



LINKS PLAYERS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Links Players

Access

When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. (Isaiah 1:15)

Four of us who live a couple of hours from Pinehurst went to the U.S. Open last year. It was the first time I'd ever been to a professional golf event. We got there early. I was suspicious that the golf world descending on Pinehurst, NC, was a recipe for terminal gridlock. It wasn't.

Clearly, the USGA and Pinehurst folks had this thing figured out; it's not their first rodeo. We quickly arrived at our designated parking at a nearby high school, boarded a bus, and were on the grounds, ambling past the Payne Stewart statue in under an hour, baking in the Sandhills sun.

We hadn't developed a game plan yet, so we were working our way through the pines on the right side of one of the fairways. It was a par four, gentle dogleg right, slightly uphill. We staked out a spot where we estimated the tee shots would land. It was not crowded.

Someone shouted, "Incoming!" A ball hit high up in the trees and dropped onto the pine straw right in front of us.

As the groups made their way up the fairway, it was Wyndham Clark (the defending champion) and his caddy who headed over towards us.

What followed was a ringside seat for their discussion of how to play the shot, followed by a well-struck low fade around the trees to just off the green, which he got up and down for a par. Professional golfer, right?

Having attended numerous professional sporting events in the past, I was quite impressed with the high degree of access to competitors that golf affords.

In today's passage from Isaiah, it's clear that the Israelites were about to enter a phase of severely restricted access to God. Their hands were "full of blood," which may refer to their treatment of Isaiah's fellow prophets or to their getting comfortable with offering sacrifices to idols - false gods.

Not that access to God in the Old Testament was free and easy in the first place. And although they were God's chosen people, Joe Average Israelite was not allowed to wander randomly into the Holy of Holies, where God was truly present.

That privilege went to the High Priest, one day a year. But now their prayers were going to fall on deaf ears. It's as if God was saying, "Okay, you like idols? Let me show you how false gods process prayers from mortals."

Following this, the Israelites were taken captive to Babylon, then eventually returned to the Promised Land, only to be subjugated by the Romans and their empire.

Then, access to God took a dramatic uptick when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among them.” Access that had been very limited was now truly unfettered and unrestricted. The thick veil, which had cut off access to God, was torn. Top to bottom.

Instead of offering prayers to a God who wasn’t listening to them-whose name was too holy to utter, Jesus taught a prayer that began “Our Father.” Free access, indeed.

Prayer: Father, thank you for the unfettered access to you that we have in Christ.

Peter Muller

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