

February 7, 2021

Texts: Isaiah 40: 28-31; 1 Corinthians 9: 16-23

Title: "The Best Motivator of All"

What motivates you to do what you do? I recently read about a man from Spain who has become famous in the world of sports. He's appeared in the French Open, in Formula One racing, at World Cup soccer matches. Is he a great athlete? No. I think you would call him a stalker. Yes, I said a stalker. The man goes by the name Jimmy Jump. You can see videos on YouTube of him running our on the field at all these big sporting events.

Why does he do this? He claims he's interrupting these events to raise awareness of injustice and racism in the world. In fact, he frequently wears a shirt that reads, "Jimmy Jump Against Racism."

He may be well-intended, but I'm not sure about his method So what is it that motivates you to do the things you do? I'm always amazed how the NBA teams tend to have much better records playing at home. It appears to me that the home fans motivate the players to play a bit harder and with more enthusiasm. Of course, now, they play with no one in attendance and a recording of a cheering crowd. I wonder if there still is a home advantage?

What is it that motivates you to get out of bed every morning? Your relationships? Your hobbies? How you choose to spend your time and your money? That brings us to our Bible passage for today. Paul travelled all over the Roman Empire preaching about Jesus and starting new churches. In doing so he faced a lot of rejection and

persecution and danger. But he didn't care if no one was cheering him on. He was playing for God's applause, and no one else.

Can we say that about the things we do? Some of us, if we're employed, may be in it to get a paycheck. Or we might work as many hours we can, overtime, to make as much as possible. We may neglect family, loved ones because of our pursuit of money. Money's a powerful motivator isn't it.

Another one is fear. I read an interview with the former head lawyer for the McDonald's Corporation who said that he was always haunted by a dream that he would humiliate himself by being totally unprepared for a meeting. He's probably one of the top lawyers in the U.S. And despite being in this prestigious position, he still has fears of being unprepared. A lot of people are motivated by fear but again, ultimately it doesn't do you much good and its bad for your health. You can't become your best self and serve God to the fullest when you're motivated by fear.

Are you motivated by a need to have the admiration and respect of others. I have a collection prophetic fortune cookie sayings that I keep on my desk (can't find them in the move). But I remember once reading a fortune which, I think, had a typo in it. It said, "You will gain admiration from your pears." Not from your peers, but from your pears.

I don't think we're so desperate for respect that we even need our fruits and vegetables to notice us. But many of us desperately are looking for approval from those around us. But again, for those of us who do that; when we get it, it doesn't

satisfy.

Money, fear, respect of one's peers—there are a lot of things that motivate us. **But I'd like to suggest to you that the greatest motivator in this world, by far, is love.** There's nothing in this world that can motivate like love.

You doubt that? Let me ask you a question. If you had a child who was critically ill and needed an extremely expensive operation in order to survive, how much would you be willing to spend? Would you be willing to take all of the money out of your bank account? Of course. Would you be willing to sell your house? Your cars? Or take a second job? A third job? Would you take a job late at night washing dishes at a truck stop? How far would you go? You'd would do whatever it takes.

What motivated the apostle Paul? Our lesson is from 1st Corinthians 9. He was a tent maker by profession. He said that he had a right to get paid for his ministry but that he didn't want that to get in the way of its success so he never accepted any money for his ministry of preaching of the gospel. He was proud of that. He even boasted of it. It allowed him to say truthfully, "I'm not doing this for the money."

What did motivate him if it wasn't money or prestige? No, Paul wasn't universally loved either by those in the early church or those outside of it. It certainly wasn't any sense of power or any of the other things that generally motivate people. It was love. Love for God. Love for people. Love for the Gospel. And that love motivated him to give it his all despite rejection, beatings, and time in prison. As he wrote, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do

all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

If you and I see our ultimate purpose in life to be connected with living out our faith, then there's only one motivation and that is Love. Paul says at the end of 1st Corinthians: “Do all things in the spirit of love.” Love for Jesus and love for people.

What kind of difference can we make in this world to the extent that love for God and love for other people is number one? Let allow God to examine our mind and heart and show us what areas of our lives that are not conformed to His love. And as you do these things, you will find new courage and conviction and joy in everything you do. Amen.