

“Let Us Pray”  
Sermon – June 5 & 6, 2010  
Jeremy Duprey

Let us Pray. Dear Lord we are grateful to be in your presence. You are good. Lord, this morning we ask that you speak to us. Teach us. Let us hear your truth. And Lord, today we ask that you specifically open the ears and hearts of our graduating seniors so that they may take something away from today that they may remember as they begin the next phase of their journey. In your name we pray. Amen.

Good morning. My name is Jeremy Duprey and I am one of the youth ministers here at Christ Church. I have been here for almost three years, but my time here at Christ Church is coming to an end. My family and I will be leaving in a couple weeks to return to our family back in Montana and Wyoming. So this is a time of transition for me and I have had a lot of time to do some reflection. In my time of reflection one question continues to pop in to my head “Have I been successful”

Seniors, this is also a time of transition for you. If you have not already begun, you will do some major reflection on the last 10 or 12 years of your life. I imagine that you will reflect on relationships with friends, how much fun you have had, maybe on how hard things were or are. You may reflect on how you have done in the classroom or in the athletic arena or on the stage. I anticipate that you will also reflect on whether you have been successful in your life up to this point. You may ask yourself “have I been successful”. And you won’t be alone. I imagine there are few people around you, maybe even your parents, who have asked themselves “Have I been successful”

Now “Being successful” is nearly impossible to define for all of us, because to have success is to meet expectations, and we all have individual expectations that differ from someone else’s expectations. For example, Paul has an expectation for his hair that is way different than my expectations for my hair. Paul has this very suave Robert De Niro thing going on with his hair, and I hope that my cowlick doesn’t stick out in the back and make me look like Alfalfa.

So because of our different expectations we all may have different criteria for being successful. But I think there are some general expectations that many of us are asked to meet. I would like to tell you a story about expectations. Can I tell you a story? (then doing the hand motion that Paul always does when he wants the congregation to say “yes”)

When I was in school, each year we did this presidential physical fitness test. They tested us in five areas and I did really well in four of the five. I had no problems reaching the requirements for sit-ups and the shuttle run. They had us sit on the ground and reach towards our toes to measure flexibility and that was pretty easy. I was always first in my class when we ran the mile. But there was one test that I did not meet the expectations:

pull-ups. Each year I would walk up to the pull-up bar in front of the entire gym class only needing to do one to get the cool blue patch and each year I was unsuccessful. Each year I would come home and tell me dad that I had not done a pull up and he would tell me that was ok, he still thought I was a great athlete, but that I just didn't have the body type for pull-ups. He was right

But still there were these expectations sort of thrust upon me as a first grader that I did not meet and I felt like I was unsuccessful because I could not do one pull up.

Well as we all know these type of expectations don't stop once we leave gym class, and they don't stop once we leave elementary school, they don't stop once we graduate high school or college. To me there seem to be expectations to get a very high GPA in school, attend a college that 80,000 other people also want to attend, get married, have two amazing children, have a stable job, donate time and money to charitable foundations, be well read, travel the world, be part of a community, memorize the bible, own an iPhone, work out consistently, make family the number two priority only behind God, do a really good job, and have enough money to retire and buy season tickets to the Chicago Cubs.

These are some of the expectations that I feel. I am not sure where they all come from. Some come from me, some come from my dad, some come from you, some come from those very effective commercials on TV, and there are others that I am not sure from where they come. Most of these expectations and many other expectations in our lives are not bad. Many of them are good. But for me these types of expectations are how I determine if I have been successful.

Our reading from Galatians this morning was written by a very "successful" person in the Apostle Paul. Now before he was the successful Paul, he was the very successful Saul. As you can see in verse 13 and 14 of chapter 1, Saul had authority and power to destroy the church of God, he was climbing the ladder in his profession, and he was "beyond his years" intelligent.

Circumcised on the eighth day (he was a card carrying Jew, he belonged to the right group, he was insider with God), of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin (has good pedigree), a Hebrew of Hebrews (true to his colors, patriotic); in regard to the law, a Pharisee (like a local circuit judge and teacher); was for zeal, persecuting the church (passionate and fired up); as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. (Paul would later say that one of the keystones to his theology was that no one could be perfect in the eyes of the law, but of anyone he knew, he gave it the best shot.

So Saul was this very "successful" guy. He met, and exceeded, expectations. Then Acts chapter 9 happens to him and bam, Saul is Paul, the man that formerly persecuted the church now preached the faith he once tried to destroy, and suddenly the expectations that he has, the things in his life that determine whether he is "successful" are radically different.

Verse 15 of Galatians chapter 1 says “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the Gentiles “.

Allowing God to reveal Jesus Christ through his life was Paul’s expectation. This is how he gauged success.

Seniors, whenever you reflect on your life, whether after graduating from high school, or after college, or when you turn 30, or 40, or 70 you may see that you have achieved many of the expectations for your life, but this is not how you should determine success. I hope that you surrender your life to God, allow him to work through you and reveal his Son Jesus in your life. That, my friends, is success!