

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 8/2/2024
Victory is Not Always About Winning

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

Kenyan runner Abel Mutai is a long-distance runner. In December 2012, Abel was competing in a race in Spain. Just a few feet from the finish line he became confused with the signage and stopped, thinking he had completed the race. In doing so, he appeared to have sacrificed victory.

A Spanish runner, Ivan Fernandez Anaya, was right behind Abel. Realizing what was happening, Ivan started shouting at the Kenyan to continue running. Mutai didn't know Spanish and didn't understand. Realizing what was taking place, Fernandez pushed Mutai to victory.

After the race, a journalist asked Ivan, "Why did you do that?"

Ivan replied, "I didn't deserve to win it. I did what I had to do. He was the rightful winner. He created a gap that I couldn't have closed if he hadn't made a mistake. As soon as I saw he was stopping, I knew I wasn't going to pass him."

The journalist insisted again, "But you could have won!"

Ivan looked at him and replied, "But what would be the merit of my victory? What would be the honor in that medal? What would my mother think of that?"

Ivan is truthful about the challenges leading to his decision. "Of course, it would be another thing if there was a world or European medal at stake. Then, I think that, yes, I would have exploited it to win. But I also think that I have earned more of a name having done what I did than if I had won. And that is very important, because today, with the way things are in all circles, in soccer, in society, in politics, where it seems anything goes, a gesture of honesty goes down well."

As Christians, we are called to seek justice in the world for ourselves, but also for others. Our world pushes the idea that winning is everything. When winning comes at the expense of justice, there is no victory. Victory is more than just prevailing in competition. It is the effort to have a meaningful life and one that has value. When we sacrifice values for the sake of a so-called victory, we have actually lost. Honesty and ethics are the true values that lead to what we as followers of JESUS might truly call "winning."

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey