

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Anyone ever play TAG?

Variations on the game:

Freeze tag.

On a playground- people you tag join your team until you get everyone.

SWIM

Dead Ant Tag - when a person gets tagged, they become a "dead ant" by lying on their back with legs and arms in the air. In order for the "dead ant" to join back in, he or she must be tagged on each limb by four different people.

Why is it fun?

Do you like being chased?

When you're being chased what do you do? RUN

When we run from God, what does he do? CHASES US!

Romans 5:18

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men,

so, one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners,

so, by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Car chases are a staple of the movies.

The Fast and Furious franchise is wildly successful because of their wild and increasingly crazy car chases.

We're going to take a few minutes to watch the very 1st ever filmed car chase from a charming movie called, ***"The Runaway Match"***.

Watch very closely to see if you can figure out the story.

- Rich Daddy forbids the marriage so, they elope.
- Papa gives chase but his car breaks down.
- When he discovers his daughter is married, he becomes reconciled to the fact and embraces his new family.

A far cry from cars flipping over, cars crashing into other cars, cars flying out of planes and across skyscrapers or a rare 1963 Corvette Grand Sport, valued at \$10 million flying over a cliff into the Colorado River. (They didn't actually use that car for the crash)

But car chases take place in real life, not just in the movies.

One evening a while back in San Bernardino County, California, a car chase began about 6:30 p.m. and lasted for 90 minutes.

The suspect in a car theft took off from Chino and led police on a chase that ended in Hawthorne.

The chase took officers to the Ventura Freeway, where the suspect vehicle sideswiped a Prius and nearly hit a tanker truck.

After driving in the wrong direction, the thief pulled the car into the southbound lanes of the San Diego Freeway. There, the stolen vehicle was rammed once by a patrol car, but that did not deter this guy.

When he got into the Hawthorne area, a California Highway Patrol SUV executed a **PIT maneuver**, and game over. The car went sideways into a spin, and the driver was apprehended.

PIT stands for **pursuit intervention technique**. But has other names:

- pursuit immobilization technique,
- precision immobilization technique,
- push it tough,
- parallel immobilization technique and
- precision intervention tactic.

The link to Romans 5 is coming soon, but for now, notice that in the Bible, people are often running. They're described as running away from God who, alternatively, is frequently depicted as chasing them.

It started in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ran and hid from God.

God used the **PIT maneuver** to confront them with the consequences of their sin. But before he expelled them from the Garden and denied them access to the tree of life, he provided skins for clothing and gave them the promise of salvation.

God called his prophet Jonah to travel to Nineveh to give the people there a chance to repent before God's judgment was visited upon them. Well, Jonah didn't want that to happen, so he boarded a ship in the other direction.

The **PIT maneuver** in this case is the storm and the great fish which the Lord provided to swallow up Jonah.

And after three days, the leviathan, irritated by the pit in its stomach, spits Jonah onto a beach where he lies prostrate and in complete surrender to the will of God.

David writes, **"Where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7).**

The Israelites are often depicted as people careening down a path to destruction. And in battle, they sometimes ran away, rather than standing their ground, like when Saul and all Israel ran from Goliath.

Isaiah describes sheep as having a propensity to wander astray (Isaiah 53:6), and Jesus also refers to the shepherd who, although in possession of 99 sheep, sallies forth to find the 100th lamb that's run afield (Luke 15:1-7).

In that same chapter, Jesus tells the story of a young man who runs away from home. We know how that turns out.

Dorothy Day was perhaps the best known radical in American Catholic Church history.

In his book about Day, Johann Cristoph Arnold writes,

"Day felt the call to discipleship early in life (though only vaguely), but she first threw herself into other, 'more important things.' There was the lure of journalism school, and then politics. Then there was travel and a taste of the Roaring Twenties in New York City, Italy and Hollywood. There was also a novel, several film scripts, an abortion, a short-lived marriage and a baby daughter. Still it did not dawn on her that she was running from God, and that her yearning would never be stilled until she was obedient to him.

