



There is a large dog racing track in Colorado. It is a big business. People come from all over to bet on the dog races. The dogs are fast. They run with a motivation that is impeccable. What is their motivation? It is a rabbit. The dogs are born and bred to pursue rabbits. From the time they are little puppies until they become racers their entire existence is focused on catching the rabbit.

One day while some friends of mine were at the dog track when they saw a rare occurrence. There was a track malfunction of great magnitudes. It had to do with the mechanical rabbit. This mechanical rabbit is strategically maneuvered to be just out of reach of the fastest dog in the pack. Each dog runs as hard and as fast as it can so it can get the prize of the rabbit. Well, here is what happened. The dogs came up to their gates. The gates opened and the race began. The dogs were running and barking pursuing the rabbit with a vengeance. But then the rabbit stopped! Just stopped. The mechanical rabbit shorted out. And soon enough the dogs caught up to it and attacked it. And then, it wasn't pretty. The dogs shredded the mechanical rabbit to pieces.

When it was time for those same dogs to race again, they were put into their gates, the gates opened, but this time they stood there. They just stood there. Not one of them moved. Eventually they walked out of their gates and started playing together. They had no desire to pursue that rabbit any more. The one thing they had always pursued, the one thing they had always wanted was not worth it. The dogs were then adopted out to families since they refused to run at the track.

What do you pursue in your life? And what happens to you when you get it? The book of James has something to say to us about who or what we pursue and what is going to happen to us when we get it.

READ James 1:9-11

In this text James isn't saying that being rich is bad and being poor is good. What James is getting at here is 2 things.

- 1) What are you pursuing your lives?
- 2) What do you have when you finally get it?

We live in a culture that strives for wealth as a means of attaining a sense of security, a sense of joy. How many of you have one of these? (show my wallet) How many of you don't even carry a wallet anymore, but just use one of these as a wallet? (show cell phone) What is in your wallet? Our culture often encourages us to pursue filling this up with wealth. There is a strong cultural ideal that the more money we have, the more we can fit into our wallets, the happier, the more content, the safer and more secure we will be. Am I right? There is a sense that if we just have "enough" all will be well. We often find ourselves pursuing money, spending lots of time managing our financial portfolios so that we can be secure.

We are pursuing something to protect us now and into the future. Isn't that what we all want, we want to be protected from the unknown, we want to be protected from all danger and harm, we want to feel secure, we want to be in control and our society has spent millions of dollars trying to convince us that the more money we have the more secure our future will be.

In our reading today James tells us that wealth doesn't protect us from everything. He said that if we are going to pursue something, we are better off pursuing our relationship with Jesus instead of pursuing more and more wealth. He says that wealth is temporary, it can be here one day and be gone the next. If we chose to focus our time and energy on our wealth we may become very disappointed in what our money can't buy.

James is giving us a reality check about wealth. As much as we would like to believe, as much as our culture would like us to believe, wealth can't protect us from pain, suffering, sorrow, broken relationships and most certainly death. Life happens, relationships are broken, pain comes, death comes and when it does what we really need is something that money can't buy, Jesus.

James lets us know that pursuing our relationship with Jesus will bring us hope, healing and new life. A richness that is never counted in dollars. He is not saying we are supposed to pursue being poor. James is encouraging us to pursue Jesus in our lives. To spend time on our spiritual portfolio. Jesus is imperishable. He promises to be with us at all times in our lives. Jesus walks each step of our lives with us. He is the only thing in this world that is imperishable. Jesus will always be here. He is with us no matter what our circumstances may be. When we are hurting, when our relationships are broken, Jesus provides us with hope, comfort, peace and joy. That is when we know we are rich in Christ.

A few weeks ago one evening I came home and told my husband that I feel like I am the richest person in the world. Jim said, "please do tell!" Here is what I told him, " I had book club with my friends and we had the most wonderful conversations, then I had lunch with a couple of other friends we sat outside and talked and laughed and cried. All in the same lunch time. I was wonderful. Then I went into Prince of Peace and had amazing conversations with my colleagues. I talked to our girls on the phone. Then I went to my small group. We call ourselves the warrior princesses. We talk about our own personal ups and downs we study scripture and talk about it. I felt so supported. And now it get to come home and spend my evening with you! How could anyone be so rich! I am so thankful to God tonight.

Take out that wallet again or cell phone. What else is in your wallet? Pictures of people you love? What if you and I take our time and energy and manage our portfolio of relationships. Start with the very people you hold close to your heart. Jesus calls us into a life of relationships with him and with the world. We live that out through our lives in our homes, neighborhoods and church.

You and I can pursue what we really need in this life. Relationships with others through the love of Jesus. Spending our time and energy pursuing a relationship with Jesus will bring to our lives a richness that can never be bought. Today is fathers day. Some of you have fathers that are wonderful and you will be celebrating with your fathers, Jesus is right there with you. Some of you no longer have your fathers with you, Jesus is right there with you, some of you have broken relationships with your fathers, Well Jesus is right there with you too. Know that when you pursue your relationship with Jesus, he is there for you to bring love, hope and comfort.

We want everyone who comes through our doors at Prince of Peace to experience the richness of being in relationship with Jesus and others. I have some more good news for you today. Amy Oestrich is our new small group director and she is here today to get you connected to this community of faith. To work with you to find a group of people to walk with you through the ups and downs of life. She is in the back of the sanctuary (over by the stairs outside) to connect you with a group of people here at Prince of Peace. Stop by and visit with Amy, get connected with a small group. As you pursue relationships, Jesus is right along side you.