

NBC Devotional
June 1, 2022
“Who is the Center of the Universe, and Who is Not?”

Like it or not, vocational ministry is highly competitive and performance oriented and no matter how much we bristle at this notion, every single one of us would have to admit that every once in a while, we would really like to experience a WIN and to receive some positive feedback on our performance. Ministry is competitive. Ministry is performance-oriented. There is no getting away from that. It is critical that we COMPETE AGAINST THE RIGHT OPPONENT AND PERFORM FOR THE RIGHT AUDIENCE, because it can go so badly so quickly for us inwardly AND outwardly if we compete against the wrong opponents and perform for the wrong audience.

While we live in this competitive and performance-oriented environment, we proclaim and embody a Gospel that is all about a loving God who has done something for us we are utterly incapable of doing for ourselves or anybody else. His love for us does not kick in after we have won or performed well.

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

THIS COMES FIRST.

Everything else of any value flows from this. BUT when we start to compete against the wrong opponents and to perform for the wrong audiences, we begin to find our identity in the wrong places.

It’s nice to have a compliment once in a while, but you better not try to live on them. It’s nice to get a win once in a while, but you better not build your identity around them.

I hope you receive compliments on a regular basis. I also hope people affirm you for what you can do and how well you do it.

As ministers of the Gospel, we know that who we are becoming in Christ is only made possible by what Christ did for us. And we know that what we accomplish in ministry is only made possible by Christ working in us.

Let’s remember together today, that the advancement of God’s kingdom, the achievement of our church’s mission, the salvation of souls, did not start with us, does not depend on us, and will not end with us.

- It is God who created us and sustains us.
- It is Jesus who became flesh and offered himself on the cross for our sins.
- It is Jesus who rose again and ascended into heaven.
- It is the Holy Spirit who is ever present and efficiently active, who convinces the world of sin, who regenerates, sanctifies, and guides into all truth.
- It is God who inspired the Holy Scriptures to “inerrantly reveal the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to salvation.”
- It is God who first called sin, who defines what sin is, and who condemns sin in sinful humanity.

- It is God who gave his only begotten son to suffer, shed his own blood, and die on the cross to make a full atonement for all human sin sufficient to save every individual of Adam's race who repents and believes.
- It is God who offers prevenient grace that enabled us in our fallen, depraved state to respond to His saving grace.
- It is God who JUSTIFIES us.
- It is God who REGENERATES us.
- It is God who ADOPTS the justified, regenerated believer and calls us His sons and daughters.
- It is the Holy Spirit who bears witness with our Spirit that we are right with God.
- It is God who sanctifies us by His Holy Spirit, purifies us from all indwelling sin, and empowers us for life and service.
- It is God who grows us in grace and matches our purified spirit with a mature character.
- It is God who formed the church, who empowers the church by His Holy Spirit to be His Son's redeeming, reconciling presence in this world.
- It is Jesus whose death and resurrection we join in baptism and whose very presence we are filled with in the Lord's supper.
- It is God who heals through miracles and through medicine.
- It is Jesus who is coming again for his own both living and dead, when the living will "be caught up with the risen saints in the air, so that we shall ever be with the Lord."
- It is God who will resurrect the dead, both just and unjust.
- It is God who will judge each one and welcome into "glorious and everlasting life" "all who savingly believe in and obediently follow Jesus Christ our Lord" and who will allow those who have rejected His presence to live forever without it in hell.

Everything we are and everything we do is only possible because of what our Lord has done for us. We need to start here this week. We need to start here every day. We need to start here in every sermon, in every ministry plan, in every new season of ministry.

He is our Father. His Kingdom is coming. It is His will we seek. He gives us each of our days. He gives us our bread. He forgives our trespasses. He delivers us from evil. It is HIS kingdom. It is HIS power. It is HIS glory.

Let's remember who is the center of the universe and who is not.

Dr. Scott J. Sherwood