

050921 PASTOR DAVE'S SERMON: "OUR FRIEND JESUS."

>> Pastor Dave: GRACE AND PEACE TO YOU FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.

LET US PRAY.

HEAVENLY FATHER, MAY THE WORDS OF MY LIPS AND THE MEDITATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE PLEASING UNTO THEE, OUR LORD, OUR GOD, OUR ROCK, AND OUR SALVATION.

AMEN.

WELL, HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY AGAIN TO EVERYBODY.

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY.

WHAT AN AWESOME THING IT IS TO -- I HOPE IT IS NOT JUST A DAY THAT WE HONOR OUR MOTHERS.

I HOPE IT IS JUST THE WAY WE LIVE OUR LIVES AND EVERYTHING IN GENERAL.

OF COURSE, BEING WHO I AM, I HAVE TO SHARE A COUPLE OF ANTIDOTES WITH YOU ABOUT MOTHER'S DAY.

THIS MOM IS SITTING AT HER MAKEUP TABLE, AND SHE IS PUTTING ON THIS MOISTURIZING CREAM ALL OVER HER FACE.

AND HER LITTLE PRE-SCHOOL BOY IS WATCHING.

AND SHE LOOKS AT HIM, AND HE LOOKS AT HER, AND HE GOES, MOM, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

AND SHE GOES, WELL, I'M MAKING MYSELF BEAUTIFUL.

SO HE WATCHES, WATCHES, WATCHES, AND AFTER A LITTLE WHILE, SHE TAKES THE CREAM OFF, AND HE GOES, WHAT'S THE MATTER?

ARE YOU GIVING UP ALREADY?

SOMETIMES THEY DON'T GET IT, RIGHT?

THEY JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND.

AND SOMETIMES THEY DO UNDERSTAND.

THIS IS MY SECOND ANTIDOTE.

THIS KID GETS IT.

THIS FAMILY IS GETTING READY TO MOVE, AND THEY'RE MOVING ACROSS STATE, AND SO THE MOM DECIDES SHE IS GOING TO DRIVE ONE OF THEIR TWO CARS, AND THE DAD IS GOING TO DRIVE THE OTHER OF THE TWO CARS.

AND THIS REALLY UPSETS THEIR SON, WHO THINKS, WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN IF WE GET SEPARATED?

WHAT -- HOW WILL WE POSSIBLY WORK THAT OUT?

AND THE DAD GOES, RELAX, SON.

WE'LL JUST DRIVE SLOWLY AND WE'LL STAY CLOSE TO EACH OTHER.

WE WON'T GET SEPARATED.

AND THE LITTLE BOY GOES, YEAH, BUT WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DO?

AND THEN THE DAD JOKES WITH THE LITTLE BOY AND SAYS, WELL, THEN WE'LL NEVER SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN.

SO THE BOY CONSIDERS THAT, AND HE SAYS, WELL, IF THAT'S THE CASE, I'M GOING WITH MOM (laughing).

[LAUGHTER]

>> Pastor Dave: HE GOT IT RIGHT, RIGHT?

THAT'S WHAT WE CELEBRATE ON THIS MOTHER'S DAY, THE LOVING RELATIONSHIP THAT OUR MOTHERS HAVE NURTURED WITH US.

AND WHAT APPROPRIATE SCRIPTURE IT IS FOR MOTHER'S DAY BECAUSE JOHN IS WRITING TO US ABOUT LOVE.

AND NOT JUST MOTHER'S DAY, BUT SOMETHING THAT EVEN SURPASSES THE LOVE OF A MOTHER, NO MATTER HOW AWESOME IT MAY BE, AND IT IS, BUT GOD'S LOVE IS EVEN MORE INCREDIBLE.

BECAUSE THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT GOD IS LOVE.

LIKE THIS IS MADE OUT OF WOOD.

GOD IS LOVE.

THERE IS NOTHING ELSE.

HE IS LOVE.

AND THE BIBLE TELLS US HERE THAT AS THE FATHER HAS LOVED JESUS, SO DOES JESUS LOVE US SO THAT WE WILL LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

SEE HOW IT JUST KIND OF PASSES DOWN?

