

### **Psalm 15**

A Psalm of David.

O Lord, who may abide in your tent?  
Who may dwell on your holy hill?  
Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,  
and speak the truth from their heart;  
who do not slander with their tongue,  
and do no evil to their friends,  
nor take up a reproach against their neighbours;  
in whose eyes the wicked are despised,  
but who honour those who fear the Lord;  
who stand by their oath even to their hurt;  
who do not lend money at interest,  
and do not take a bribe against the innocent.

### **John 13:34-35**

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

### **I Timothy 4:11-16**

These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

### **“The Ball Is In Your Court”**

**Rev. David Dalke**

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I want to read some Scripture to you, and then I'm going to ask you a question. The first Scripture I want to read to you is from the Book of Psalms, it's the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter. It's real short. "O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?" Here's the answer. "Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart; who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbours; in whose eyes the wicked are despised, but who honour those who fear the Lord; who stand by their oath even to their hurt; who do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent."

And then the Gospel of John, in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, these two short verses: I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love

one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Then we look at the words of a young person who was sort of on the Gospel campaign for the Apostle Paul, and he hired old Timothy to work for him in Ephesus. Here's what he says. Paul is talking to Timothy, and he says, “These are the things you must insist on, and this is what I want you to teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

If you were not doing what you presently do, if you were not occupied the way you are, day in and day out, whether it's a homemaker, whether it's a person who teaches, whether it's a salesperson, wherever you find yourself, if you were not having that happen for you, day in and day out, what do you think you would be doing? What would be your dream? Now, I need to tell you, someone at the eight o'clock service said they were still waiting to get that call from the Broncos. I just thought that was kind of cool, you know, to be in the presence of that person. I tried to reassure him that it probably wouldn't happen, but he's still hopeful.

What would you be doing? Just let me hear a couple. What might you be doing? Writing children's books. Deliver flowers. Boy Scouts. You know, I think I'd try to coach. Coaches come in all kinds of identities. Martha's a life coach. We have athletic coaches, we have dialect coaches, we have drama coaches, we have business coaches. When Stuart, who sang the solo for us this morning so beautifully...I went to hear his senior recital, it was wonderful, but he paid tribute in his program to his voice coach, who is Cynthia, and who is leading us here. We all have coaches, and have had through the ages. Charles Schultz has been probably a pretty good coach, you know, the cartoonist. Parents sometimes are good coaches, grandparents, teachers oftentimes take on a coaching role, in Scripture we read this morning about some people that are good coaches to us. I suspect Moses was a good coach, the Psalmist was a good coach, Paul was a really good coach, he coached Timothy. He told Timothy, “You know what you have to do? You have to pay attention to helping those people understand what their conduct is supposed to be, and how they should speak to one another, and what their faith journey ought to be, and how they make good decisions. That's what a coach does for us.

Coaches in our lives are people that remind us of the possibilities. They remind us of what's possible for us. They remind us that the answers are probably tucked away inside of us, right here, and all we have to do is discover. When we're kind of perplexed, we pull inside, and we say “What is it that I must do?” Coaches remind us that those are inside of us, they just need to be expressed. It all has to do with attitude. A lot of it is attitude. Don't we know people that have a lot of knowledge and a lot of smarts and they're really skilful, but they have this lousy attitude? I mean, just lousy, you know?

You get around those people and you say “Good morning!” and they say “Mmmrnf.” “How are you doing?” “What do you think?” “It’s good to see you.” “Mmm-hm, sure.” “Nice shirt.” “Yeah, garage sale.” I mean, nothing’s right. There’s nothing right about that person. And it’s all attitudinal. And you know people and I do too, for whom they maybe don’t have quite as much smarts and they might not have as much knowledge about some things, and they may not be quite as skilful, but you know what? They’re just glad to be here. They’re really glad to be here, just like those children. They’re glad to be unique. They’re the kind of people that say, “No matter what happens to me, I’m going to get through it. No matter what happens.” It’s attitudinal. It’s looking at what’s possible.

You know, I think that’s what Jesus was all about. I think he was trying to tell us that you don’t have to worry. Don’t worry, be happy. Well, I don’t know that he said that last part, but I think he said “Don’t worry.” And I think he was saying, “I’m not going to abandon you. I’m the way, the truth, and the light, just hang in here with me. Stay with me,” he said. Focus on what’s good in your life. Focus on what you know will work. Which is exactly why, I think, that ball team from Kansas won the national championship three weeks ago. Yes, I know, you knew that it was going to come out sometime. This is the first chance I’ve had. You know, I don’t think they won that because someone made a miraculous shot with the time running out and sent the game into an overtime and then they really went wild. I don’t think that’s why they won it. I think when they were all celebrating jubilantly, and they were wearing their hats, and their shirts were on and someone said, “What did the coach say to you? You were down nine points and had less than two minutes to go, what did he say to you? You must have felt like you didn’t have a chance. What did he say?” And one of them said, “Well, he told us just to kind of focus on what we know what we can do right, focus on the possibility of what can still happen for us. Focus on what will work. Focus on what we know. Focus on what we know about ourselves.”

