

Invitation - Lessons From "March Madness"

This time of the year is like Christmas to basketball fans and players alike. This is why players practice and workout during summer and the fall. Now is the time they get to go out and have fun. For three weeks people will watch games being played all across this country. Fans will pack the stadiums to cheer on their teams.

For the fan it is fun because we will see the unexpected. Somebody usually knocks off a highly ranked team. There will be the "Cinderella" small school under the radar taking on a big name team and winning. Even the smallest of schools and teams can win a game and make a name for itself. In 1998 a 16 seed (Harvard) defeated a 1 seed (Stanford) in women's NCAA 1 Tournament. (Editor's Note: At the time of writing this article Virginia had not lost to UMBC.). Or it may be a buzzer beater the last second shot that snatches victory from the jaws of defeat. For the sake of us Kentucky fans, I won't say any more on that subject.

You will see players giving their best effort on the court. They will walk off having given everything they have. Some will play harder than they had ever played before and give more than they had thought possible. There will be heroes and there will be those who wish they had that last shot over again.

The crowds will get bigger and bigger, louder and louder, as teams advance. Eventually one team will walk away with the National Title and trophy. The others teams will walk off the court with their heads down, some with tears in their eyes, some with disbelief in how this could have happened.

To the basketball fan and player this is what it is all about. Let us make a few comparisons between "March Madness" and the Christian's life.

To the Christian there is the goal of heaven. It will be better than Christmas because it will not grow old or fade away. "To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven

for you." (1 Peter 1:4) Trophies gather dust and eventually lose some of their luster. But heaven will never grow old or boring or tiring.

Those who will be victorious, i.e. in heaven, will be wear white having been washed by the blood of the Lamb. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." (Revelation 12:11)¹ They will have practiced their religion on a daily basis. Some will come to Christ later than others but they will all have submitted to Him. Some will have been sacrificed on the altar. "When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed." (Revelation 6:9-11) While many will not be killed for their faith, others will be living sacrifices. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

In the end they will wear the crown of life. 2 Timothy 4:8 NKJV 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. Unlike March Madness where only one team walks off the court having never lost a game, all Christians will be victorious.
- Dennis Tucker