AS GRANDMA LOVES MOM, MOM LOVES ME, AND NOW I'M GOING TO LOVE MY CHILDREN, AND I'M GOING TO REALLY LOVE MY GRANDCHILDREN.

NO OFFENSE TO THE KIDS, BUT GRANDKIDS ARE GOD'S REWARD FOR NOT KILLING YOUR CHILDREN.

SO JUST HANG IN THERE ON ALL OF THAT.

WE LOVE THEM, BUT IT COULD BE TOUGH.

YOU KNOW, HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE EVER BEEN ASKED WHICH ONE OF YOUR KIDS ARE YOUR FAVORITE?

[LAUGHTER]

>> Pastor Dave: I WOULD SAY IT DEPENDS ON THE DAY, RIGHT?

OKAY, LET'S GET BACK TO THE TEXT.

SO THIS HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH OUR IDENTITY.

WHO DO WE SEE OURSELVES AS?

THERE IS A WONDERFUL WRITER AND A PASTOR NAMED RICHARD JENSEN.

I DON'T KNOW IF HE IS PRESBYTERIAN OR METHODIST.

HE IS NOT LUTHERAN, BUT THAT IS OKAY.

I CAN STILL QUOTE HIM.

AND HE WROTE A BOOK, AND IN THIS BOOK HE DESCRIBES THIS EVENT THAT WOULD GO ON IN HIS HOUSE ON A REGULAR BASIS, ESPECIALLY AT TIMES WHEN HE GREW OLDER. AND IN HIS OLDER TEENAGED YEARS, HE BEGAN TO DATE, AND HE BEGAN TO TAKE THE FAMILY CAR OUT.

BEFORE HE WOULD LEAVE, HIS FATHER WOULD LOOK AT HIM AND SAY, DICK, DON'T FORGET WHO YOU ARE.

DID ANYBODY HAVE A PARENT WHO DID THAT FOR YOU?

DON'T FORGET WHO YOU ARE.

SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN, EXACTLY?

IT MEANS THAT THEY HAVE INCULCATED IN HIM CERTAIN VALUES, AND THAT HIS ACTIONS SHOULD REPRESENT WHO HE IS.

THEOLOGICALLY, WE HAVE A WONDERFUL WAY OF SAYING IT -- I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'LL AGREE WITH ME ABOUT IT OR NOT -- BUT THE IMPERATIVE TO ACTION GROWS OUT OF THE INDICATIVE.

DOES THAT SOUND IMPRESSIVE?

AREN'T YOU GLAD I WENT TO THE SEMINARY SO I COULD BRING HOME AND DROP THIS STUFF ON YOU?

THE IMPERATIVE IS A COMMANDMENT, RIGHT?

AN INDICATIVE IS A FACT.

THE IMPERATIVE ACTION -- SO THE COMMAND TO ACTION IS ROOTED IN THE FACT.

AND SO WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH US TODAY?

WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH US IN THIS READING THAT JESUS IS GIVING US?

HE IS TELLING US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

THAT'S THE IMPERATIVE.

THE INDICATIVE IS THAT GOD LOVES YOU.

DO YOU FOLLOW ME?

THE IMPERATIVE TO ACTION GROWS OUT OF THE INDICATIVE.

GOD IS NOT ASKING US TO BE ANYTHING THAT WE'RE NOT ALREADY.

WE SING A SONG IN THIS SERVICE THAT SAYS, "I AM WHO YOU SAY I AM, YES, I AM.

I AM CHOSEN, NOT FORSAKEN.

I AM WHO YOU SAY I AM, YES I AM."

WE ARE LOVED BY GOD, AND LOVED PEOPLE LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.

DON'T FORGET WHO WE ARE.

THE WORLD MIGHT NOT BE TREATING US LIKE THAT.

AMEN.

THE WORLD MIGHT HAVE A LOT AGAINST US.

BUT HOW MANY OF YOU KNOW THAT IT IS BETTER, BY FAR, WHAT GOD KNOWS ABOUT US THAN WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK ABOUT US?

IT IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER WHAT GOD KNOWS ABOUT YOU THAN WHAT OTHER PEOPLE MIGHT THINK ABOUT YOU BECAUSE GOD SEES WHERE? EVERYWHERE.

THERE IS NO PLACE WE CAN GO THAT IS HIDDEN FROM GOD.