And you know, I suspect that when Bill Self was in that huddle looking at those players, I don’t think he saw a group of young men that were just going to go out there and try to win a basketball game. He saw deeper than that. And I think what he really saw was a Brandon Rush that was standing there looking at him that had never had a father figure in his life. I think he saw a Russell Robinson who came from the hardscrabble of Brooklyn, New York, who wanted to leave his freshman year and the coach said to him, “Come back. You still have something to offer.” He said, “I don’t feel good about myself” and he said “You’re still worth it.” I think he saw a Sasha Kaun who was standing there whose dad was shot and killed when Sasha Kaun was thirteen years old, his dad shot in a parking garage in Russia. I think he saw Roderick Stewart, who looked at him and who had just three weeks prior to that tournament, his brother in Seattle was sitting at a stop sign in his car and someone came up and shot him. All these shootings, I think that’s what he saw. I think he saw a Sherron Collins who came out of the depressive part of the projects in Chicago, where there was prostitution and rape and where there were gang wars and drugs, and whose best friend when he was a senior in college was coming out of his house, after they’d had a great time together, and he walked out on the porch and a gang member drives by and shoots him and kills him. That’s what he saw. He saw a Darnell Jackson who had experienced more hatred in his life and more agony than any of

us might even imagine, who wanted to leave last year and go back to Oklahoma City, the scene of a crime where the police officers chased his dad and shot him down. And Bill Self was waiting there for him when he drove up, and he said, "Come on, you're going back with me." And he coached him back there. A Darnell Jackson whose grandmother, whom he loved dearly, was hit and killed by a drunk driver three years ago. Whose cousin was shot and killed the same week that Roderick Stewart's brother died. Two players, three weeks before the tournament, going through grief and death. That's what I think he saw. I think he said to himself, "What you young men have been through is nothing compared about the fact that we have only few minutes, we're down nine points and we just have a couple minutes – that's nothing compared to what you've been through. Nothing compared to what you've been through."

The Apostle Paul said, "Cling to that which is good, and detest that which is evil." Cling to what's good, and detest what's evil. Coaches have a way of telling us that something is possible. But they also do something else. I think coaches teaches when it's time that we can take a time out. They remind us, when life just gets overwhelming and it's overpowering, whether it's in our marriage or in our relationships with our friends, or whether it's in our families or whether it's in our work, our neighborhood, or our extended family. Whatever it is, sometimes we just get up to here, and we just say, "You know what? I have to take a time out. This is just too overwhelming." And you know what? It's a good idea, because the cortisol level rises in our body when we feel all this stress stuff going on, and when that cortisol rises it affects the cholesterol inside of us, and when the cholesterol is affected, you know what it does to the arteries, and then the heart doesn't do what it's supposed to do, because the stress levels are so high.

We need time out. Jesus took a time out. He took a lot of time outs, I think. You know, we read about him going off into the mountains by himself, going off to pray, going off to meditate, getting in his boat. He wanted to get away from people. They pressed against him all the time. All the time, and he needed a time out. And we all need to get away sometimes, and pull back. We need a time out. You've called time outs, I'm sure.

I called one. I called one when my son was in the third grade and he was playing basketball in a league sponsored by the Salvation Army. We played at their facility every Saturday morning. He was in the third grade, and the rule of the third-grade basketball teams was that everybody played equal time. Everybody got to play the same amount of time. You're in the third grade. Well, my son sat on the bench most of the time with two or three of his other buddies, and he would play like only one or two minutes a game. And so one Saturday morning we left, and I looked over at him and he had tears rolling down his cheeks, and I said, "Mike, I'm sorry you lost today." And he said, "I'm not crying, Daddy, I'm not crying because we lost. I'm crying because I didn't get to play." And I said "Time out. Time out."

Then I wrote the coach, and I wrote the Salvation Army. That's taking on a pretty big group, you know. And I said, "Here are the rules." Well, they reprimanded his coach, and the coach got mad at me. You know how that all works, you've been there, some of you. We muddled through two more games, and so we got through the rest of the school year.

Now he's in the fourth grade. He says, "I think I'm going to play basketball again." I said, "Are you sure?" He said, "Yeah, and I want you to coach." "Now wait a minute, Mike, just because I complained, doesn't mean..." "Dad, you said that everybody would play equal time. I want you to coach." So I said "Okay." Well, it was the night to select the players, and here was this Salvation Army gymnasium and all of us, coaches and parents were up in the stands, and the kids were going through all their routines, and every now and then I'd notice somebody would leave the stands. The coach, and he'd go down and tap a boy on the shoulder, say "Come here, come here." And they'd go up and talk to the parents. He'd say, "I want you to play for me." And I realized, they're recruiting. They're recruiting these fourth graders. I sat there and I thought, "I will not do that."

