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Saint John's Episcopal Church  
Sandwich, Massachusetts 02563

October 24, 2010  
Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

Today's sermon is taken from 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen*

Perhaps you are thinking Father McGinn is all set up for good old stewardship when you heard the ten percent and the other things in the different lessons, but really I want to start this morning with something that you can help me with later. Mike Krzyzewski (I'd like you to spell Krzyzewski to me as you go out) is the coach of the Blue Devils basketball team, and also this summer was the coach of the men's world basketball team made up of professional basketball players who played different teams from around the world and ended up being the top team.

Mike Krzyzewski is known as being meticulous in his pursuit of basketball success. In his book titled *Leading with the Heart* he attributes most of his success to his mother. He writes, "You want to know who my hero is? My hero is my mother. Everything she did was something that she put her own trademark on -- whatever it was -- be it something as simple as making a batch of chocolate chip cookies. When we were a little poor she put three chips in every cookie, and when we got a little more money, it would be four chips. But if you got a chocolate chip cookie that had only two chips in it, you knew it wasn't my mother's, and from that simple lesson I've taken the principle that everything we do has our own personal signature on it, so we want to do it the best that we possibly can."

I believe that that's a pretty good philosophy. Put your personal stamp on everything you do. In every worthwhile thing you do, give it your best. St. Paul put his personal signature on the New Testament and on the burgeoning young church in his day, and St. Paul did it like coach Krzyzewski's mother. He gave his very best; he held nothing back.

St. Paul was under house arrest in Rome when he wrote the words that Michael read this morning from the epistle to Timothy. He knew that he would soon be going to die a martyr's death. He wanted his young colleague Timothy to know

that he had no regrets, that he would do it all again. He wanted to let it be known quite clearly that the Emperor Nero could not take his life from him. He was willing to give his life up freely for the glory of Jesus. So he writes these memorable words: “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

“I am being poured out like a drink offering.” Paul is saying that he has held nothing back. Everything was freely given to God. That was Paul’s legacy. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Paul was totally poured out. He was about used up. He was on his hands and knees and crawling, but he could say without hesitation that he had held nothing back, he had given his all. And that’s rare in this world.

I heard about a college man who went into a photography studio one day, and he had a framed picture of his girlfriend. He wanted the picture duplicated. This, of course, meant that the picture had to be taken out of the frame, and in doing this the studio owner noticed that there was an inscription on the back of the photograph. Here’s what it said: “My dearest Tom, I love you with all my heart. I love you more and more each day. I will love you for ever and ever. I am yours completely for all eternity.” And it was signed, “Diane.” But this message of eternal love had a postscript: “P. S.,” it said, “If we ever break up, I want this picture back.” (hearty laughter). Perhaps Diane wasn’t quite as committed after all.

All of us are inspired by people who give their all. We call them saints, heroes, legends. We put them on pedestals. It’s not that they are more intelligent or more talented than we are; they simply gave more than the average person is willing to give. “For I’m already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

I believe these are inspiring words. In light of Paul’s writing, let me ask you some questions this morning. The first is this: How would you be remembered? I think that’s an important question: How would you be remembered? Will you be remembered as a person who gave his or her all, or will you be remembered as a person who always took the easy way through? What will be your legacy? That’s

a popular word now a days and an important one -- legacy. How will you be remembered? What will you leave behind?

And a second question is: Whose life will be better because you have been here? Billions of people have been touched by the life and the writings of St. Paul. Whose life is better because you have walked this planet? -- your spouse, your children, your friends, the people with whom you have worked. Have you made a conscious effort to touch the lives of others with the love of Jesus?

A couple of weeks ago, I think all of us were inspired by what happened in San Jose, Chile. That gold and copper mine that collapsed on August 5<sup>th</sup> some two-thousand fifty feet below the ground was an incredible story. All of these miners were trapped down there together. Now, I think all of us can realize what might have happened. I don't know about you, but I'm a little claustrophobic, but I can't image being trapped in a place like that. But those thirty-three men somehow from August 5<sup>th</sup> to when they were liberated on October 13<sup>th</sup>, they helped each other, they encouraged each other, they inspired each other, and ultimately they loved each other, imprisoned in a place over two thousand feet below the ground; but yet they responded in a wonderful way. This is a parable of our place in this world. God has placed us here to serve one another and to serve God. It is in giving away our lives that we receive new life. It is in serving that we find greatness. It is losing our lives that we find them. Whose life is better because you have been here? It is only in adding to the lives of others that we find value in our lives.

Here's the final question. When your race is over, what will God say about your life? It's important that your friends comment favorably about your life, it's even more important that your family remember you fondly; but what will God say about your life? Will God say that you have been faithful servant?

One day in an English town a tailor named George Vickers received a shipment of cloth from London. When he unpacked the box the cloth was damp, so he hung it up before the fireplace to dry. A week later George was dead. A few days after that one of his landlady's young sons died; and then the man who lived in the house next door. It wasn't long before twenty people per week were dying in the town. The year was 1665. The disease was bubonic plague. The town was called Eyam. One day as the plague raged on and others died in the little village, the rector of Eyam's Church of St. Lawrence, called the people together for a meeting. He proposed they draw an imaginary line surrounding Eyam that the villagers would not cross as long as the plague was present. In effect he was suggesting that they voluntarily quarantine themselves rather than trying to escape to places where

there was no plague. The smart thing for any one person to do was to get out of town as quickly as possible in case they had not been infected. But the people knew how quickly the plague would spread if they went to other towns, so people of Eyam made an amazing sacrifice; they stayed put, thereby almost guaranteeing that each of them would die, so the plague might not infect neighboring villages. By the time the plague was over in November of 1666, two hundred sixty of the three hundred people of the little village had died, the highest percentage of the population anywhere in England.

I wonder if this nobility exists anywhere in today's world. I believe it did when those thirty three men demonstrated that kind of nobility. We are people who look after our own interests first and foremost. Enlightened self interest is the way that is often rationalized. To lay down our lives for the greater good is a foreign concept, and yet that is what Jesus did for us. Today Jesus looks for people who understand what sacrifice and self-giving is all about. It is to them that he will say, "Welcome, thou good and faithful servant." It is to those who are totally poured out in service to others that Jesus will open the gates to God's kingdom.

How will you be remembered? What will be your legacy? Whose life will have been better because you have been here? What will Jesus say as he welcomes you into God's kingdom? St. Paul came to the end of his life and here's what he had to say: "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for Jesus' appearing."

*Amen*

Transcribed by Phyllis K. Briggs

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