peace

knowing that God is with us always. We can be at peace when we let God be God and we try not to always understand, but trust in the one who know matter what, is still in control of things.

You know, those three things are the best advice one could give to those who are graduating and to those of us who already have been part of the rat race. Sometimes we all need to take a step back and think about our lives and where are we going. As I told the seniors the other night my goal ever since I was in the 3rd grade was to join the Navy. I wanted to be like my older brother who served in the Navy during WW II. I had no idea of ever going off to college. I married Carole and worked in a factory until God got a hold of me and told me he wanted me to be his messenger, a pastor serving him. I thought he must have the wrong guy, and just like Moses, I wanted to say, “here I am Lord, send one of my friends.” But God would not let me go. So after fighting the call for over 2 years, I surrendered to him and the next thing I knew I was preaching my first sermon at the Buffalo/Dawson churches on Father’s Day 1983. I had come a long way, baby, but I know one thing, with God in my life directing it, it was a lot more peaceful. And here I am 25 years later, retired, well sort of, and still under the leadership and direction of our Father in heaven. I still aim high to be more like Jesus, after all, contrary to some of your beliefs, I’m not perfect. I press on, though, to be the best pastor I can be as well as the best Christian I can be.

My friends, those 3 things can help everyone.

First, aim for perfection. Second, be of one mind, and lastly, live in peace.

You know, if we would do all that what a wonderful live we would live and what a wonderful legacy we would leave behind.

Last week I spoke about the power of the Holy Spirit that lives in those who belong to God through Jesus Christ. When we turn the key to the on position we unleash that power so that we can go forth knowing God goes with us and we can accomplish great things for his kingdom, amen? Amen!