

Lent 4  
St. John's

I want to talk to day about a fellow called Jimmy Hill.

Jimmy Hill was a man who hosted a show called Match of the day on the BBC, an English TV channel, about 30 years ago.

You have to understand that in England we only had 2 television channels. A 3rd was introduced around the 60's and a 4th was introduced in the 70's. Saturday afternoon was the afternoon that professional soccer was played and on Saturday evening they had highlights of the Match of the day.

It used to be hosted by a man named David Coleman. And the commentators were very matter of fact and only got excited when a goal was scored.

The commentary went something like; Smith passes to Jones. Back to smith. Up the field to Johnson. Tackled by Gordon and Middlesbrough is back in possession.

Now what has Jimmy Hill to do with all of this? Well Jimmy had a lot to do with a lot of things about the coverage of soccer.

When Jimmy Hill took over the anchor for Match of the day, he began introducing things called statistics. Before Jimmy people didn't really care. It was who won or lost and how that affected your place in the division you played in.

But now we were introduced very slowly to Middlesbrough having 12 shots on Goal and Manchester United 1. Middlesbrough goalkeeper making two saves, Manchester united, 14.

Then we were told of Middlesbrough having possession of the ball 70 percent and Manchester united 30 percent. Then we were told who had the most possession in the last 5 minutes.

Soccer to the TV commentator became a game, not of winning or losing, and how you stood in your division, but a game of statistics.

The teams were now compared not on winning or losing but on how much possession they had, shots made or saves made etc, etc, etc.

And this all began in soccer with Jimmy Hill and now commentators do not only tell you who is passing to who but how they should have passed, what they should have done, what they were thinking and how everybody is affected by what they do.

Commentators also now are expert officials and they pass judgment on calls made in split seconds on the fields. Without the luxury of instant replay.

We find this now in all sports as commentaries are peppered with statistics. We are statisticed to death.

And what do statistics achieve?

Only one thing. How one team does not measure up to the other in a certain area. How one does not measure up to another.

This thinking, this notion, now permeates our culture in the number of polls, statistics, gradings and comparisons made that tell us how, in many ways, we do not measure up.

We hear the statistics of how much money other people make and we resent it.

We see the ideals of what is considered beauty by Hollywood thrown at us from every quarter and we do not measure up.

We see others getting promoted or recognized and we resent it.

This is not new. This really has been the history of our human race.

Jesus came to tell us about God in order for the human race to change.

And he told us the story of the father and his 2 sons.

The elder son, well here we are.

The prodigal, well here we are.

Henri Nouwen in his book *The Return of the Prodigal Son* writes, "In a world that constantly compares people ranking them as more or less intelligent, more or less attractive, more or less successful, it is not easy to really believe in a love that does not do the same. When I hear someone praised it is hard not to think of myself as less praiseworthy.

When I read about the goodness and kindness of other people it is hard not to wonder whether I myself am as good or kind as they. And when I see trophies, rewards and prizes being handed out to special people I cannot avoid asking myself why that did not happen to me."

"The world in which I have grown up is so full of grades, scores and statistics that, consciously or unconsciously, I always try to take my measure against all the others. Much sadness and gladness in my life flows directly from my comparing. And most, if not all, this comparing is a useless and a terrible waste of time and energy."

A terrible waste of time and energy.

When Jesus came to ask us to change he asked us to switch from thinking about a natural law to a divine law. God loves the world. The common, mixed up, moral/immoral, fair /unfair, world.

It is not how you measure up to others that counts. It is how you measure up to yourself in the eyes of God that matters.

And even then we have been told we do not measure up.

But you know something?

Noah was a drunk, Abraham was too old, Isaac was a daydreamer, Jacob was a liar, Joseph was abused, Moses had stuttering problem, Gideon was afraid, Samson had long hair and was a womanizer, Rahab was a prostitute, Jeremiah and Timothy were too young, David had an affair and was a murderer, Isaiah preached naked, Jonah ran from God, Job went bankrupt, John the Baptist ate bugs, Peter denied Christ, the disciples fell asleep when praying, Martha worried about everything, the Samaritan woman was divorced more than once, Zaccheus was too small, Paul was too religious, Timothy had an ulcer and Lazarus was dead.

Jimmy Hill changed the way that the commentators announce a game of soccer—but you know what is really important? It is that the players still play the game.

We all have been called by God to this wonderful journey called life. Do not waste it thinking what you might have been, could have been, should have been, or ought to have been.

Live it as you are and not how you believe you measure up to anybody else.

Amen