

Sermon: God At Work

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Discussion Questions:

Let's begin today by simply talking about the word "launch."

- What comes to mind when you hear this word?
- What are some things that typically are launched?
- What are some things that have to happen in order for an object to be launched?

Boats are launched. Rockets are launched. Careers are launched. Arrows are launched. Plans are launched. Companies are launched. And people are launched.

Think about a bow and arrow. The arrow is created to fly through the air in a perfectly straight path in order to strike a target in a specifically desired location. If that arrow is never launched—it never achieves the purpose for which it was created. An archer must notch it onto string, pull it back under great tension, aim it, and then release it by letting it go.

When we are born and enter this world, we have no awareness whatsoever of our uniqueness as human beings. We don't know our strengths or our weaknesses. We're not born with any preconceived notions of our likes or dislikes—our preferences or our skepticisms. We're like a motionless arrow.

But as we grow—we are launched. Sometimes, this launching can take the form of someone else's preferences becoming our preferences. Be honest—how many of you have children that are Penn State fans? Why do you think that is? Who launched them to think this way?

Other times, though, we are launched when important people in our lives (typically our parents—but also teachers, and friends, and relatives) begin to notice certain things about us—and then begin to encourage and praise those things. As we move through our early childhood and into adolescence, certain things begin to become evident about us. We have natural athletic ability. Or we're very good at expressing ourselves verbally. Or we're funny, or good at math, or soft-hearted. Others notice these things about us—and begin making comments or observations. These comments and affirmations plant seeds in our hearts.

As we grow and age, we are also given opportunities to try certain things. We decide it might be fun to try out for a school play. Or we join youth soccer. Or we take dance classes or join the robotics club. Without our knowing it, these opportunities can fuel and propel our lives in certain directions—also helping to launch us along certain paths.

- Talk about your own life with the group...
 - What has been said to you in your past that has served to launch you?
 - What opportunities have been given to you that, looking back, have helped to launch you?
 - In what ways can God be using **you**—TODAY—to launch others?
 - How much power is there in a single, spoken word—for good or bad?

Examination:

- Read **Romans 12:1-8**:
 - In these eight verses, Paul is turning the corner in his letter to the Romans. The first eleven chapters have been about RIGHT THINKING. He's been outlining the foundation of our theology—making a case for Truth. Here in chapter twelve, Paul now turns his attention to RIGHT ACTION. How do we live our lives? How do we put into practice the gifts and abilities that God has given us? Here in Romans 12:1, Paul begins this discussion by talking about WORSHIP. What, according to Paul, is worship? What is the essence of worship?
 - We're talking today about our lives being launched—using the metaphor of an arrow and a target. According to verse 2, does God have a purpose and a plan for our lives? What is step #1 in being launched toward this divine plan—this perfect will?
 - How can arrogance play a NEGATIVE role in discerning the path our lives take?
 - In verse 6, we see that each person has different and unique gifts according to the grace that God gives us.
 - How important is it that we identify and put those gifts into practice?
 - It can be difficult to recognize these gifts and abilities in ourselves. In what ways have other people spoken into your life—calling attention to unique gifts and abilities that you possess?
 - Go around the circle right now (or get into groups of five or six), and speak into each-other's lives. How do you see God at work in those around you? Keep in mind that God can use your words to help launch one another.

- Read **Ephesians 2:8-10**:
 - We see in verse 8 that our salvation is a gift from God. We haven't earned it, nor do we deserve it. God, in His mercy, has CHOSEN to grant us salvation and adoption. What does this say about our ability to boast?
 - We also see in verse 10 that we are God's "handiwork." Don't read past that word too quickly. What does "handiwork" mean? Why is this such an important truth to wrap our minds around?
 - What is God's purpose for creating us? Why has He designed us—and given us our unique talents, gifts and abilities?
 - Not only have we been designed and created by God for a purpose—but we are also part of a much greater plan—playing a role in an Upper Story that we aren't even aware of. How does the last phrase of verse 10 state this clearly?
 - These truths make our discussion on "launching" even more important and weighty. Go back to the metaphor of the arrow. God creates every person as a unique hand-designed arrow—with a purpose that was decided before we were even created. Think about the thousands of people around us here in our community. How many of them fail to understand the purpose that God created them to fulfill? How many of them remain in the quiver, and never get launched into their divine purpose? More importantly—what role do WE play in HELPING launch these arrows? What is the power of a spoken word?

Application:

Your mission this week, should you choose to accept it, is to consciously and intentionally help launch another person. Look them in the eye, speak truth into their lives, help them see their gifts.