"Then came an unforgettable night in a Greenwich Village bar where her friend, playwright Eugene O'Neill, recited Francis Thompson's 'Hound of Heaven' for her — a poem whose message left her reeling. It contains the verse:

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days

I fled Him, down the arches of the years

I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways

Of my own mind and in the mist of tears

I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running,

ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and unperturbed pace,

so does God follow the fleeing soul by his Divine grace.

“Day experienced what can only be called a conversion. Leftist friends mocked her new interest in the Gospels: didn’t she of all people, a Communist, know that religion was just a crutch for the weak? But Dorothy dug in her heels. Jesus promised the new society of peace and justice they were all looking for, she said, and if the Christians they knew were soft-minded hypocrites, that was not Jesus’ fault. She was determined to give him a try.”

Dorothy Day, like King David, the prophet Jonah and others before her, was the object of God’s loving and persistent **Pursuit Intervention Technique**.

- When the LAPD engages a suspect in a car chase, they hope first that the vehicle will run out of gas.
- Failing that, they hope the suspect will have a change of heart.
- The officers in pursuit might try to get roadblocks into place.
- Then they may throw spike strips across the road.
- When all means have been exhausted, the chief will authorize the **PIT maneuver**. The officer’s car now becomes the tool bringing the suspect’s surrender.
- Then, surrounded with no place to go, the runner emerges from the car with hands in the air, and then is usually told to kneel, and then may be asked to lie prostrate, whereupon he is cuffed and taken into custody.

This patience and reluctance by law enforcement is mirrored in the way God handles us during the chase. God is relentless but unhurried, patient and yet passionate.

God begins by giving human beings free reign in the created world.

God provides in writing what humans should have known in their hearts: the “law.”

The running continues. God pursues.

God sends

- adversity,
- obstacles,
- defeats,
- wars and

➤ pestilence

and still — after momentary repentance — the resistance and fleeing continues.

God sends prophets to be the voice of God, to remove any ambiguity they may have about God's love and aspirations for the people of God.

Through the prophets, God reminds us that — by all rights — God is the one who should be running away from the mess; it is the people who should be chasing after God who, in turn, would be justified in washing his hands of the whole affair.

And yet, were the people to truly seek God, God would be found:

Jeremiah 29:13-14

When you search for me, you will find me. If you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord.

Romans 5 explains how the **PIT maneuver** works.

God uses the cross as a battering tool to send us spiraling into submission, hands in the air, on our knees and prostrate before him in complete surrender.

That thief on the run in the opening paragraphs? The CHP stopped him with a **PIT maneuver**, but they had to smash windows and send in a K-9 unit before he exited the car, knelt and surrendered.

God's not going to force us to surrender.

God will confront us with the cross, but he will not force us to kneel.

Notice the contrasts the apostle Paul uses in this text between Adam and Jesus Christ:

Adam

Christ (the Last Adam)

Disobedience, v. 19

Obedience, v. 19

Sinners, v. 19

Righteousness, v. 19

Sin came, v. 12 Gift of salvation

Judgment, v. 16 Grace

Condemnation, v. 16 Justification, v. 16, v. 18

Death came, v. 12 Life

Many therefore die Many therefore live

This explains how God through Jesus Christ exercised a **PIT maneuver** on humans determined to go their own way. The cross nudges us out of control, tips us out of our comfort zone, knocks us silly and sideways, and does it all with sacrificial love.

It's the first Sunday of Lent.

If we're ever going to start anew, is there a better time than now?

Perhaps we should stop running.

Perhaps we should reverse direction, and instead of driving the wrong way against traffic, turn our lives around and go in the right way with Jesus.

If we don't sense the cross as an intervention technique, perhaps God has other ones that will bring us to attention.

Today is a good day to put our hands up in surrender.

Today is a good day to get down on our knees.

This is the meaning of the cross: There can be no more running away from the reckless and relentless love of God.

