

Keep Your Eye On The Goal
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I want all of you to watch this video carefully. *This is the most amazing Golf shot I have ever seen.* There is something very unique about it, and in case you can't see it...the guy whose golfing – and of course he is a masters champion – actually skims the ball, like you would skim a rock, over the face of the water!

The ball bounces twice on the surface of the pond, and then lands on the green...and watch what happens.

I didn't know you were allowed to get that excited at a golf tournament.

There's something to be said for keeping your eye on the goal, isn't there? On where you want the ball to go. He looked at the ball, he looked at the flag; looked at the ball, looked at the flag...and it was a hole in one.

That probably didn't happen the first time he tried that shot. But one thing for sure, I believe he always knew where he wanted the ball to go. The direction, and the goal.

So now that I have your attention, I want you to know that what is true in golf, and in many other sports – looking to where you want the ball to go – is true in life too.

You could say it this way...that the "goal" or that flag on the green is your "purpose" (SLIDE).

The ball itself is your mission (SLIDE). You want your mission to fulfill its purpose.

If we have the mission as a church to "Know Christ and Make Him Known" – then we need to think about how we direct that mission.

Do we know what direction we are going in, to fulfill that mission - what it is we want to achieve?

A couple was traveling through the countryside and they were lost. They spotted an old

man on the side of the road and asked, "Where are we?"

He said, "Where are you going?"

"We don't know," they said.

And the old man said, "Then it doesn't matter."

When we do not know where we are going, then it really doesn't matter where we are.

It is only when we know our purpose that we can determine our priorities, so that we can achieve that purpose.

And this is true for our own lives, as well as for the church.

Great military leader, General George S. Patton, before a big battle, would gather his soldiers into a room and ask them this question: "What is your purpose?"

In other words – what's the end game? He knew that was the single most important piece of information every soldier had to know if victory was going to be won.

What's the end game – or ultimate purpose - is also a phrase we have used in our intentional parenting class. When we get into our roles as parents and grandparents, the day to day grind – sometimes we forget the end game with our kids.

Would we say that the end game is for them to get into Harvard, or Stanford and have them be terrible people – who lie and cheat to get ahead?

Or is it more that we want to raise kids who have a moral character, who will make the right choices, have God in their lives, and who will contribute meaningfully and compassionately to our world.

That end game – if we keep that in mind – is really what then determines the choices that we make as parents and grandparents on a day to day basis.

It determines our priorities. If we truly want to raise kids with character then maybe church rises up on that list of priorities rather than just adding an extra math tutorial class.

Well, Jesus has left no doubt as to what the mission and purpose of the church, is to be. Standing on one of the mountains that surround the Sea of Galilee,

He made a statement clean, clear, and concise that has now become known as "The Great Commission." That commission is built around a little word that carries a big punch--"Go."

Somebody has observed that the word "go" is two-thirds of the word God, one-third of the word gospel, and half of the word good. It is a little word with a big meaning.

But not just GO in any direction you please...rather GO in a very specific

direction...to make disciples...

GO and let people know about me...GO and stand in the temple courts and proclaim, declare, tell people...

And this word "GO" is said and played out in Acts again and again.

We see it here in the scripture that Kayla read – in what verse do you find the word GO – someone find it...

Verse 20 – GO and stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of this new life

All through Acts all kinds of discouraging things happen to the disciples/apostles to keep them from "going" in the direction of sharing Jesus with others.

They are thrown in prison, they are stoned, they are flogged, rumors spread, people think they are from Satan...etc., etc...the list goes on and on about the obstacles that are in their way to get that mission off course – that ball to fly into a sandpit...

Someone once said if you choose a road without obstacles, friends, chances are it doesn't go anywhere

This road of sharing Jesus with others went somewhere...it changed everything...and you better believe the apostles had a ton of obstacles to deal with...but every time there was an obstacle the Holy Spirit made a way through for them...

