

## *The goal of power is the well-being of all.*

*Acts 17:22-31; John 14:15-21*

What is the role of the church? What are we called to do and be as people of faith? We begin with the belief that we belong to God. God is at the center of who we are, and all that we do. We have NOT been put here on earth as consumers. We have NOT come to church to be consumers. Yet, if we are honest with ourselves, after church we probably find ourselves thinking about what touched us, what moved us, and what helped us?

Don't get me wrong, these are important questions...but as Anthony Robinson, a theologian writes, but really "The first question we should be asking ourselves is: did we, did I worship God/ did I praise God? Did I feel the presence of God? Putting God, putting Jesus at the centre of our being, and living according to the commandments given to us by Jesus, puts us in a precarious position. What we believe and our values go against what is the dominate value of our culture – success and personal power.

In the scripture from Acts today, Paul has been brought before the Council of Areopagus, because of what he was preaching and teaching. Standing before this council, he was asked, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? Paul was distressed by all the idol worship found in Athens, idols like consumer goods, military power, sex, technology etc. He even noticed an inscription on one of the idols that said, "To an unknown God." What Paul was boldly trying to communicate in his response to the authorities in Athens was that we need to put God at the centre of our lives. Jesus invites people of faith who believe in him to imagine power that has its goal as the well-being of all persons regardless of social status. Paul preached egalitarianism.

We are called to love. There is no magical formula to doing this. "The love Jesus wants his hears to embrace is not an abstract philosophical concept but the lived reality revealed in the life, relationships and actions..." This love is seen in Jesus life of serve and compassion, his fierce protests against those who abuse this vision

of the value of each person and the importance of an ethic of mutual regard and care.” What Jesus teaches us is how to live in and with love.

We know this because Jesus led a life of service and compassion feeding the hungry, healing the sick, acting towards all people with care and respect.

Imagine a community of faith and a world where the desire for power is not for personal gain and affirmation, but rather power is used for the well-being of all people. God came to serve, and now we are called to do the same. If Paul were to stand before us today, I wonder what he would see? What would he notice?

We talked about what it means to be a team with the children earlier. I have been watching a TV series on Apple TV called Ted Lasso. Ted was a coach of a football team in the US, but was invited to come to the UK to coach football there which we know as soccer. Ted knows nothing about soccer. In many ways, Ted Lasso is the religious archetype of the modern day Holy Fool. The Holy Fool is a person who feigns insanity, pretends to be silly or who provokes shock or outrage by his deliberate unruliness, a person who flouts social conventions to demonstrate allegiance to God. Ted rejects respectability and instead embraces humility and love, and through this and his crazy actions he teaches the team how to live, to be the best versions of themselves. That is what success is for Ted.

There is one episode when suddenly Ted has an epiphany and he figures out what the team needs in order to find success in winning. It is called Total Football. Though Ted come up with this by himself, it turns out someone else already created it. Total Football is about constant movement, it is about taking risks and supporting each other’s choices. It is about letting go of our baggage, and throwing off the constraints from society.

It takes 4 things to work:

1. Conditioning – exercise
2. Versatility – what does this situation need right now? We need to understand and appreciate everyone’s position and everyone’s function.
3. Awareness- support each other’s choices
4. Well...no one knows what that is yet...but as Ted says, “It will reveal itself when it’s time. Ted believes that you need to leave space for God to walk in the door.

For me the concept of Total Football is the same as the concept that we are the body of Christ.

As a people of faith we need to condition our spirit, to study the bible, to prayer, to worship, to serve, to reach out, to seek justice, to forgive, and to love unconditionally. As the community of faith here at Robertson-Wesley we need to understand and appreciate the different roles people play and we need to understand their function. Part of the reason why we make a covenant with the new board is to understand the roles that each person has been elected into. AND it is about trusting in the choices of the leadership at the church and trust in each other and the roles that we each play. We need to support one another's choices. We can do this when God is at the centre! That being said, we need to continually ask ourselves, what does this situation need right now? Do I need to express my individuality, or do I need to support the team, the community of faith by filling in the gaps? No one person is called to do all things. There may be times when you feel you are not doing enough and that is when another person comes and supports you. There will be times when you are called to step forward to support another. We need to be constantly acting in faith, living our faith out in the world. We do need to take risks, like Paul did, in sharing what God is truly calling us to do, even in the face of adversity and judgement. And we are able to do this when we feel the support of others in our midst.

As it says in the offertory hymn: "Though all our living, we our fruits must give. Good works of service are for offering. When we are giving, or when receiving, we belong to God, we belong to God." Jesus said, "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you...because I live, you also will live." As you love so I will love.