

“Love the Golf Ball”
A Sermon Preached by Frank Mansell III
John Knox Presbyterian Church – Indianapolis, Indiana
October 28, 2012

Mark 12: 28-34

Introduction

- + Love golf – sport I have enjoyed since child.
- + Can’t play as often as once did; recently enjoyed seeing in person at BMW Championship at Crooked Stick.
- + You might think I’ve gone a little off the deep end with the sermon title.

1. Jars of Priorities

- Instead, refers to golf balls in this context.
- Familiar image which I’ve used before, but helps remind us of how we order our priorities in life.
- Empty Glass jar – this is our life.
 - Fill with golf balls – what’s most important in life: God, family, etc.
 - Fill with pebbles – important things, but not crucial: car, house, job, etc.
 - Fill with sand – everything else in life: entertainment, vacations, small stuff.
 - All of these items fit in the glass jar, as long as they are put in the jar in this order.
- However, let’s see what happens if we fill the jar in a different order.
 - If we fill the jar/our life with the sand first, and then the pebbles, how much room is left for the golf balls?
 - See how many golf balls are left over, when they are not placed in first.
 - When we choose to place other items ahead of what should be our biggest priorities, there is simply no room left for the golf ball.

2. Scripture – Mark 12: 38-44

- Jesus is asked by a scribe which commandment is the greatest of all.
- Jesus responds by saying that the first is this: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and all your strength.”
- The second is “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

- These two commands are the core of the gospel message.
- For me, when we do one, we are led to do the other. When God is our number one priority, then we will love our neighbors as ourselves. And vice versa.
- (Pointing to the glass jars) – in this context, there is no question: the golf balls represent God, our faith, and where we place that faith as a priority in our lives.
- Love the Lord your God – love the golf ball.

3. Stewardship Theme: Changing Lives in Christ

- In fact, this scripture reflects this theme.
- If we love God with all our being, we will change people's lives through the love they are shown.
- For our mission and ministry here at John Knox, if the golf ball is our number one priority, then we will change people's lives through the outreach, care, and discipleship we show to our neighbor.
- You have heard several stories this month from other members, sharing with you why this place is important to them.
 - Pat Dean, Sue Hartman, Kel and Amy Winton, Goehrig and Betty Orr, Jill Charboneau.
 - Commitment to children and youth, music, care for one another, opening our facility for the community, support for local, national and international mission.
 - These stories reflect how we love God with all our being, and subsequently love our neighbor as ourselves.

4. Getting Up and Loving God

- Each year on Stewardship Sunday, we do something a little different here.
 - Instead of staying in our seats and placing our offering in the plate, we're invited to stand up, walk to the table, and place our offering and pledge of financial support in the basket on the table.
 - I hope you all see this the way I do – not as something uncomfortable or forced, but a chance to actively come to God and say, "Here is what I am willing to do in your service this coming year."
 - Each year, there are familiar faces who come; there are new faces which come; and there are faces we miss seeing come forward, as they are no longer with us. This is indicative of the natural passage of time and our life in community.

- Today is a day when we consider how we will love the Lord our God with all our being, but especially with the financial commitment we will make in the coming year.
 - Which glass jar will our commitment reflect?
 - In what order will we place the various elements of our life into the jar?
- I keep this jar on a bookshelf in my office. It is my reminder of where my priorities ought to be, and how sometimes I need to reorient things so that everything fits in the jar.
 - Financially, the first thing I do when I receive this (paycheck) is to write the checks which go in here (offering envelopes).
 - This has always been our practice as a family. We've been amazed at how when we give God our first fruits, we always have enough to take care of the pebbles and sand.
 - It is our family's pledge to tithe as part of those first fruits. There isn't a requirement in this church that we tithe; we are asked to give what we discern God wants us to give.
 - The tithe is a biblical model, one which we hear of in the Old Testament as guidance to give 10 percent of what we have back to God.
 - Our family's income increased this year, due to Debbie's change in jobs. Consequently, our pledge to this church will increase in proportion, not out of guilt or reluctance, but out of gratitude for what God has done for us.

5. Conclusion

- (Holding the glass jar) - When we follow the Lord's command to love God with all our being, then our life looks like this. When we lose sight of Jesus' command, our life can look like this (the other jar).
- As you come to the table and offer your commitment to God, where will your priorities be? Where will your faith be? What are you willing to give, so that we might continue to change people's lives in Christ?
- "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself."
- Love the Lord your God. Love the golf ball.