That's kind of what the Book of Acts is all about

This account if you read on from where Kayla left off, is really kind of comical – (and again the book of Acts has a lot of humor in it). But the Roman guards – all decked out in their armor with their spears in hand - are still standing in front of the cells that were securely locked – where the apostles were supposed to be imprisoned– but when they went in, there was no one inside. (IMAGE)

Really speaks to the futility of people's efforts to dissuade what God wants to see happen.

God has a purpose, and he will fulfill it – and nothing can stand against it.

However, he chooses to involve people in fulfilling that purpose...

What's the purpose? To bring people to Jesus.

That's the direction that he wants to see that ball fly –

We are to GO and share with others what he can do for them and who he is... one of the best ways to do that is to share your own experience of God's love in your life...

Note...

God sets the apostles free from prison – not just so they can lead more comfortable lives but so they can **“GO...and stand in the temple courts...and proclaim this new life**

The main problem with many churches today is not that they do not know their purpose – to share Christ - but they just don't do it.

Someone once cleverly wrote the following letter and response from Jesus Christ to His church, and the church's reply to Him. It illustrates the point.

Dear Christians:

I have been given all power and authority in heaven and earth. Go then to all people and make them my disciples; tell them how much I love them. Share the good news of my living presence. I will be with you always even as you do this - to the end of the age. I have given you the power and the ability, the conviction and the hope for this task. I gave my life for this. Do not be afraid for I will lead you step by step as you share my good news with the world. Shalom,
With all my love,
Jesus Christ

This was the church's reply:

Dear Jesus, our Lord:

We hereby acknowledge receipt of your request. The proposal is very interesting and we feel that we should probably undertake this project--not immediately of course, but as soon as it may seem feasible. Due to the shortage of personnel and several other financial and personal obligations, we do not feel that we can give it proper emphasis at this time. A committee, however, has been appointed to study the plan, and we should have a report in a few months. In the meantime, we are honored to know that you have considered us for this task, and we appreciate your offer to serve as our resource person should we choose to undertake this project. You may rest assured that it will be given careful consideration by our committee, and we hope to have an answer at our earliest convenience.

Your Obedient Servants,
The Church

What if the apostles, upon their release from prison kind of winced and said, “We aren't really wanting to share about you right now God. We've just been in prison – kind of want to go home take a shower...and we have these wounds from a recent flogging...But thanks for letting us out of prison. We really do appreciate that part.”

In 1929 when the Soviet government wanted to wipe out the church, do you know what they did?

They passed a law not to close the church buildings, not to prohibit worship services on Sunday morning, - no that was fine - but to make it a crime to go into the neighborhoods and reach out to the people.

Believers had to stay within the four walls of their church on Sunday morning and the Soviet government said, "You can meet." Just don't spread it around in the neighborhood.

When we just meet here, and that all we do - that's when the mission "**To Know Christ...AND MAKE HIM KNOWN**" loses its momentum and direction and flies off course and goes into the sandpit. (**Promo I Once Was Lost – IMAGE** - so good for this multi ethnic community and post-modern culture. The first step is helping people trust a Christian)

We must GO...and make him known...

But something else that is so important to understand here is this...and I am sort of shooting myself in the foot here...but

Did you know that nowhere in the Bible are we told to bring non-Christian friends, neighbors, or co-workers to the church?

Now there is nothing wrong with doing that, and sometimes it's a great thing to do

But Jesus said we are to go to where the people are first... be witnesses where they are.

Many times I hear people complain that "you just can't get people to come to church like you used to." Well, I think if Jesus were here in the flesh he would not be asking the people on the outside, "Why won't you come to church?" He would ask us on the inside, "Why won't you go to them?"

Many of you know that I used to work at MPPC and I had a great mentor and friend who was the executive pastor there – who taught me just about everything I know about ministry – The Rev. Walt Gerber.

Bob Harrison and I had the privilege of going to Walt's memorial service this past Thursday – Walt passed away two weeks ago. The place was just packed – we had to get there an hour early.

It was like a homecoming. I saw a lot of people I knew, and the atmosphere was charged with a lot of grace and joy. I actually wrote a memoire about Walt that was in the bulletin at MPPC and is also on my blog – you are free to read that if you would like online. how people how to get to the blog)

There was a lot that was shared about who Walt was as a person. People brought out his authenticity, his mastery of the 20 minute sermon, (takes longer

to write than a 40 minute one) his ability to see people's gifts and use them, his constant encouragement of everyone.