GOD KNOWS OUR DEEPEST THOUGHTS.

EVEN BEFORE OUR THOUGHTS ARE ON OUR TONGUES, GOD KNOWS IT.

SO HE KNOWS ABOUT US.

HE KNOWS OUR SHORTCOMINGS, BUT HE ALSO KNOWS HIS LOVE FOR YOU.

AND IT IS MORE IMPORTANT, WHAT GOD KNOWS ABOUT YOU, THAT YOU'RE HIS CHILD, THAN WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK ABOUT YOU.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT SO MUCH.

LIVE YOUR LIFE IN FREEDOM.

JESUS SAID THAT I'VE COME THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE MY JOY REMAIN IN YOU, AND THAT MY JOY MIGHT BE IN YOU AND YOUR JOY MIGHT BE COMPLETE.

WE ARE LOVED BY GOD.

THIS IS SO CRUCIAL TO OUR IDENTITY.

HOW WOULD THAT CHANGE YOUR LIFE?

HOW WOULD THAT CHANGE THE WAY THAT YOU THINK?

LET'S JUST SAY IT TOGETHER.

I AM LOVED BY GOD.

>> Congregation: I AM LOVED BY GOD.

>> Pastor Dave: LET'S SAY IT AGAIN WITH FEELING.

>> Congregation: I AM LOVED BY GOD.

>> Pastor Dave: I AM LOVED BY GOD.

I AM LOVED BY GOD!

WE ARE LOVED BY GOD.

PUT IT ON A THREE-BY-FIVE CARD, AND PUT IT UP SOMEWHERE WHERE YOU CAN SEE IT AND REMIND YOURSELF OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT YOU ARE LOVED BY GOD.

THIS IS THE ROOT OF MY IDENTITY: I AM A CHILD OF GOD.

ALL OF THE REST OF THIS STUFF IS SECONDARY.

IT DOESN'T MATTER AS MUCH AS THE FACT THAT I AM LOVED BY GOD.

NOW, DOES THAT MEAN I CAN BE AN ARROGANT JERK AND GO OUT AROUND THERE?

NO.

IF I'M LOVED BY GOD AND I'M COMMANDED TO LOVE EACH OTHER, THE FACT THAT GOD COMMANDED ME TO DO THIS IS ROOTED IN THE FACT THAT HE LOVES ME.

AND I'M GOING TO WANT TO BE LIKE HIM BECAUSE I HOLD HIS TEACHINGS DEAR.

THE APOSTLE JOHN REFERRED TO HIMSELF ALL THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN AS THE DISCIPLE WHO JESUS LOVED.

DO YOU THINK THAT'S BRAGGING?

DO YOU THINK THAT'S BODACIOUS?

WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS?

I'LL TELL YOU WHO HE THINKS HE IS: HE THINKS HE IS ONE WHO JESUS LOVED.

I THINK IF YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE HIM HERE AND WE TALKED TO HIM -- JOHN, TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF -- I DON'T THINK HE WOULD START OFF BY SAYING THAT HE SURVIVED PATMOS.

I DON'T THINK HE WOULD SAY THAT HE WAS THE ONLY DISCIPLE THAT DIED OF NATURAL CAUSES, THAT HE WAS THE ELDER OF EPHEBUS FOR MANY YEARS.

I DON'T THINK HE WOULD SAY HE WAS THE WRITER OF THE EPISTLES OR THE GOSPEL OF JOHN OR AN APOSTLE.

I THINK WHAT JOHN WOULD TELL US IS I AM THE ONE WHO JESUS LOVES.

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT THIS, IT'S JUST MIND-BLOWING TO ME.

AND SOMEHOW I DON'T ALLOW THAT KNOWLEDGE IN MY HEAD TO COME OUT OF MY MOUTH IN WAYS THAT ARE MOST APPROPRIATE.

LET ME TELL YOU WHAT I MEAN BY THAT.

I'VE GOT SOME FRIENDS THAT AREN'T CHRISTIANS YET -- DO YOU HAVE ANY OF THOSE FRIENDS?

YOU KNOW, THEY MIGHT BELIEVE IN SOMETHING, BUT THEY ALWAYS WANT TO ASK YOU WHY. WHY, WHY, WHY?

WHY DO YOU KEEP READING THE BIBLE?

