

“Don’t Miss Out on the Best Part of Life”

1 Corinthians 9:16-27

A couple of weeks ago, I made a reference to the fragment of the Gospel of Mark which was discovered dating from the First Century – making it the oldest existing copy of any of the Gospels we have. We are still waiting for it to be verified. The world of archaeology moves really slow.

On Monday morning, trying to avoid the “big news” of the day – the aftermath of the Super Bowl, I did a Google search of the major archaeological websites to see if there actually was any new news on anything. There was not – other than some work being done to restore and actually reconstruct Herod’s Palace near the Dead Sea where John the Baptist would have been imprisoned and killed.

Going back a couple of months, there was a discovery of clay seals called “bullae” used to seal official documents from the time when David and Solomon reigned in Israel. Neither of those “discoveries” should be all that noteworthy. They have discovered what they should expect to discover.

Here is the problem. There are many so-called experts – many who are well-funded representatives from universities throughout the world who are very hostile toward God and have devoted their lives to promoting the notion that the Bible is not actual history. They did not expect to find evidence of David and Solomon. I am not kidding. The worse part is that many of them most likely did not want to find evidence of David and Solomon –

or John the Baptist. Even though there has never been anything unearthed from the ancient world which contradicts what we read of in Scripture. There are many influential people (especially in the last few hundred years) who have desperately tried to remove the evidence of God from before the eyes of the people.

Their efforts have been in vain. For anyone who is actually looking for evidence of God or evidence to support the rather bold claims of the witnesses of Scripture – such as Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. The evidence is right there before your eyes. The critics of God have nothing to offer except empty ideas blowing in the wind. Truly, God is the One, as Isaiah says in our Old Testament reading, “who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. . . when He blows on them, they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.”

Do not worry about what people say when they mock the Gospel. Remember, “The fool says in his heart, ‘there is not God.’” Don’t be burdened by the words of fools. These empty attacks show up even in places like the Super Bowl commercial for Carnival Cruise line.

Did you catch the plea for you to come back to the sea because the sea is where we came from (that is, where we supposedly evolved from). What evidence is there? Well, the voice in the commercial claims our blood contains “exactly” the same percentage of salt as sea water. The reality is that salt levels in the ocean can range from less than 1% in the Baltic Sea on the north shore of Europe to 4% in the Persian Gulf. It amazes me how this sort of ignorance goes unchallenged. Yet, the majestic voice claims, “When we go back to the sea . . . we go back from whence we came.” (Empty ideas blowing in the wind)

On Monday, I spent my day looking for actual news – something concrete to share with the people of God. Do you know what I found? On Facebook, there were countless posts of a video of Jimmy Fallon lip syncing with Will Ferrell. That link dominated my news feed. And I watched it. I didn't want to miss out. People had to be sharing it for a reason. It was funny. I don't know if it was worth nine minutes of my office time.

I found t-shirts for sale with the dancing sharks from the Super Bowl halftime show. This was on Monday. T-shirts were already for sale. Apparently, the lack of dancing ability of the shark on the left during halftime is of some great importance. It sure was “big news.”

For the past few hundred years, Satan deceived the world with empty ideas about God not being involved, or certainly not being necessary, for life to begin or continue on. These empty ideas are now easily refuted by anyone who will actually take the time to look at the evidence.

Therefore, Satan has found a different (and probably a better) way of keeping you from hearing the truth of the Gospel. It is what you do with small children when you want to keep them from something – you distract them. Every parent knows this trick. Our world has lost sight of what is necessary in this life. We are so easily distracted.

Ironically, the media obsession with popular news is driven by people's fear of missing out. You don't want to miss out. The ironic part is that our culture's obsession with not missing out on any news of the day is that the majority has become obsessed with unimportant things like dancing sharks. And therefore, the majority misses out on the best part of life.

On Monday, I was trying to figure out what should be considered the biggest event, the biggest news of the day from last Sunday. Of all the things that happened last Sunday, what is the one thing that everyone should be talking about? Was it the Super Bowl game or the Super Bowl commercials or the dancing sharks, or even the archaeological discoveries supporting the history of the Bible?

Taking a step back, it was easy to see the biggest event which offered the biggest reward last weekend. It happened right here. It was the preaching of the Gospel – the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. There is a reward. There is a prize. It is more lasting than the Lombardi trophy. Paul compares the preaching of the Gospel to the Olympic style Greek games. The athletes devoted their entire life to training for the games and the opportunity to receive a laurel wreath. Those plants would be dead and dried up faster than the Patriots trip to Disneyworld.

Let me ask you this, who won the 2005 Super Bowl? It was only 10 years ago. I had to look it up. I had no idea. It was also the Patriots. Ten years from now, you will have to check the Internet to find out who won this year. It does not last. Who won two years ago? I had to look that one up also – and I really like football.

Paul's message is simple. Run the race that matters. Run the race with the imperishable prize – the one that lasts forever. The Son of God has died to take away the guilt of your sin. The Son of God has defeated death. The Son of God has promised you resurrection and life eternal. Don't miss out on the best part of life. Amen.