### Real Winning – Week 6

**What is winning?** The world has many ways of defining winning. When I think of winning, the movie *Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins,* comes to mind. In the movie, Clyde is Roscoe’s step brother and they competed at everything. And Roscoe lost at everything. Roscoe has finally come back home to visit and sitting at a family picnic Clyde sums up what winning looks like for most people:

Done good Scoe. Outstanding Career. Beautiful Fiancé. Great Son. Don’t even matter now that you couldn’t ever beat me at nothin.

**The truth is each of us would define winning differently.** Some of us throw ourselves into sports. When I was younger, I did everything that I could to be the best runner that I could. Others throw themselves into academics wanting to be smarter than everybody else. Some will even try to be “better Christians than others” by doing or not doing certain things. Some people try and win by getting the acceptance of their parents and peers by having the right gadgets or behaving in a certain way. For others, winning is having “enough” money. For others still, it’s being beautiful. While others seek comfort in their lives.

**Working hard to become a better runner, or learning something new isn’t necessarily a bad thing,** but when it becomes the only thing or the main thing… we have our priorities out of whack. And we as people can end up trying to find our identity and value in all the wrong places and no matter how successful or good we are… it only gives fleeting joy. It can leave us always wanting more and never being content with what we have.

**Do you ever look at some of the rich and famous and wonder, “When will it be enough?”** Enough money. Enough houses. Enough Cars.It is enough to look at their lives of excess and see the problem. But do we have the same one? Just on a different level? What are you focusing on with your eyes and holding onto with your hands?

**As followers of Jesus, we should define winning differently.**

**St. Paul described what winning looks like for us as Christians,**

***“****forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,****14****press(ing) on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:13-14*

Paul here is using language that alludes to running a race. Something that I am familiar with. Two things you need to remember when running a race. What type of race you are running and your goal. In High school, I could never run the 3200, not because it was too long, but because I couldn’t focus enough as I got tired and couldn’t remember which lap I was on. I got distracted and lost my focus, the same thing can happen in the race that we are running. WE can get distracted and forget who we are and what we are supposed to be about.

I remember a particular cross country race that I was running in, in my old beat up Nike zoom rival D’s. They had a couple of track spikes in them that I couldn’t get out. That day the course was muddy from heavy rains and as I ran on an embankment I lost my footing and fell down. The same thing can happen to us in our race, sin can trip us up and knock us down and we can forget our goal or think we aren’t worthy.

Let’s start by figuring out what our Goal is? Because that will clarify for us not only where we are headed, but also the race that we are to run. **What is our Goal and our prize? Heaven?**

Before we break into singing

I’m but a stranger here,

Heaven is my home;

Earth is a desert drear,

Heaven is my home;

Danger and sorrow stand

Round me on every hand;

Heaven is my fatherland,

Heaven is my home.

**We are going to need to go back and consider the context of Philippians.** Warning: I am about to tell you something that might just mess with your whole world. When I first heard this, it messed up mine. To be honest… I am still trying to figure it out. Are you ready for it? Heaven is not your home. Unless there is something that I don’t know about you, like you have wings, hidden somewhere, your other hat is a halo and your favorite instrument to play is the harp, heaven is not your home! Call me strange, but I think this is good news, even great news. Because floating on a cloud in a robe getting plucky with a harp doesn’t sound all that exciting to me. I have a hard time seeing me do that for all of eternity. It actually sounds kind of boring.

**Philippi was colonized by Roman Soldiers, in other words Roman citizens.** When we hear citizenship, I think we too quickly think of what it means for us as American citizens. They understood that citizenship means that they have all the rights and privileges that come with being a member of that kingdom, not that they lived there or were destined to live there. The last thing any Caesar would want is a bunch of soldiers with time and blood on their hands hanging around the capital…

**Before you freak out too much!** I believe Heaven is a real place, like Canada. Hey it works. Not all that many of us have been there and come back. It is up above us. And there are actually more people than most people think. On a serious note though, here is a challenge. Find for me where it says in the Bible that “we go to heaven when we die.” Heaven’s going to be great. What I mean is whatever comes after this life. In Hebrew, the word that often translates as heaven simply means sky. God’s word promises that we will be with God in paradise when we die, just as Jesus promised the thief on the cross. St. Paul says *“to die is gain and to live is Christ.”*  I mean look at the Earth. It is great, filled with beauty and wonder even though it has been ruined by sin. So what God has in store for us is going to be far better than anything we have experienced so far.

**But then again heaven isn’t the ultimate goal**. To be clear, what we believe in as Christians is life after death…As Christians we confess it every week whether we are confessing our faith in the words of the apostles, Nicene or Athanasian Creed. The Apostles creed says that We believe in “the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.”

Paul said as much in verse 21, “*who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body”* resurrected bodies and a restored creation that has been freed from the effects of sin.

**[Testimony Here]**

**Bodily resurrection and life everlasting in God’s restored creation.** That is our goal.

Winning is not being well liked or having the most or the nicest stuff. Real winning was accomplished for you 2000 years ago on a cross. And because he rose you too shall rise. You are a citizen of heaven that means that you are a member of a kingdom that will not perish, but will last on into eternity and so shall you. In the meantime we colonize the earth. Bringing God’s kingdom to bear and by striving to make things in this world as they will be in the Kingdom of God.