HAVEN'T YOU READ IT YET?

YEAH, I'VE READ IT DOZENS OF TIMES?

WELL, WHY DO YOU KEEP READING IT?
CAN'T YOU REMEMBER WHAT IT SAYS?
WHY DO YOU READ IT?
WHY DO YOU GO TO CHURCH EVERY WEEK?
WHY DO YOU SOMETIMES IN HOLY WEEK YOU GO THREE TIMES A WEEK?
ISN'T SUNDAY ENOUGH?
WHY DO YOU DO THIS?
MY RESPONSES ARE ALWAYS SOMETHING THEOLOGICAL.
LIKE, WELL, GOD SAID I SHOULD DO THIS.
I'M JUST TRYING TO LIVE OUT THE LIFE THAT GOD HAS GIVEN ME TO LIVE.
I NEVER JUST SAY, "BECAUSE JESUS IS MY FRIEND."
HOW SIMPLE IS THAT?
WHY DO YOU READ THE BIBLE?
WHY DO YOU GIVE TO CHARITY?
WHY DO YOU CARE ABOUT STARVING CHILDREN IN OTHER COUNTRIES?
WHY DO YOU DO ALL THESE THINGS?
WELL, BECAUSE JESUS IS MY FRIEND.
I WANT TO HANG OUT WITH JESUS.
AND IT'S KIND OF MIND-BLOWING TO SAY THAT, RIGHT, JESUS IS MY FRIEND.
I CAN SAY WITH CONFIDENCE THAT JESUS IS MY REDEEMER, HE IS THE GREAT I AM, HE IS THE
RESURRECTED AND ASCENDED ONE, BUT TO SAY JESUS IS MY FRIEND -- BUT ISN'T THAT WHAT
HE SAYS IN OUR READINGS TODAY?
HE SAID, "YOU ARE MY FRIENDS.
YOU ARE MY FRIENDS.
SERVANTS DON'T KNOW WHAT THEIR MASTER'S BUSINESS IS, BUT I'VE CALLED YOU FRIENDS
BECAUSE EVERYTHING THE FATHER HAS TOLD ME, I HAVE TOLD YOU.
YOU ARE MY FRIEND.
AND IF YOU OBEY ME" -- NOW, THIS WORD "OBEY," IT IS A GREEK WORD, "TI RETO," AND IT
DOESN'T JUST MEAN OBEY.
BECAUSE HOW MANY OF YOU KNOW YOU CAN OBEY SOMEBODY BUT HATE THEM?
HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE FELT THE FRUSTRATION AT 2:00 IN THE MORNING AT A RED LIGHT,
WHEN THERE IS NO TRAFFIC VISIBLE, AND YOU'RE STUCK FOR IT TO CYCLE THROUGH ALL EIGHT
DIFFERENT THINGS, AND YOU'RE THERE FOR FIVE MINUTES, BUT YOU'RE OBEDIENT.
YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE THAT.
THAT IS NOT WHAT GOD IS SAYING.
"TI RETO" REALLY MEANS TO HOLD MY TEACHINGS DEAR.
REMEMBER WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT IS THE IMPERATIVE TO ACTION GROWS OUT OF THE
INDICATIVE.
SO THE IMPERATIVE TO ACT AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS IS TO BE ROOTED AND PLANTED
FIRMLY IN GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU.
WHEN THAT IS WHAT IS COMING UP THROUGH THE GROUND AND INTO MY SOUL AND
THROUGHOUT EVERYTHING ELSE, THAT'S THE WAY I'M GOING TO WANT TO BEHAVE.
NOW, AM I PERFECT?
CLAUDIA, AM I PERFECT?

>> NO.

>> Pastor Dave: THAT WAS PRETTY QUICK.

NO, NOBODY IS PERFECT.

WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES.

NOW, DO I WANT TO BE MAKING MISTAKES ALL THE TIME?

NO.

BUT I'M NOT AFRAID.

WHY AM I NOT AFRAID?

BECAUSE GOD LOVES ME AND GOD FORGIVES ME AND I AM JESUS' FRIEND.

LIKE I SAID DURING THE CONFESSION PART, I THINK SOMETIMES THE JOY OF OUR CHRISTIAN WALK GETS STOLEN AWAY BECAUSE WE ARE SO AFRAID OF MAKING A MISTAKE, RIGHT?

