

I was recently blessed with the opportunity to accompany my friends and fellow believers Zoe White and Jerry Jones on an evangelism outreach trip to the LSU campus in Baton Rouge. When the three of us set out from brother Zoe's home, we first had a time of prayer and preparation, calling on the Lord to send his spirit before us and make hearts and minds sensitive to the intentional preaching of God's word and truth. We prayed that the work of tilling the soil, which only God can do, would be done in the souls of those we would encounter. We prayed that we would be faithful to the spreading of the gospel, and we sought from God the peace that comes from a mind set on the truth that we are workers in the harvest, no more, no less. This trip, being the first of its kind and scope I have ever participated in, would cause me to reflect on that truth many times throughout the night.

We would be joining one of the biggest game day crowds of the year as LSU faced Alabama, and the energy on the campus was heightened to the extreme. As we walked to our destination, we passed one reveller after another, and there was a general feeling of camaraderie as people enjoyed the company of other sports fans. This energy and jovial atmosphere would abruptly change, however, once Zoe's amp turned on and the evangelism message went out in earnest. The crowd began to shy away from us, giving us a wide berth. The angry, disapproving looks were numerous. Mocking shouts and jeers were common. Those initial reactions to our presence were clear: we were not welcome. This was not a surprise, as 1 Corinthians 1:18 clearly states that a spiritually dead person considers the gospel foolishness. I was not caught off guard intellectually by this, nor did I feel personally attacked, but I nevertheless began to reflect on how and why that scriptural warning was working itself out when my answer came from someone passing by: they told us, "this is not the place for that..." to which Zoe responded, "This is the place for this because you are here and still breathing." That's when I realized part of the reason why we, and more importantly the spoken gospel message, were not welcome: we were ruining the fun.

In this place and atmosphere of sports fandom and worldly devotion to a team, the truth was going out and causing no small amount of discomfort. The message was threatening an idol, calling for self-reflection and an admission that blind pursuit of worldly pleasure is neither fulfilling nor wise. Sports has no temple and yet I overheard a man bragging about how far he travelled, how much he spent on the trip, and how long he waited in the snow to see an away game. Sports has no holy book and yet I overheard someone proudly reciting player names and stats from memory. Enjoying sports is not inherently bad, but this was an extremely sobering and convicting realization for me, personally. Was I devoting that much time and energy to the most important pursuits in my life? Was there anything in my life, sports, hobbies, relationships, that were displacing God and my pursuit of Holiness?

To a believer, this kind of inner dialogue is a sobering reality that everyday we must examine our hearts, but we, as believers, do so firmly positioned in Christ. The prompting to be more holy, to increase in faith is joy and ultimate good. To a lost, dead listener, these truths and appeals are like salt on a wound. They can't integrate this into their worldview, their master, whether it be sports, religion, themselves, will not allow it. Two masters can't exist in a man's heart side by side, and a dead servant of darkness can't overthrow his master. Praise be to God then that the believer's master is mighty, and wherever He chooses to go, whatever He chooses to conquer, we can be sure and certain that nothing will stand against Him.

I was able to see this truth on full display that night as Zoe and Jerry faithfully continued to plead with passersby, and meaningful conversations continued to happen, even in the midst of mockery and discouragement. Tracts were refused and discarded, but still went out. It was amazing to see the people who were drawn to us, sometimes almost accidentally, and were willing to ask questions and have a respectful dialogue. It was refreshing to see the truth of God's word come alive, that the world will, for the most part, reject and mock the word of God, and believers themselves, and we should be thoroughly prepared for this. But as Isaiah wrote, God's word shall not return void, and the blessing of being able to speak the gospel to His glory can't ultimately compare with whatever the world can throw against it.