And when it was all said and done, there were some boys standing out on the floor by themselves, of which my son was one, and the head of the league came up to me and said, "David, there's your team." And he said, "But there's a problem." I said, "I'll bet. I'm sure there is." He said, "There are eleven boys out there, and we can only have ten on a team." Can you imagine that?" I said, "You've got to be kidding me." I said, "If I'm coaching, all eleven play." Well, we started practice, and those boys, with the exception of my son, knew nothing about basketball. They just had the spirit in them to have fun, get out there and just do what they could do. We learned a few fundamentals, we started playing our games. One game, we didn't even score. Now this is basketball. We didn't even score. One time, we scored four points. Two of them in the wrong goal. And I'll never forget Andy coming over to me and saying, "Coach, I scored." I looked at him and said, "Andy, it was a great shot, but next time, shoot it in that basket over there."

Well, they got better. We didn't win, but they got better, and they had fun, and every Saturday after we'd play I'd take them out for lunch. I remember one game, we were kind of in the game, it was pretty close, and little Scotty down at the end of the bench, he yelled at me, he was just sitting there and he yelled at me right in the intense part of the game and he said "Coach, what are we having for lunch?" Well, it came down to the very last game, and we were playing a team that was undefeated. They hadn't lost, and they were coached by the guy that coached the team last year, that I didn't like very much, who coached my son. They were undefeated. If they beat us, which they surely would, they'd win the league. If we happened to by a miraculous way, win, they'd get second place. So the game was being played, and we just really worked hard on our defense that week. We played good defense, we were tenacious, and they weren't scoring, and we were dropping a few in the basket, doing pretty well. When it came down to the half we were only down three points. And then as it came down to the end of the game, there were ten seconds left and there was a jump ball under our basket, and the game was tied. The score was tied. And the jump ball was under our basket. And I said, "Time out. Time out." And when they got in the huddle I looked at them, I said "Andy, you're our center. Now Andy, I want you to get the tip. You've got to get the tip. You can do it. Jump as high as you can." I looked at Henry and said, "Henry, do you like football?" He said, "Football?" I said, "Yeah, you like football?" He said, "Yeah, I love football." I said, "Aren't you a quarterback?" "Yeah, I'm a quarterback." I said, "We're going to play football." He said, "This is basketball." I said, "I don't care. Listen. Andy's going to tip it

to you and Henry, I want you to get the ball and pivot, don't walk, just pivot, and hand that ball to Mike just like a handoff in football. Mike's going to come around behind you, he's going to get the ball. And then Mike, I want you to step back, just take a jump shot. You can do it, you've done it before. Henry will kind of block for you." I said, "I know it sounds like football, but just do it."

Well, the referee threw the ball up, Andy got the tip. Henry got the ball. He pivoted around, gave it to Mike, Mike put the ball in the air, the gun went off and the ball went in, and they won. And you would have thought, because the other kids had gathered that morning, because we played the early game, so the stands were full, and they rushed out of the stands and they picked these kids up. They just hoisted them up. It was a glorious moment for eleven fourth graders. It was a great moment for them, just like it was a great moment for a group of college kids that rolled down Massachusetts Avenue in Lawrence, Kansas on the back of convertibles to eighty or a hundred thousand people cheering. It didn't matter who it was, because there were some common denominators going on there, and the common denominator was that everybody had coaches in their lives.

Everybody had somebody, even amidst tragedy and heartache and hardship, that cared for them. There were some Moseses in the lives that said, "Here are the tablets. Look at them, read them. They've got some words of coaching and guidance on them." And there were psalmists in their lives that said, "You know what? Get in touch with the truth, and act on it. Get in touch with the truth. It's found in your heart. And there were people like Pauls in their lives, they all had a Paul in their life who said, "Cling to the good. Get rid of the evil." And there were Timothys in their lives, Timothy who said, "Watch your conduct, watch your speech, make good decisions." And then there was a friend, it was Jesus. There was a Jesus in their life that said, "Don't worry. Life is more than what you're going through right now. I'll never abandon you, I'll always be there for you." And these are the coaches that hand all of us the ball. These are the coaches that look at us and say, "I want to remind you what's possible in you life." These are the coaches that say, "When it gets too overwhelming, take a time out. But remember, when you take a time out, you always come back." You always come back. And that's when the coaches in our lives hand us the ball of life and they say, "The world is your court, now go out there and give us all something to cheer about." Amen.