



Worship at Home: National Sports Sunday 2021 Sunday 16th May 2021

ADDRESS

Warren Evans, CEO of Sports Chaplaincy UK

What a privilege it is to share from God's word this morning. Before I start, I just want to say to you, please lean in. Don't switch off if you're not a sport lover. It's not about sport. It's about God and people, so please stay tuned. As James says, I am Chief Exec of Sports Chaplaincy UK, which simply means I work with some wonderful leaders and people both in and outside the church, seeing our community impacted in a positive way. As a charity, we are here to serve the local church and we have a dream, I believe it's a God given dream.

A dream to see an expression of his love and compassion in every community called sport. And sports just the field that God has placed me in but ultimately, I want to say this. I want to see an expression of his love and compassion in every community. Do you know the community of sport consists of 13 million men, women and children? We all have preconceived ideas of sport. You may love it, you may loathe it, but today, I simply want to say this: Sport is more than an activity. It's a community of people. Matt, my colleague kindly read to us the scriptures from John 17:6 to 19, which I want to share from today. But using an acronym to help us remember and challenge and encourage us to not just be hearers of God's word, but doers of God's word. That acronym is simply a word which is made up of letters. And so on National Sports Sunday, the clue, it would be remiss not to use the word 'sport'. And it's not all about, I remind you, it's not all about an activity, but it is about God and people.

So, sport, I want to use this visual aid. Just remember, just think of a seesaw. And we've got S-P-O-R-T. O is that pivotal point that I'm going to come back to. But time's against us, so we're going to crack on. 'S'. S stands for see. My wife and I have three boys, and my oldest boy would watch those aid adverts, Christian Aid, WaterAid adverts, and see children in desperate need and would cry and was moved with compassion. And because of this, we chose to sponsor three girls in different parts of the globe because it's morally, ethically, and spiritually right. Jesus saw the crowd and was moved, compelled with compassion to respond to their needs. I've got a question. What do you think when you see sport?

Some may be moved with passion, others turned off. But I guess it's not about- Mostly, a lot have been moved with compassion, that's for certain. But as the Church of Jesus Christ, we should be culturally different. If we see a community no different to anyone else, are we any different? You know, in 1 Samuel 16, verse 7, he says, "God looks upon the heart." Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks upon the heart. You know, as people of God, we're called to be culturally different and to look not as everyone else sees.

And I believe we are called to look at this decimated community through the eyes of a compassionate God. When we look at the kids' clubs, the gyms, not just the elite, but the park runs, through the eyes of a compassionate God, when we do this, we see something different. We see something differently. We move with compassion, we respond differently. A moment's revelation demands a different response. So 'S' stands for see. We can all choose to see differently, choose to see through the eyes of a compassionate God.

'P'. P for prayer. Prayer is one of the most underused tools in our kit bag. If we see differently, we will also pray differently. And I want to challenge you to pray for the community of sport. Not just for wins. But you know when you drop your kids off, your grandchildren off, when you go to the club, when you go to the gym, just simply say a prayer. Pray for them. Pray for their families, but say a prayer. God, wherever you're at work, can I join in?

'O' is that pivotal point that we're going to come back to later. So next is 'R'. 'R' is all about relationship. Missio Dei, the mission of God, sending. God sends his Son, the Son sends his Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit sends us. You know, David Bosch says this, 'mission is not primarily an attribute of, and activity of the church but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God'. God sent his son primarily so we could have a relationship with him. And that's what he's calling us to do the same, to be a signpost to a broken world, to Jesus, because he loves us. So, wow, that's so important. It's all about building relationships. You know, we've all heard those sayings, 'trust is not easily gained, but it's easily lost'. You know, we've also heard that saying, 'people don't care how much we know until they know how much we care'. Can I encourage you to build that trust, to build relationships with your community? Not to judge them. Mother Theresa says this, 'If you judge people, you have no time to love them.' So please love your community. 'T'. T is for transformation. Sport is an aid in itself, but it does impact its wider community. When a club wins, pregnancy rates go up, the economy increases. But when it loses, you know, things like domestic violence go up.

Why do I say that? Because sport impacts its wider community. But we're called to impact our community called sport. What with? Love, grace and mercy. You know, so when we are carriers of God's presence, we are speaking his life and hope to people. And we can see and be and bring transformation. You know, if you want to see transformation take place, be the change you want to see.

John Wesley, I'm going to just get me notes here because it's a long quote but it's a powerful quote, says this, 'Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.' I did say it was a pivotal, and we're going to talk about 'O'. And 'O' stands for obedience. We can either obey God and his word, as indicated in John 17. We can choose, as verse, he talks about we are sent people. The great commission in Matthew 28 says we're called to go. We have a choice today. Hold your breath. We have a choice, we can either obey God and go or we can choose to tell God to go, get lost.

Well, that's a tough call, ain't it? But I believe, with the power of the Holy Spirit, not in our own strength, we can go and make a difference. SPORT: 'S' is for see; see what God sees. Look at a community through his eyes of compassion. Pray, 'P' pray for that community of sport. 'O'. It all hangs on obedience. Obedient to God and his word, to go to a community. 'R'. Be intentional. Look and build long lasting relationships with our communities. 'T' is transformation. When we do what God asks, we will see transformation take place. Be the change you want to see. Partner with God and make a difference. It's a attribute to St. Augustine, and it says this, 'Love God and do what you will, for when you love God, you'll do what God loves.'

God loves your community.

Thank you.