WE DON'T WANT TO GOOF.

THAT'S THE ONE THING THAT CHRISTIANITY SHARES WITH ALL OF THE WORLD RELIGIONS, IT'S FEAR OF MAKING A MISTAKE.

IN FACT, IF YOU WOULD TAKE ALL OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS, ALL OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE EVER BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THEM, AND PUT THEM IN THIS BIG LIBRARY AND FORCE YOURSELF TO SIT THERE FOR MONTHS AND READ OVER EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEIR LAWS OF MORALITY, YOU WOULD BE BORED TO DEATH BY THE SHEAR SAMENESS OF THEM ALL.

THEY ALL TEACH WHAT YOU SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T DO.

NOW, WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT CHRISTIANITY?

CHRISTIANITY TELLS US WHAT TO DO WITH OUR MISTAKES, WHEN WE'RE NOT PERFECT.

WE BRING OUR MISTAKES AND WE PUT THEM AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

WE LAY THEM AT THE FEET OF JESUS, AND JESUS FORGIVES US BECAUSE HE IS THE SINLESS LAMB OF GOD THAT CAME INTO THIS EARTH IN THE FORM OF A MAN, AS A HUMAN BEING, TO LIVE THE PERFECT LIFE THAT WE COULD NOT LIVE TO OFFER US FORGIVENESS.

THAT'S WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT CHRISTIANITY.

AND THAT'S WHY WE SHOULD HAVE JOY.

AND THAT'S WHY A JOYLESS CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE AN OXYMORON.

WE SHOULD BE FULL OF JOY.

LET ME GIVE YOU ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.

WHEN I MOVED HERE FROM IOWA IN 1963, I STARTED PLAYING THE TRUMPET AT OAK PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD.

AND I PLAYED THE TRUMPET ALL THROUGH MIDDLE SCHOOL AND ALL THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL.

WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL, THE BAND DIRECTOR NOTICED THAT MY LIPS ARE RATHER -- HE CALLED THEM DEVELOPED EMBOUCHURES.

HE DIDN'T SAY YOU'VE GOT BIG LIPS.

HE SAID YOU HAVE DEVELOPED EMBOUCHURES.

SO WE'VE GOT A LOT OF TRUMPET PLAYERS, BUT NOT MANY BARITONE PLAYERS.

WHY DON'T YOU PLAY THE BARITONE.

SO I STARTED PLAYING THE BARITONE IN HIGH SCHOOL.

BUT I DID MARCHING BAND, PET BAND, STAGE BAND, ORCHESTRA, AND I REALLY LOVED THEM ALL, BUT I REALLY LOVED ORCHESTRA BECAUSE I HAVE A VERY -- I LOVE CLASSICAL MUSIC.

AND WE SPENT A COUPLE OF YEARS LEARNING TO PERFORM BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH -- BA, BA, BA,
BA -- REMEMBER CHRIS ALLEN? HE HAD A PHONE MESSAGE THING, THAT WHEN YOU
CALLED HIM AND HE WAS NOT THERE, HE SAID, "I'M NOT AT HOME (SINGING).

I'M NOT AT HOME."

BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH.

AND I REMEMBER LEARNING THIS ON THE BARITONE, TRYING SO VERY HARD TO GET EVERY
SINGLE PART RIGHT

THAT WHEN IT CAME TIME FOR PERFORMANCE, I WAS TERRIFIED OF MAKING A MISTAKE.

I WAS SO UPTIGHT; I WAS RIGID.

I WASN'T ENJOYING IT AT ALL.

IT WASN'T UNTIL LATER THAT I HAD SOMEONE TELL ME, JUST RELAX; IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE,
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

JUST KEEP PLAYING.

JUST LET THE MUSIC FLOW THROUGH YOUR SPIRIT AND FLOW THROUGH YOUR SOUL.

AND YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED?

I DID THAT AND IT CHANGED MY POINT OF VIEW ENTIRELY.

INSTEAD OF BEING AFRAID OF MAKING A MISTAKE, I CELEBRATED THE MAJESTY OF THE MUSIC
THAT WE WERE MAKING TOGETHER AS A BAND.

