

ALDERSGATE UMC OF BUTTE, MONTANA

www.aldersgatebutte.org ... 406.782.2425

Pastor Matthias Krier

July 4, 2021

Service at 8:30a.m. due to July 4th Parade

Message

“I Am Third”

How many of you have read the book, “I Am Third” by Gale Sayers with Al Silverman? How many of you are familiar with the story or have seen the movie, “Brian’s Song”?

As a young man, I was deeply impacted by the story of Brian Piccolo and Gale Sayers. I might add that this was probably one of the first introductions given to me that God was actually real. Up until that point, God was just a name that many spoke and many spoke the name of God in vain. Up until that point as the apostle Paul was speaking to his audience in II Timothy 3:5:

II Timothy 3 from the Message Bible

Difficult Times Ahead

3 1-5 Don’t be naive. There are difficult times ahead. As the end approaches, people are going to be self-absorbed, money-hungry, self-promoting, stuck-up, profane, contemptuous of parents, crude, coarse, dog-eat-dog, unbending, slanderers, impulsively wild, savage, cynical, treacherous, ruthless, bloated windbags, addicted to lust, and allergic to God. They’ll make a show of religion, but behind the scenes they’re animals. Stay clear of these people. End reading.

As a youth, I didn't even have a form of godliness at the time, but felt that God was not real. I hungered for something, but simply felt empty and lost.

This book, *"I Am Third"* brought God to life for me and while my understanding and experience of this God has evolved over the years, I realize that the church cannot truly be the church unless God is first. We say God is first and then fight over the color of new carpet to be installed in the church. Oh, not this church, mind you, but many churches I know of that will go unnamed.

We begin with this quote from one of the best running backs of all time, Gale Sayers:



If my church was trying to teach me this as a youth, it did not register. I had a form of religion because of the way I grew up in the church, but it was not a relationship to God, it was just that: a religion.

Reading this heartwarming story back in the day awakened me to the fact that God had to be first before everything, even my girlfriend, Della. If you are visiting with us for the first time, I married my high school sweetheart, Della Osterloo, and I learned at a very young age that God had to come before the love of my life!

Not only did God need to come before *Della*, God had to come before my *church*. Now granted, the priests and the nuns tried to get through to me, but it took something else to get my attention at such a young age and that was the story of two professional football players, Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo.

Not only did God have to come before Della and the church, God had to come before my *country*.

You see anything that comes before God is an idol and when Jesus gave us the two greatest commandments,



... he knew well the very first commandment in the Torah, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me,*" Yeshua made it clear that we are to love God with ALL of our heart, with ALL of our soul, with ALL of our mind and with ALL of our strength! And to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

This means that God comes **first** before everything which also includes our possessions:



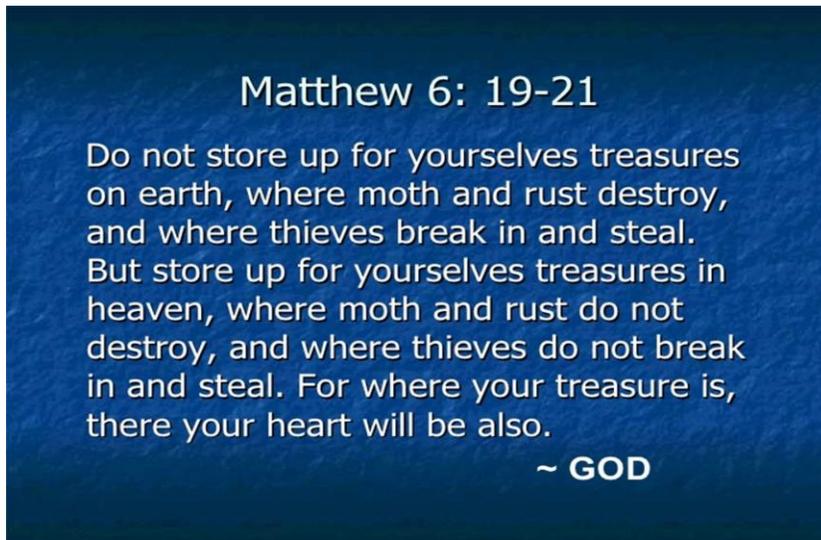
And speaking of our possessions, someone once said, "**Do we have possessions or do they possess us?**"

Over the years, I have paraphrased this quote by Gale Sayers "*I Am Third*" to this;

God is first, my family and friends are second, and I am third.

When we seek first the kingdom of God, things fall into place. When we do not seek first the kingdom of God, we cannot and most likely will not live in peace and harmony with God, much less one another.

Yeshua showed us the way in which to live and move and have our being:



These are undoubtedly “Words to Live By” in that we would be faithful in striving to be disciples of Christ.

Let us share in these words together as a closing prayer for the message:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Let us now prepare for the sacrament of Holy Communion by singing this sacred hymn, Eat This Bread. Listen to these words before we sing them:

Eat this bread, drink this cup

*Come to me and never be hungry
Eat this bread, drink this cup
Trust in me and you will not thirst.*

Hymn of Preparation # 628

“Eat This Bread”

Prayer for this Independence Day

Prayer of Presence

Matthias Krier

Oh God of *Hope, Peace, Joy and Love*,
We know that all things are possible with You!
And even though our nation is in turmoil,
may your *Presence* be known, especially, on this Independence Day,
We trust that, no matter what, your *Presence*
will guide us in the weeks, months and years to come.
We trust that your *Presence* will guide our nation and world,
of your *Hope, your Peace, your Joy and your Love!*
Thank you for this radiant and illuminating *Presence*
that sheds light in the darkness.
We pray all will awaken to your *Presence*
with open minds and open hearts
and empower us to live, together, in peace and harmony.
In your Holy Name, we pray. Amen.