

## **Need a Vision?**

### *Prayer*

Good morning welcome to AGM Sunday! It has been another year and I am excited to celebrate what has been done this past year and look forward with great vision for what the coming year holds.

Let me start off with some illustrations that speak to vision this morning:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1, 2). We need to live the life of the upward look. If we keep our eyes constantly on the things of earth we live on a low plane and miss the best in life. We are like the man who found a gold coin on the streets and ever afterward kept looking downward in the hope of finding more of the treasures of earth. He missed the beauties of the flowers and the sky and kept his eyes fastened on the dust and mire of the street. We need the upward look in order to receive necessary help in the experiences of life. By keeping our faces turned Heaven-ward we are prepared to meet temptations and to care for the duties and responsibilities of life that come our way. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."—Christian Monitor.

### **This morning is our vision fixed on earthly treasures or on the heavenly kingdom?**

A number of years ago a noted artist was working on a great mural. This was to be a great work of art, which he intended to be the masterpiece of his life. He had erected a scaffold and was standing upon it, putting in the background of the picture. A friend suddenly came into the studio and stood quietly in the rear of the room, looking at the work. The artist was slapping on the gray tones and deep blues all across the canvas for the background. Then he wished to view his work from a better perspective so he descended the ladder and stepping back, with his eyes on the canvas, he backed right into his friend without seeing him. Enthusiastically he said, "This is going to be the masterpiece of my life! What do you think of it? Isn't it grand?" His friend replied, "All that I see is a great dull daub." Then said the artist, "Oh, I forgot. When you look at the picture you see only what is there. Now, whenever I look at it, I see what is going to be there."—H. A. Ironside.

### **This is your church! What vision has God lain upon your heart to see fulfilled through our work here in Salmo? Do you see what it will become?**

Let's go back to the guy who found money on the street for a minute...

Is this a one-off or is it a real problem?

"A young man once found a five-dollar bill on the street," says William Feather, a well-known writer. "From that time on he never lifted his eyes when walking. In the course of years he accumulated 29,519 buttons, 54,172 pins, twelve cents, a bent back, and a miserly disposition. He lost the glory of the sunlight, the sheen of the stars, the smiles of friends, tree-blossoms in the spring, the blue skies, and the entire joy of living."—San Francisco News.

**Just because this world has done something good for you, what will you miss out on because of needing the world to fulfill a desire for the good times of the past? Are we as a church resting on our successes? Are we simply enjoying the laurels of the good work that has already been done or are we embracing today?**

Today do we as a church see what our community can become? Great!  
Today as a church are we working toward seeing it done?  
What sacrifices or time, material or resources will it take?

There was once a scotch boy by the name of Alexander Duff. Alexander was relaxing one day and had a dream in which in a chariot of great glory, God drew near to him where he lay musing on a hillside, and calling to him said, "Come up, hither; I have work for thee to do."

As the story goes, that vision never faded from his memory. He did what he needed to do to see it fulfilled. He went to grammar school and to St. Andrews University, where a missionary society was formed among the students. Duff became its first librarian.

In 1829 he went out to India as the first missionary from the Scottish church. He was a real pioneer. He opened a school in Calcutta, and later helped to establish a medical college there.

If you have a dream of doing great service for God, will you try to make it come true as Alexander Duff made his dream come true or will you let fatigue, stress, anxiety and worldly pressures derail your plans.

Many of you have heard I am sure of Pastor Rick Warren. He said something that I think is extremely relevant. He said: My imagination influences my aspiration. In other words you dreams determine your destiny. To accomplish anything you must first have a mission, a goal, a hope, a vision. "Without a vision the people perish." Prov. 29:18

Ken Godevenos said: "All memorable achievements were brought about by leaders who had vision. God uses visions to excite leaders because excited leaders get the most out of followers. Active followers accomplish much and, Christ's Body keeps getting bigger thanks to prevailing local churches. That is why Proverbs 29:18 clearly states, "Where there is no vision the people perish." Let a leader grasp a godly vision and then watch God work.

Bill Hybels said: Proverbs 29:18 says, ““Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained.” They can’t focus, can’t reach their goal, can’t follow their dream. An older translation says, “Without vision, the people perish.” I’ve seen it with my own eyes – without vision, people lose the vitality that makes them feel alive.

In our church we have gotten some programs off of the ground and others have ground to a halt. This is why vision is so important? It is because without vision these programs are just people doing ministry without a purpose...

Okay...

Let’s say you get passionate about doing something. Let’s say you need to make a picture. What tools will you use to make it? Will you use brushes, pallet knives, chalk or pastels? So you decide and go out and get your tools together. What kind of paint will you use? You choose acrylic paint? Do you choose a stand up easel or a sit down easel? Stand up is your choice and you go and get it? What kind of brushes will you use and so on... you have done a lot of preparation, a whole lot of organizing and a great amount of work... but what are you trying to create? What is your vision? Are you making a road sign or a masterpiece? Is it a portrait or scenery?

It is all well and good to go through the motions of organizing, planning and preparing but without a vision for the outcome, what benefit is it? Without a vision the artist sits with all the tools he or she needs, but has never actually thought about the outcome. Without vision all the tools and prep work mean nothing if there is no goal or vision.