He always encouraged me – even when I failed. I am telling you the first time I ever spoke at MPPC I had no idea what a great sound system they had. And I was asked to read the scripture – before the sermon and I had learned at Princeton to project my voice; and I had come from a church that barely had a sound system at all.

Now just imagine this...you come into church...it's a lovely summer day. You kind of want to relax, meditate, listen to some light and blissful piano music as you get ready to take in the sermon. Ah...God's presence is here...

And then this new woman pastor (me) gets up and blasts you out of the water – with the scripture reading - I mean the rafters shook as the sound system took my projected voice and blared the scripture passage out so loudly people were just stunned. No one moved...they just stared at me with wide eyes – their ears ringing.

I did not realize I was coming across that way. No one talked to me after the service; they just looked at me askance as if to say “what's wrong with her?”

But you know what Walt said when he saw me...”You really read that with authority!” Well, later I found out from other sources that I needed to tone it down.

Walt was an encourager...but you know what kept coming out again and again... over the course of that memorial service?

The thing that was mentioned the most? More than an encourager?

It was Walt's love for Jesus, and his total commitment to him. He was so excited about Jesus that he couldn't stop talking about him, everywhere he went. And it was always about the love of Jesus, the grace of Jesus, the plan that Jesus had for people's lives. How much he cared about them.

Do you know who was at that memorial service besides all the pastors and church members?

The head of the gym where Walt went to work out. Someone introduced me to him.

I said, “O, how nice of you to come.”

He said, “I am here because Walt made our health club his ministry.”

I said, “Really”

He said, “Yes. Walt loved people and he was always talking to everyone about the Lord...and it was the coolest thing. He just loved us all.

And I am here because of him and the impact he made in my life. The whole

place there was transformed because of Walt's love for Jesus... Everyone knew it, and everyone loved him – and he would pray for us and God would work...and things would happen...It was just amazing!"

For Walt – he was not just a pastor at a church – It was his relationship with Jesus, his love Jesus, his passion for Jesus that defined him.

And because of that, everywhere he went he couldn't stop loving people and talking about the one who loved him first...Jesus...

This is what one of ECO films that Bob showed us recently on Tuesday night was emphasizing. Wherever you are out there in your week – that's the mission field. We don't have to bring people here...we go there, as God's people, as his 21st century apostles – the apostle means "sent"... **The command is "GO" and we are "SENT"**

Maybe for you today its not "GO – stand in the temple courts and tell people the full message of this new life."

But maybe its, "GO, be in the stands at the school soccer game...and tell people "GO, be at the water cooler at work... "GO, talk to the person next to you in line at the grocery store...GO...wherever you are out there and tell people the full message of this new life..."

Wherever you are out there, be all out for Jesus.

Please people. Don't hold back. The time is short.

The truth is that if you love Jesus – really love him... Walt used to always talk about "intimacy with Jesus"

If you have that...you will also be able to truly love people from your heart-

The two go hand in hand

Closeness to Jesus/love for people

You can't love Jesus and not love all the people he gave his life to save

And when you really love people, not conceptually, but actually

That kind of authentic love is so catching;

People are just starving for it. They want it so badly.

See that's God kind of love. Its outrageous love. Its unconditional love. Its what we all long for.

It's the lack of authenticity from sometimes neurotic Christians who try to force an unfamiliar or senseless concept on folks that's the turn-off for most...when we share Jesus with them.

But authentic love for people – never turns them off...ever

AS YOU GO in the love of Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, people will be drawn to you, like a magnet, and as you GO prison doors will be open, Just like they were for the apostles
And lives will be changed;

Any place, where you are out there, can be a ministry
For Walt it was a health club. Where will you be tomorrow? The next day? See it as a ministry...and

Trust that God will give you all that you need. GO...and share this new life with others...GO
And the purpose of our mission statement here at WVPC “to make Christ known” will be fulfilled.
It will be a hole in one.
AMEN