

Hello, This is Pastor Matt Woods, Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in New Albany, Indiana and this is the devotion for the week of June 22, 2020.

“A Lot is Happening Behind the Scenes”

Ever watch Survivor? Even if you don't, I think you will appreciate the reality behind the show. I caught an article recently from Living Magazine that talked about all the behind the curtain stuff for making Survivor. It was really quite interesting. For example. If you want to do an Internship for Survivor, part of the “dream team”--well talk about a dream job.

‘The Dream Team’ is a group of young college students who score an internship by spending the summer testing out upcoming Survivor challenges. The purpose is to perfect the challenges and tweak any problems that may come up when the actual contestants perform them. There are multiple stages of filming a challenge. First, the interns do dry runs of the challenges to block out the action for the cameras. Then they run a dress rehearsal, and producers run through the footage afterward to make decisions. Lastly, the interns run the challenge themselves. The internships take place on site such as on the islands like Fiji, to give you an idea. The interns also help out around the set with prop making and production preparation.

Fun right. There's more. Every contestant gets paid--\$2500 if a contestant is voted off first, five figures for making it to the jury and ten thousand for showing up to the live reunion episode. Of course, one million dollars for winning.

Even though you never see them there are tons of film crews all over with the goal of filming in a way that it appears that the contestants are alone on the island. Every contestant has a camera person on them 24/7, during monsoons and whatever mother nature throws at them. A medical crew is also always on hand. The crew is huge and has their own accommodations, along with those who construct the sets, produce music, sound, lighting, catering, and all the stuff that goes along with filming. In season 16 some of the contestants found the place and broke in and stole some Gatorades and peanut butter. Since then all contestants are closely watched and limited to certain places.

Contestants are blindfolded when they travel to other parts of the island so they do not see challenges or other camps or any other place. Meanwhile the contestants are truly limited to rice and whatever they can catch so the hunger at least is real. And if you make it to the jury you spend your time at the Ponderosa, where they eat and drink as much as they want and get pampered the rest of the time. Wardrobes are preapproved before the show begins and contestants are given “certain essentials” like birth control, feminine hygiene products, vital medication, sunscreen, and insect repellent but no hair brush, tooth brush, or deodorant. Although, a couple times some have managed to smuggle stuff in to the game.

Finally, the tribal council is a lot longer than ten minutes. Its been said to last up to three hours. Afterward producers sift through the footage to get rid of all the boring parts and keep the best “quote-worthy” lines. In the end what goes on behind the scenes is all very deliberate and controlled so that what we see is a polished, entertaining result.

Consider all that goes on behind the scenes in our game of life as Christians. Ephesians 6:10-12 tells us, ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Behind the scenes is a spiritual battle and every day we must arm ourselves with the Spiritual gifts.

No where is this more revealing then on Good Friday. Outwardly Jesus was being crucified, mocked, and brutalized. Behind the scenes we see a spiritual battle. On the one hand, just listen to the way in which Jesus is mocked. Matthew 27:40; "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" This is the devil speaking through those jeers. We remember Matthew 4. "If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread." Be lest we forget God was also at work. Jesus died on the cross but in His death our sin was forgiven (Ephesians 1:7). Darkness covered the land but sin was destroyed along with death itself. The cross was the culmination of the Lord working out a plan that started all the way back in Genesis 3. The Spiritual battles continue to rage around us. Keep in mind however, that the outcome is settled. Satan is destroyed and heaven reigns. In the end Philippians 2 promises every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Let us also keep in mind other important elements at work behind the scenes because of the cross, faith and hope. Romans 8:18-19, 23-25 Paul talks about life in the spirit. ¹⁸ "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ... ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." Hope is a behind the scenes element that dwells in our faith in Jesus. By faith we hope in much more than our physical world. We wait for a new creation knowing that its not just a wish but something that is coming and just as real. 2 Corinthians 4 says the cross and resurrection of Jesus are a treasure in jars of clay. And at the end of the chapter Paul says, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal." Behind the scenes God is working for the good of those who love Him. In so many places we see God is with His people but also our faith and hope at work too clinging to the Lord.

Behind the scenes we also see within ourselves in a spiritual battle. I know Christian parents who put on a good face, a strong face, but inside they are tortured with guilt about working too much rather than being with their kids more. They wonder if they are doing a good job raising their kids. I know Christian teens who don't know who they are supposed to be, don't feel worthy of love, don't know what their purpose is; are they pretty enough, good enough, athletic enough, just hoping they won't screw up and make life worse somehow. I know Christians who struggle with addiction wondering how they might fit into a sober world and use their defensiveness to protect themselves. I know Lutheran pastors that are insecure about themselves and wonder if they are doing enough, creative enough, good enough. Christians struggle with all the same things non-Christians do. Likewise, Christians are good at producing a happy smile; and edited version of themselves for others to see on most days. But inside a whole different battle is too often raging in Christian hearts. And it is often a very guarded thing. It's our own personal reality show; edited and produced.

But the Lord already knows the real you (Psalm 139). He knows the hidden things about us. He knows our hearts. And still He wants to know you and love you. His desire is for you to know Him and gladly calls us friends (John 15:15). His love for you is an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). And He wants you to live with Him in the Father's House forever (John 14). The Lord is not producing a reality show but a new reality just for you and me. He is creating a new heaven and new earth and a new you. The old order of things will pass away. And He will

wipe away every tear from our eyes. We won't have to compete for it. Jesus will not vote out any believer. Actually, since Jesus is for us nothing can stand against us. We will never go hungry or thirsty again—not in heaven. We can't see heaven yet but it is already a certain fact, a reality that is being built as we speak. It will premier on the day that we leave this world. And death will be swallowed up in victory. And we will receive the grand prize of eternal life.

A lot is happening behind the scenes. Such things shape what is going on for others to see. The fruits of the Spirit on display in our life demonstrate God is at work in us. Some see life as a game of Survivor, survival of the fittest, etc. Not Jesus. His is the way of Savior. He knows the truth of our sin and our secrets; He forgives and loves us. And faith in Jesus is our immunity necklace that promises we will get to the winner's circle in the realm of eternal life.

And now, May the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with his favor and give you His peace. Amen.

Pastor Matthew Woods
John 3:30

https://www.livingmgz.com/glamour/if-youre-a-fan-of-survivor-youll-wanna-know-this/?utm_source=ya&utm_campaign=390731480-dtm-us-hd-ya&utm_medium=c&utm_sid=390731480&utm_term=&utm_content=1&utm_siteID=&utm_referrer=HOMEPAGE_US_yahoo.com&utm_eid=HOMEPAGE_US&utm_ad_id=35489686215&fps=ya&campaign_name=Survivor05_CRS_GeCPA10cents_DESK_accliv16_06-09&cust_1=liv16