

Victory of the Lamb – April 28, 2019
Acts 2:38-42 - What if . . . we share the good news? – Pastor Bill Limmer

With the first pick in the 2019 NFL Draft the Arizona Cardinals select Kyle Murray, quarterback, University of Oklahoma. That was an exciting moment in time for Kyler and his family and friends and the brass of the Arizona Cardinals. To get to that point on Thursday evening, there were a lot of behind the scenes workouts, tests, recording of stats, and crucial conversations. Picture this, it is day 1 of the 2019 NFL Draft, and the Cardinals pick Murray, but no one ever tells him. The draft goes on and Murray is just sitting there, and finally around mid-night goes home. There is no celebration, there is no party, he has no idea he is drafted. And this goes on for the duration of the draft and the duration of his life. And so, Murray misses out on practices, games, endorsement deals, camaraderie, friendship, and a lot of other things too. His life is dramatically different. We will come back to that but for now . . .

The draft is one of highlights of the NFL label. Over the last couple of weeks, we have been in one of the great highlights of the Christian church. We have gone from Palm Sunday, to Good Friday, to Easter Sunday. I was still shaking my head on the way to church, that Jesus robbed death, and walked out of the grave for the most astounding and powerful victory of all time. And he won that victory not for himself but for you and for me. You may not have considered it, but we are here today because Jesus is alive.

Let's talk. Let's have a crucial conversation. Do you ever wonder if you lived 2000 years ago what you would have done in that so-called Holy Week setting? Would you have been in the crowd on Palm Sunday praising Jesus? Would you have changed your tune by Good Friday and instead of praising Jesus would you have called for his death too? Sometimes in life, we end up doing things we never thought we would do. Like the guy named Peter, who confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Savior of the world, but then this same Peter ends up denying Jesus because of the accusation of a teenage girl who is probably going to be in trouble when she gets home because she missed her curfew. So, I have concerns about myself and what I would do. Here is maybe a hint for you and me and what we would do: Have you ever used your mouth to sing praises to God only to later in the day or week turn around cursed or swear? If so, you probably have your answer.

But one thing I know for sure is that when that same Peter has a crucial conversation with the people and says, Acts 2:36 **"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."** I would be guilty of crucifying Jesus. I am guilty of causing the death of God's own Son. My stats are all there: Concerned more about me than anyone else including God. My mouth and my heart have sung some beautiful praises, but my mouth and my heart have also been so ticked off that they have both run people into the ground, mostly behind their back. Cuz it is easier that way, right? I have made people places, things, and accomplishments more important than God. I have done some dumb stuff and that dumb stuff is called sin. My stats are horrible. And it is sin that put Jesus on the cross. **Crucial conversation:** I will let you in on something, the person sitting closest to you has done the same thing and is responsible for the killing of Jesus too. So much for the church being for good people. **All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.** Not a likely draft pick for God's team and family. But shockingly all is not lost.

Here is what happened when Peter had the crucial conversation with the people of his day. **When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do." Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus**

Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Wow. What an amazing gift. The forgiveness of sins, the removal of all the bad stats, a restored relationship with God, not based on what you do but based on what God has done for you. Jesus carrying through on his conversation that (John 3:16) **God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** I know it doesn't make sense. It's called forgiving the debt and welcoming you into the kingdom. This is how God works, and this not just ok news, this is good news. And it is for you, right here and right now. Isaiah 55:1,2,8,9 **“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. . . For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,”** declares the LORD. ⁹**“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”** What this means is God is the author of the most amazing draft picks of all time. He has drafted you and me to be a part of his family. Even though our stats are horrific, and we don't deserve it. He has made a way for us, actually the only way, through Jesus Christ and his perfect stats, sacrifice and victory.

Which bring us to today, one-week post Easter in 2019. 94% of Christian millennials agree and believe that learning about Jesus is the best thing ever. Millennials have more unbelieving friends than any generation before, BUT here is the bad news 47% of believing millennials don't believe it's appropriate to share their faith. Wow that is crazy right – from best thing ever to I am not saying a word. But millennials aren't the only ones who struggle with sharing Jesus and the greatest news ever, are they? Check out this quote from MLK: Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about important matters. What is going on is that a lot of people don't know that God loves them and wants them on the team because their friends aren't having a crucial conversation with them. Picture Kyler Murray not being told he was drafted.

As you consider your crucial conversations be honest: What do you want for yourself, what do you want for the other person, and what do you want for the relationship. Part of the reason we don't share our faith is that we don't want things to get awkward or ruin a relationship. We incorrectly assume we must choose between getting results and keeping a relationship. But there are actually ways to share our point of belief and build the relationship all at the same time. The top priorities of millennials without faith that would help them consider faith in Jesus is a conversation with someone who listens without judgment and someone who doesn't force them to draw a conclusion. In other words, don't make the person we are having a conversation with a project. Make the person an object of your love so that they can know that they are an object of God's love. And you know what, this is perfect. And here is why: conversion is the Holy Spirit's deal not ours. We just have the conversation.

As we follow the example of Jesus, the key to having crucial conversations about God isn't what you say, listening is. According to Martin Copenhaver in his book Jesus is the Question: Jesus asks many more questions than he answers. To be precise, Jesus asks 307 questions. He is asked 183 of which he only answers 3. Asking questions was central to Jesus' life and teachings. Jesus cared enough to listen get their input, their take, their response so that he could understand their heart's. You know that God is still listening today to you. Jesus is listening to you as you prayer and pour out your heart, your hopes, dreams, concerns, requests, as you give him praise. Jesus hears every word you speak, whether it is good or bad, Jesus hearing is so deep and complex he hears your every thought and attitude, he hears your every heartbeat. Jesus is tuned into you. Hebrews 7:25

When we listen, we are seeking to understand in contrast to talked where we seek to be understood. We earn the right to share what we believe by listening, understanding, and meeting people where they are at. It was one of my favorite and compelling things to do in campus ministry is leave a question unanswered. It led to much deeper respect and discussion as opposed to being the answer guy or the sage on the stage. Remember Jesus is present in every conversation, and the goal isn't to win an argument or even get in an argument but to try to understand a heart so we can share the relief, the love, the power, the grace, the joy of being drafted by Jesus.

Let's go back to the draft, not the NFL draft but God's draft. Imagine no one ever told you what God did. That he drafted you based on his love for you in Jesus Christ. Think of it this way because not everyone is into sports – silly people. Let's say Dave and I our neighbors and we end up at Pic N Sav at the same time. We are both going for a gallon of milk. We each grab a gallon and are talking about this that and everything. We go to the self-checkout and Dave scans his milk. And it costs him \$1.79. I go to the same scanner right after him, scan my milk and the coupon I picked up on the way in for the milk and so I get my milk for free. What do you think Dave's reaction is? Like, what the heck? Are you kidding me right now? Why didn't you say something? Now imagine it is the last day, the world has just ended, and Dave is going down while I am going up because I never shared told Dave through Jesus he was drafted, called, empowered, forgiven, a masterpiece of God. What do you think his response is? What the heck? Are you kidding me right now? Why didn't you say anything? The "coupon of grace" to heaven is Jesus. It is free and he is for everyone. Here are some song lyrics by Jason Gray – "God put a million billion doors in the world For His Love to walk through One of those doors is you.:"

If this is the very first time you have heard the message of Christianity know that Jesus and his grace chooses you. If you think you have disqualified yourself by not sharing God with someone, or some other sin, know that Jesus has chosen you. If you grew up in faith but left God behind and are wondering if God still chooses you, the answer is YES! God's drafted you too. God says, "Welcome home. Welcome to Victory."