Let’s take this further and say a teacher is helping the artist, and he or she can’t think of what to paint... So the teacher comes by and says: “What do you like to paint? What inspires you to create something beautiful?” The student says: “I dunno, I put all this together so I could accomplish great things! To which the teacher asks: “What things?” The student replies, “I dunno, I am stuck. I have everything I need, but I have no idea what to make.”

So the teacher says: “How about a picture of flowers, they make people happy.” The student says: “No, I don’t like to paint that!”

So the teacher says: “How about a portrait of Jesus, He saves people.” The student says: “No, I don’t know what he looks like!”

So the teacher says: “How about an abstract work of art?” The student says: “No, I don’t subscribe to that nonsense.”

So the teacher says: “What do you want to paint?” The student says: “I don’t really like painting.”

Finally, the teacher says: "Why did you organize all of these materials and tools if you didn't want to paint?" The student says: because that is what I thought was expected of me. What I really like to do is help organize projects...

What is his or her real vision and passion? Organization

So many Christians do things that they think are good and right. They engage in activities and events but they find no fulfillment. Many Christians are unhappy because they are doing things that God never asked them to do in the first place. They go through the motions and get some prep stuff done, but with no real passion or vision. How long do you think a person painting will continue to paint when they either don't like what they are doing? How long when doing things out of duty or obligation or simply to please others do you think they will continue without getting tired and frustrated?

God places passions, visions and dreams inside of each of us. Do we embrace all that he has for us? Do we have a vision for how God will use us to make a difference here in Salmo and her surrounding communities or do we just get frustrated and tired doing what we think is expected of us without passion?

A famous musician once said: To play a wrong note is forgivable, but to play without passion is unforgivable. This morning... Let me ask some real questions:

- 1) What in God are you passionate about?
  - a. If your not... you need to seek God and ask him to reveal what will bring you joy and fulfillment as you serve him.
  
- 2) How does your passion relate to your life as a Christian?
  - a. Are you passionate about evangelism?
  - b. Are you passionate about kids?
  - c. Are you passionate about music?
  - d. Are you passionate about art?
  - e. Are you passionate about teaching?
  - f. Are you passionate about preaching?
  - g. Are you passionate about administration?
  - h. Are you passionate about counseling?
  
- 3) Are you willing to see beyond programs and activities to a vision that enraptures your very soul?
  
- 4) Are you willing to put aside apathy, complacency, depression, grief, anxiety and worry for something that inspires and fulfills you?

This year I offer up a challenge. Look inside, talk to God and find what God has made you passionate about. Next, ask yourself how that relates to your Christian walk? What is your vision for your life? What is your vision for your church life?

What is your vision for what Crossroads can be to Salmo and the surrounding communities?

Let me give you a hint...

If you want to lead a happy and joyful life, find your passion and offer it up to the Lord. Several times I have mentioned that I don't like the concept of volunteers in the church. A volunteer is just a warm body in a role. I prefer the concept of stewardship. A person who is passionate about what they do and then takes ownership of doing it in the church does so with a vision for its completion. They know what the end result will look like and they work towards it.

This is the time, this is the moment, this is the year. Let us see the kingdom of God established here in Salmo. Let us not get weary in well doing, or become tired and stressed, let us work together with the vision that Crossroads will be a lighthouse in the dark, a hospital for sinners. God wants people passionate about him and his church, so look inside and find that passion he has within you and light the fire.

Today we worship God – In the coming year how will you do that?  
Today we love all people – What steps will you take to make that happen?  
Today we embrace community – How will we let Salmo and the surrounding communities know that God cares for them? How will we let them know that we care for them?

The church has a vision to reach the hurting and the lost what part will you play?  
What is your vision for the future of your church Crossroads?

Friends, let me summarize:

**A vision is a picture of the future that produces passion!**

We have examined the thoughts of many leaders in the Christian faith this morning. We can clearly see that they conclude that vision is an integral part of church life.

So often the words people perish has been interpreted from a worldly business standpoint. But they do have a point. If we have no vision then churches that do not exercise their vision will lose members and be unable to numerically grow and flourish.

Is that conclusion supported by proverbs 29:18?

Let's briefly look at the same phrase in multiple translations of the bible

- NIV – Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint
- NLT – When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild
- CEV – Without guidance from God law and order disappear

- NKJV – Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint
- HCSB – Without revelation people run wild
- ESV – Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint
- AMP – Where there is no vision [no redemptive revelation of God], the people perish

Clearly, the vision here is not simply our own passions but rather how our passions can fire the vision that God has placed within us. Interestingly the KJV adds: "...but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

My final point...

The but here contrast something from both clauses. What we need to also take away today is that there are those who cast off restraint or perish when there is no revelation from God.

We as Christians are being warned that turning away from the revelations of God in our lives causes us to cast of restraint or perish; yet, if we embrace his vision for our lives God promises joy and blessings to those who honor him.

This year embrace the passion and vision that God has placed in your heart. If you don't know what it is... Seek it out. You will find it.

We need divine guidance and we need to embrace it.

God has said: "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he."

Just think about how powerful and amazing it can be discovering our passion in the vision God has for us!

*Prayer.*