

“Go Pack Go” ?

Our kids surprised us a few weeks ago with an early Christmas present: tickets to a pre-season Packer game. As Ann & I were driving up Highway 41 for our early holiday treat, we could see the stadium from the highway, rising up like an enormous temple, dwarfing all the other buildings in Green Bay. As we approached the ‘holy ground’ of Lambeau Field, it got me to thinking (which can, at times, be a dangerous thing).

Unless you live right next door to the field, going to a Packer game requires a considerable investment of time and travel. On the other hand, for most people, church is close by and doesn’t take all that much time out of a Sunday morning.

We had to go on the Internet to find, reserve, and pay for parking near the field so we could attend the game. Parking at church for Sunday services requires no such preparation, and it’s free.

Our kids paid for tickets so that we could sit on steel benches, and then we paid an additional \$6 each to rent stadium seats that made those benches more comfortable. Pews at church may or may not be all that comfortable, but no one charges admission or seat cushion fees.

A football game has a set pattern designed to provide entertainment. There are actually two patterns. One is the one we see on television (National Anthem, coin toss, kickoff, cheers prompted by the big screen in the stadium, etc.), the other is the one in the stadium that keeps the crowds occupied while the television broadcast has gone to commercials (guess today’s attendance, prizes for people sitting in certain rows or seats, dance for the cameras so maybe you can see yourself on the big screen, etc.). A church service also follows a set pattern, known as the liturgy. The liturgy isn’t designed for entertainment, but for delivering the forgiveness of sins, for edification, for building up everyone’s faith and life, for healing the wounds of the past week and preparing us for the week ahead.

Perhaps most significantly, people attending a football game don’t know how the game will end. Will our team win or not? Will we go home happy or disappointed? On the other hand, people attending church services know exactly what to expect and have no fear of being disappointed, for Jesus has already won the victory for us. By His death and resurrection, Jesus has won and promised to us something greater than any Super Bowl trophy or Major League Pennant: A new heaven and new earth where we shall dwell forever with God in perfect peace, glory, and joy!

(Come to think of it, why don’t we look out at the world around us during the week and say, at least to ourselves, something like, “Go God Go!”? It’s not exactly appropriate for church, but try including that in your daily prayers!)

I’m not suggesting that everyone should give up enjoying the entertainment provided by football games (or baseball games, or soccer games, or whatever). Ann and I enjoyed the Packer game and the surroundings very much, and hope to go again sometime. But after seeing firsthand the investment of time, money, effort, and energy that so many people put into such entertainment, I am saddened that so few people make a similar investment in their faith life.

After all, Ann and I had to do a lot in order to enjoy the few hours of entertainment at that Packer game. But to receive the gifts and blessings God so freely gives at church during our Sunday liturgy, all we have to do is show up.

That’s all you have to do, too.