

A Proper 16 (Rom 12.1)	The Bulls-eye is too Small Heb 10.11-25, Col 3.1-10, Rom 12.1 by Tim Isbell	12/31/2006
B Proper 28 (Heb 10.11-25)		
C Proper 13 (Col 3.1-10)		

Thesis: God is creative enough to provide an atonement for our sins so that we can live in the Most Holy Place for all eternity – without contaminating it.

Lite Lesson

Since we generally have children in the beginning of worship, sometimes I do a short lesson for them. It usually has two goals. One is to make a point to the children, and the other is to set up the adults for the sermon that will come later in the service.

For this sermon I took in some magnetic darts and a dartboard and we interacted a bit with throwing darts. The concept was to get around to asking, "Who do you know who can hit the bullseye every time?" The answer, of course, is Jesus.

I know what it feels like to disappoint myself

To realize I missed another bulls-eye.

I saw the bulls-eye, tried my best. Missed anyway.

This may not be a sin (depending on your Christian tradition), but it is still imperfection.

Sometimes I don't really care enough

I just put in an 80% effort, maybe only 50%. And I miss the target.

Sin.

Other times I deliberately chose another target and aim at that

That's pure rebellion.

Sin.

And I know what it feels like to read God's word & discover his bulls-eye is even smaller than I thought!

I already know that I miss my own bullseye, so then to find out that God's bulls-eye is smaller just makes it that much worse!

I know what it feels like to want to make up for misses, but ...

I don't have enough money to pay my way out of them.

I'm not skillful enough, or I lack enough energy to make up for them by stacking up a thousand bulls-eyes in a row – and even then it wouldn't change the fact that I missed a thousand in the past.

Truth is, I can't even hit the bulls-eye that I can see, let alone hit the bullseye that God's word says defines holiness.

Even if I could make up for past misses, I'll miss again!

Then what?

It's enough to depress an optimist!

Maybe I can redefine my own bulls-eye, and make it bigger.

If it were easier to hit I might feel better.

But that would be like going out on the golf course in the middle of the night and cutting holes that are 24" in diameter instead of 4.5", then shooting under par the next morning and trying to feel good about it.

Even for a guy who's good at self denial, this is pretty lame.

Some of us reinterpret God's word to say that God's bulls-eye is 24" wide.

We blatantly break one of the 10 Commandments and then try to reinterpret the commandment hoping to become holy.

Like deciding the "honor your father and mother commandment" only applies to children, and not to adults with elderly parents. Or some others.

It's popular in our culture – but it's so lame even I can't accept it.

Or maybe I could convince myself that the bulls-eye God describes in scripture doesn't apply today.

It applied in Bible times but not anymore.

Lots of people use this strategy; even people who claim to be Christians.

For example, all the biblical teaching about sexual purity, celibacy outside marriage, and so on. Surely those were just God's Law in olden times - but surely not meant for today.

That's lame, too.

So, I give up at trying to make the holiness bulls-eye bigger.

It really is that small. Certainly far smaller than I'd come up with on my own.

And I can't even hit the one I come up with on my own!

Since I can't enlarge the bulls-eye, maybe I'd better take another look at finding a way to make up for my misses!

Confession is a start, but how do I actually atone?

Do I commit to serve God from now on? Will that purchase my salvation?

Nah. I'll miss again.

Do I pay for them with some sacrifice?

Maybe give up TV or desserts?

Maybe getting up early and exercising every morning? ... for a month... a year?

Maybe by killing my pet like they did in the Old Testament?

Maybe I could do like the Aztecs did and hire a poor person, give him a great couple of years, then kill him as a sacrifice in my place.

The Bible says these don't work, either.

Maybe I could go before God and sacrifice myself – commit suicide.

But how is God going to receive my sinful dead body into heaven without contaminating heaven.

Suicide is a lose-lose proposition. I lose my life and God loses me.

So I'm stuck. I can confess that I miss the mark, but I can't atone for my sin.

I've tried all the solutions I can think of, but they don't work.

I'm out of options.

Fortunately God is more genius than I.

He sent Jesus to live in our world 2000 years ago.

Jesus hit the bulls-eye every time. Perfect behavior and perfect attitude. He lived a completely holy life! He lived the life I cannot live.

Then he voluntarily offered his perfect life as a sacrifice to God. And not just did he offer his life in service, he took my sin on his shoulders and offered his life in death - precisely to atone for my sinful life of misses.

Then Jesus walked into heaven, right into God's holy presence.

Once a year the Old Testament High Priest nervously walked into the Holy of Holies. Before entering he offered God the blood of animals, as the Law at the time required. Then the High Priest walked back out for another year of trying - but missing - the bulls-eye. A year later the cycle repeated.

But 2000 years ago Jesus, after offering his own perfect blood on the cross, walked confidently into the throne room of God and "... sat down at the right hand of God, the Father." And Colossians 3.1 says Jesus remains there today.

Bible says that if I trust Jesus' perfect blood, voluntarily shed for me, then this "blood of Jesus cleanses me from every sin" ... 1 John 1.7 (B 2Easter)

This genius of God figured how to save my life – despite me missing the bulls-eye.

He did it NOT on the basis of my perfection or sacrifice but on the basis of Jesus' perfection and sacrifice. "God wants us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus once for all time."

I sense God looking at me and wanting to know...

Tim, will you receive the New Life Jesus made possible? He gave his life for you as a living sacrifice – a fully holy life. And he gave his life as a sacrifice in death. He did both.

Will you give your life as a living sacrifice?

Romans 12:1 (NLT) (A Proper 16) And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?

After all, I don't have anything else worth offering God. The only thing he wants is my life, freely given. And if I give it he will treat it better than I can treat it myself?

But how do I do that – give my life as a living sacrifice?

- God: "It means that you give your life in apprenticeship to Jesus?"
- God: "It means you accept the Spirit of Jesus into your heart to guide you into a whole new life."

After considering the options my answer is – YES! THANK YOU! Here's my life. I trust you with it.

God's offer isn't just to me... he's wants me to offer it to you.

Will you receive the New Life that Jesus blood makes possible?

Will you give your self as a living sacrifice to the one who gave his life for you?

Will you give your life in apprenticeship to Jesus?

Will receive the Spirit of Jesus into your heart?

There is no better option.

What's your answer?

Benediction

Responsive reading of Col 3.1-10 (C Proper 13)... or from Hebrews 10.11-25 (B Proper28).

Other resources:

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