

Refinement

Scripture: John 21:15 – 22

Super Bowl Sunday 2025

2/9/25

In Jeremiah 29:11, the Lord says – ‘For surely I know the plans I have for you. They are plans for your welfare and not for harm. They are plans to give you a future with hope.’

I am sure each team in the Super Bowl hopes their coaches have plans like this! A game plan that will lead to a victory!

Boy, I sure do want plans like that. I want plans for my welfare and not for my harm. I want plans for the future that are filled with hope! How about you?

A sparkling diamond does not start out as a precious jewel. Its composition begins with pure carbon, which is black. The carbon atoms are tightly arranged, and then they are exposed to high temperature and intense pressure. Then perhaps in a million years, you will see the result – a beautiful sparkling diamond!

That is how a diamond is created. That is how a sparkling diamond is created under high temperature, intense pressure, and a lot of time. The diamond is one of the hardest elements in the world. It is truly a precious stone. A diamond really sparkles!

Women, look at your diamond ring now - does it sparkle? Does the relationship it represents still sparkle also? Well, that topic is for a different message – let me get back on track.

We, too, want to sparkle. We want God to bless us and use us. We want to sparkle! But we want to sparkle without the challenges. We do not want high temperatures in our life. We do not want intense pressure in our life. And we do not want to wait

for a long time to become a sparkling person full of God's love and compassion.

We want to be precious in the eyes of God, but we do not want any pressure on our faith. We want to sparkle, but we do not want too much time to pass until that happens. We want to be a diamond, but we do not want any trials or tests to come our way. We just want to sparkle!

When the unwanted circumstances of life come, most of us ask – 'Why me?' When the temperature in our life becomes hot, most of us ask – 'Why me?' When the pressure of life becomes intense, most of us ask – 'Why me?'

Even Peter had such a moment. In our scripture reading, when Jesus told Peter the burden he would carry, Peter asked Jesus – 'What about John?' Jesus replied – 'What is that to you? You follow me!'

Often in our lives, we are so much like Peter. Jesus calls each of us into service, and we look at all the things we must do and follow to call ourselves Christians, and we hesitate to follow Jesus. We see the lessons given by Jesus on what we must do and say, and we say – 'What about someone else?' And Jesus tells us – 'What is that to you? You follow me!'

I know the burdens of following Jesus are difficult, but are not the most precious things in life difficult to receive? The crucibles of life are like enduring the forces of temperature and pressure on carbon. The cost of our faith in Jesus is for us to endure the pressures and temptations of this world. The difficulties of having a faith in Jesus Christ is enduring the high temperatures and intense pressures of life, perhaps for many days, weeks, or years.

The brilliant diamond did not just happen. It went through a lengthy refinement process. The brilliant love of Jesus Christ did not just happen. It went through a painful process on the cross.

So, be encouraged today. God's plans are not random. God is trustworthy. Jesus says to each of us – 'Come follow me!'

Are you ready for your refinement? And if you are worried about the difficulty of the refinement process – I tell you that I am here to help you through the process of refinement. I tell you that the person sitting next to you is ready to help you through the refinement process. I tell you that our elders are here to help you through the refinement process. And most especially, I tell you that Christ is with you to help you through the refinement process of faith.

One of the best thing a football coach can do is to adjust the game plan at half time, to refine the game plan at half time.

Enjoy the game today and think about how you may need to refine your plans to serve Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

Lord, help us to follow you in all circumstances. Help us in our refinement process even though we know that there are hard times ahead for each of us. We know refinement will allow us to shine brightly like a sparkling diamond for you. We pray this in Christ name – AMEN.