

## ON THE PLAYING FIELD

February 20, 2011 – Sermon Series #6 on “Spiritual Leadership” -- I Peter 5: 1-11  
The Church of the Covenant

In a children’s sermon once a minister was teaching children about the Apostle Paul and from a passage from 2 Corinthians – “*Five times I have received...forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned; Three times I have been shipwrecked...in danger from rivers, danger from robbers...danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea...*” (2 Corinthians 11: 24-26) And then he told them a story using four different potatoes as his illustration. He got out one that had pipecleaner faces and arms and legs and said this was a typical church member –a “Hesi-TATER”, someone who would not commit to do something for the Lord. And the next one was a “Common-TATER”, someone who had an opinion about everyone else but did nothing themselves. And then an “Observa-TATER”, one who sat on the sidelines and watched others do ministry. And then he brought out the next one, who had a big smile, and whose arms and feet were active and he said, “This potato is a “Partici-TATER”, an active disciple of the Lord Jesus. Then he read the second Corinthians passage and asked the kids: “Now what kind of TATER was the Apostle Paul?” And one little wise-acre chimed in –“He was a *MASHED* Potater!!!!!!!”

Hesi-tater, Common-tater, Observa-tater, Partici-tater --What kind of “TATER” are you?

+We men are funny, especially when watching football on television. I don’t know about you but when I watch a game like the SuperBowl on TV I will yell at the television screen. The normally nice and mild-mannered Pastor Stu becomes a screaming Celtic *barbarian* covered in blue paint while watching football. Men (and some women, too!) become completely engaged in the game. It is almost as if we are there, on the sidelines, even right there on the playing field. Those aren’t the Steelers out there on the field; it’s ME out there on the field. I threw that pass; I made that catch; I scored that touchdown! “Broberg, Broberg, Broberg!!!!!!” We even think we are actually there playing the game.

*Hesitating, commentating, observing; remaining in the stands and watching the game from afar is just not the same as being on the playing field. We may THINK it is; but it isn’t. It is so in our minds; it is not so in reality. Sitting in a pew isn’t being an active disciple. Are you “in the stands” or are you “on the playing field” of life?????*

+There is a difference. There is a big difference in passively watching a 300 pound linebacker trying to tear the head off someone else and running for dear life on the field yourself with him trying to tear YOUR head off.

Here is the litmus test of whether you are...or are not...a spiritual leader for the Lord Jesus Christ. Our scripture from I Peter has the disciple who was crucified upside down, the Apostle Peter, writing “*Your adversary...prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*” (I Peter 5: 8) This means you’re going to take some “hits” if you’re out on the playing field. This means you’re going to have some scars and bumps and bruises if you’re out on the playing field. This means everyone isn’t necessarily going to

sit up and applaud when you announce the idea you believe came from God in a church committee meeting. This means you might talk and work toward a goal and at the last minute someone slams it to the ground and it never sees the light of day. This means you may get criticized trying to do something positive for the Lord. This means when you're out on the playing field for God somebody's going to try to tear your head off every now and then. Troy Polamalu after the SuperBowl got some bruises that still haven't healed. When you play in the big game, and you put everything into it, sometimes you come away with some scars. Sometimes you win; sometimes you lose. But the victory, just like the battle, is ALWAYS the Lord's.

Jesus was known by His cross. And Jesus was known by His scars. When Doubting Thomas said he would not believe unless he put his hand into the wounded side of Jesus he was saying you earn your right to be a spiritual leader for the God by your willingness to take some "hits" for the team. Jesus is known by the scars he willingly suffered for us.

*Kingdom Leadership is being a disciple, is being an active disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, is moving from the stadium onto the playing field, is moving from being a hesitating, commentating, observing Christian to being a Mashed Potato for the Lord Jesus Christ.*

+Was Jesus on the playing field? You better believe Jesus was on the playing field. There were a lot of 350 pound linebackers trying to sack that quarterback. To paraphrase just a bit –“The devil is a roaring LINEBACKER seeking whom he may devour”. Jesus, known by His scars; He was known by His injuries; known by His cross. Got any scars for Jesus? If not, then maybe we're not on the playing field. Got some scars for Jesus? Then use those bruises and those weaknesses for Him! It is our mark of honor and our badge of courage and the proof positive that we follow the Lord Jesus Christ!

I remember six years ago being in the quite comfortable position of Assistant to the President at Pittsburgh Seminary. Got to go home every night at 4:30 p.m.; didn't necessarily have any weekend duties unless I accepted invitations to preach. A lot of ministers would give their eyeteeth for that kind of position. Yet I'd talk with seminarians about ministry and I'd say to them –“There is no greater thing in life than being a pastor; nothing that gets you up in the morning more alive than this; nothing more rewarding, more fulfilling, more energizing than this.” And then wistfully I'd think, “Yes, so why am I at the seminary instead of being a pastor of a church?” Why am I on the sidelines instead of on the playing field? I went to church one Easter Sunday and sat in the pew. No one wants a guest minister on Easter. It was a great service. The choir struck up the processional hymn, “Christ the Lord is Risen Today”, and from out of nowhere I began to weep. For the first time in 20 years I wasn't preaching about my Lord Jesus Christ and His resurrection on Easter. I was in the pew. I was literally on the bench. I wasn't in the game. And I knew it. I remember praying: “Lord, put me in the game. Put me in the game, Lord.” And then God brought me here...warts and weaknesses, battered and bruised and all! And, O my beloved, we **are** in the game!

**There is no more alive and vital place to be than on the playing field for the Lord Jesus Christ.** O to be sure, every now and then we get sacked. Every now and then I fumble the ball. But, O every now and then, it is worth every scar to throw the long bomb or to make the Immaculate Reception for Jesus. To be alive. Fully alive. To be free. To feel the rush of the Spirit like adrenalin pumping through your heart. Every scar is worth that Kingdom moment of exquisite rapture. Kingdom Leadership is like that.

And so my question, beloved, is this --Are you *On the Playing Field*? Put them in the game, Lord; put them in the game.

Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*