ISN'T THAT A GREAT IDEA OF WHAT GOD WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO BE?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT MAKING A MISTAKE.

RECEIVE THE JOY, THE LOVE THAT GOD HAS BROUGHT TO US IN JESUS CHRIST.

AND THE LAST THING I WANT TO SAY, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT BEING CHOSEN.

JESUS SAYS, "YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME; I CHOSE YOU."

NOW, IT'S NOT LIKE HE THREW A BIG NET AND GRABBED US ALL IN.

HE CHOSE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US INDIVIDUALLY.

HOW MANY OF YOU COLLECTED BASEBALL CARDS GROWING UP -- ANY OF YOU?

NO?

PHIL? ALL RIGHT, WE'VE GOT ONE BACK THERE.

WHEN YOU WOULD GET BASEBALL CARDS, YOU WOULD READ THROUGH THEM.

AND YOU WOULD LOOK AT THE PERSON'S STATISTICS.

AND THE ONES THAT HAD GREAT STATISTICS, THE ONES THAT MIGHT BE FUTURE
HALL-OF-FAMERS, THOSE ARE THE ONES YOU PUT TO THE FRONT OF YOUR COLLECTION
BECAUSE THEY ARE THE ONES THAT WERE GOING TO BE VALUABLE.

THE REST OF THEM, YOU JUST KIND OF LET GO.

WELL, GOD DOESN'T LOOK AT YOUR STATS WHEN HE CHOOSES YOU.

GOD JUST CHOOSES YOU.

WHY?

BECAUSE IT PLEASES HIM.

WHY?

BECAUSE GOD IS LOVE, AND LOVE MUST MANIFEST ITSELF IN RELATIONSHIP.

SO THIS GOD THAT IS LOVE HAS TO MANIFEST LOVE IN A RELATIONSHIP, AND IT HAS PLEASED
GOD TO CHOOSE YOU.

ISN'T THAT GREAT?

I HOPE YOU NEVER, EVER LEAVE A SERVICE THAT I'M A PART OF THAT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND EXACTLY HOW MUCH GOD LOVES YOU, THAT YOU ARE LOVED BY GOD, AND THAT NO MATTER WHAT ELSE MIGHT HAPPEN IN THE WORLD, NOTHING CAN TAKE THAT AWAY.

NEITHER LIFE NOR DEATH NOR ANGELS NOR DEMONS NOR NOTHING IN ALL OF HEAVEN CAN SEPARATE YOU FROM THE LOVE OF GOD THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.

HOW MANY OF YOU REMEMBER THE OLD SHOW "WONDER YEARS?"
ANYBODY?

REMEMBER THE STAR OF THAT SHOW IS THIS LITTLE KID NAMED KEVIN, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-AGED KID NAMED KEVIN.

WELL, KEVIN WAS A PRETTY WELL-ADAPTED KID, HE WAS A DECENT ATHLETE, BUT KEVIN HUNG AROUND WITH NERDS.

NOW, I WAS A NERD GROWING UP.

I CAN SO RELATE TO THIS EPISODE.

BECAUSE WHENEVER THEY WOULD SPLIT UP FOR NOON SERIES, AND THEY WOULD CALL TWO PEOPLE TO BE CAPTAINS AND THEY WOULD CHOOSE THE PEOPLE, I COULD SIT THERE AND LOOK AT MY FEET.

I COULD GO TO THE BATHROOM AND COME BACK AND THEY WOULD STILL BE CHOOSING, BUT THEY WOULDN'T HAVE CHOSEN ME BECAUSE I WAS TERRIBLE IN SPORTS WHEN I WAS THAT AGE.

I DIDN'T REALLY CARE.

I JUST WANTED TO READ A BOOK.

I WAS A NERD.

AND NERDS WEREN'T COOL BACK THEN, LIKE THEY ARE NOW.

DO WE HAVE ANY NERDS HERE?

HOLD YOUR HEAD UP, NERDY.

HOLD YOUR HEAD HIGH.

NERDS ARE COOL NOW.

THEY WEREN'T BACK IN THOSE DAYS.

ANYWAY, THIS EPISODE TALKS ABOUT BEING CHOSEN.

AND SOME OF KEVIN'S NERDY FRIENDS ARE FEELING BAD ABOUT NOT BEING SELECTED UNTIL THE VERY END.

OFTENTIMES GIRLS ARE CHOSEN BEFORE THEY ARE.

NO OFFENSE, WOMEN, BUT THAT WAS QUITE THE SHOT ACROSS THE BOW WHEN YOU WERE A LITTLE KID, GIRLS WERE CHOSEN BEFORE YOU.

SO THEY WENT TO KEVIN, KEVIN WENT TO THE TEACHER AND TOLD THE TEACHER THAT WE'VE GOT TO COME UP WITH A BETTER PLAN.

SO THE TEACHER SAYS, OKAY, KEVIN, TOMORROW YOU'RE GOING TO BE THE CAPTAIN OF THE TEAM WHEN WE PLAY BASKETBALL.

SO NOW KEVIN IS FACED WITH THAT DILEMMA: DOES HE WANT TO WIN OR DOES HE WANT TO BE POPULAR WITH HIS FRIENDS?

SO THEY START OFF.

ALL OF HIS FRIENDS -- NERDY FRIENDS -- ARE LOOKING AT HIM WITH HOPEFUL EYES.

AND KEVIN CHOOSES ONE OF HIS NERDY FRIENDS.

AND HIS NERDY FRIEND IS ALL HAPPY ABOUT IT, AND KEVIN FEELS GOOD ABOUT IT, SO HE DOES IT AGAIN AND HE DOES IT AGAIN AND HE DOES IT AGAIN.
AND NOW PRETTY SOON HIS NERDY FRIENDS ARE SAYING, NOW COME ON, PICK SOME OF THE GOOD GUYS BEFORE THEY'RE ALL GONE.
AND HE DIDN'T.
HE JUST KEPT PICKING HIS NERDY FRIENDS.
WELL, YOU CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT THE RESULTS WERE: THEY GOT CREAMED.
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT?
THEY HAD A GOOD TIME.
THEY HAD A GOOD TIME BECAUSE THEY WERE CHOSEN.
GOD HAS CHOSEN YOU.
HERE IS THE BEAUTIFUL THING ABOUT THAT: WE DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT FOR THE VICTORY.
AMEN?
BECAUSE THE VICTORY HAS ALREADY BEEN WON BY CHRIST.
AND JESUS GIVES IT TO US.
SO WE CAN JUST HAVE THE FUN PART ABOUT IT.
WE DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT HOW THE STORY ENDS.
WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ARE THE BAD GUYS GOING TO COME BACK AT THE END AND STEAL THE GAME AWAY?
NO!
THE DEVIL HAS BEEN DEFEATED.
JESUS IS VICTORIOUS.
THE BATTLE HAS BEEN WON.
AND YOU ARE ON THE RIGHT TEAM WHEN YOU TRUST IN CHRIST.
SO JESUS IS INVITING US TO THE CELEBRATION THAT JUST DOESN'T HAPPEN AT THE END OF THE GAME; IT HAPPENS EVERY SINGLE DAY THAT WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I AM THE ONE JESUS LOVES.
I AM THE ONE JESUS LOVES.
I THINK THERE ARE ONLY TWO THINGS THAT PEOPLE REALLY NEED TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL LIFE: NUMBER ONE, WE NEED TO KNOW WE'RE LOVED.
YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE LOVED, RIGHT?
OR DO I NEED TO SPEND ANOTHER HALF HOUR SAYING THE SAME WORDS OVER AND OVER AGAIN?
NO, YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE LOVED BY GOD.
THE SECOND THING WE NEED TO DO IS HAVE A PURPOSE, A REASON FOR LIVING.
AND JESUS SAYS THE REASON FOR YOUR LIVING IS THAT YOU MIGHT BEAR FRUIT, FRUIT THAT WILL LAST, AND THAT FRUIT IS HIS LOVE, TO SHARE THE LOVE OF GOD.
REMEMBER, THE IMPERATIVE TO ACT GROWS OUT OF THE INDICATIVE.
THE REASON THAT WE CAN LOVE OTHERS IS BECAUSE CHRIST FIRST LOVED US.
HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY, EVERYONE.
AND MAY THE PEACE OF GOD THAT SURPASSES ALL HUMAN UNDERSTANDING GUARD OUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.
AMEN.

