

Moving Forward

Proverbs 29:18

Preface

Winnie the Pooh and Piglet were walking along the road in their normal close companionship. Then Piglet asks Pooh; “When you wake up in the morning, what is the first thing you say?” Pooh responds; “What’s for breakfast, what do you say?” Piglet answers, “I say, I wonder what exciting thing is going to happen today.”

Last week we had our meeting. I have been told of the meeting and though it was difficult it was productive. I have heard of some good testimonies and comments. It will be a valuable turning point in the life of our church.

So where do we go from here? We move forward! We raise our heads and move forward. Like Piglet, we wonder what exciting things God is going to do in the coming days.

Privately as individuals, this is a time to evaluate our commitments to God’s work. It is a time to pray and seek out what God would have us do.

But as a church, it is time for us to raise our heads, lift our arms and move forward with our mission.

Read Scripture

¹⁸ Where *there is* no vision, the people perish^f: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he. Proverbs 29:18 KJV

¹⁸ Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law. Proverbs 29:18 NIV

¹⁸ Where there is no prophecy, the people cast off restraint, but happy are those who keep the law. Proverbs 29:18 RSV

Introduction

You probably noticed that the different translations of the original Hebrew writings seem substantially different. The familiar KJV renders “where there is no vision”. The action word (hazon) is actually properly translated “the revelation a prophet receives.” Also the KJV translation “the people perish” is from the verb (para) which means “to cast off restraint”.

This is a case where the NIV and RSV provide a more accurate translation of the original language. However, the two translations do not contradict one another.

If you look closely, the text can be understood to say, “Where there is no revelation from the prophets or understanding of the scriptures, the people will cast off their restraint or abandon themselves to their own sinful ways and it will destroy them. But those who live by the scriptures and instructions of God will be happy and blessed.”

When we properly understand this text, we find major implications for the work of our church.

Content

1. We must have a clear vision of the message of our work

If this were a business we could call in a consulting firm to get their expert advice on how to create our vision and purpose to accomplish success.

But this is not a business. We are the church and our vision is laid before us in “the revelation;” the Bible. God’s word gives us our instructions for what we are to do; **go and tell.**

We are not at liberty to design our purpose. Our purpose is laid out before us in the Word of God.

We are not at liberty to tweak our message. Our message is clear and hasn’t changed in two thousand years.

We are at liberty to use different means and methods to communicate our message. But the message remains the same; **God loves people so much that he sent His son Jesus Christ to die on the cross that they might have eternal life.**

You need to understand that whatever church means to you, that is the mission of the church.

This is the message of the New Testament and the message we are charged with communicating.

Illus: Jason had an assignment for his SS class. They were to be prepared to share with the class how they would tell someone about Christ in their own words without using a bunch of religious or theological terms.

Are you prepared to tell someone in your circle about Christ and what God has done? Is the vision of our message clear with you?

2. We must have a clear vision of the importance of our work

Jesus said; “³⁵Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest?’ I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. John 4:35 NIV

We must recognize that people need the Lord. We must understand that without the revelation of the good news, people will cast off restraint. They will abandon themselves to their own sinful ways and it will destroy them.

Without the word of God and without the instruction of living a life of being right with God, the right things do not matter and the wrong things do matter.

Right Things Do Not Matter – Without obedience and respect for God, the important things in life simply do not matter. There is no requirement to love your neighbor. There is no necessity to honor your parents. There is no motivation to respect others, live with integrity, work hard, be honest or worship God.

Wrong Things Do Matter – Without obedience and respect for God, all the wrong things suddenly matter. Sin becomes the norm, animals are elevated to equal status with man, and anything someone wants to do becomes their right regardless of how obscene and offensive. Without God’s instruction everything is subject to worship including the trees, our bodies and the stars. Discipline becomes non-existent without the word of God. What we want supersedes God’s law.

Does any of this sound familiar with modern day life?

As the church we must keep a clear vision of the importance of our work. We must take God at his word and understand that without his word, people will be destroyed.

Illus: If you had a field ready for harvest, would you just sit back and watch the crop ruin? No, you would do everything possible to round up help and get the crop harvested.

We must see what God sees; fields right for harvest. We must see the potential. As people of faith **we must not be problem-minded; we must be opportunity-minded.**

We must quit looking for others to be Christian examples and start being Christian examples ourselves.

3. We must have a clear vision of the fruits of our work

Illus: Helen Keller was once asked, “What would be worse than being born blind?” She responded, “Having sight with no vision.”

What a profound statement by a girl who was born without sight or hearing. She could not help how she came into this world but she sure could help how she left this world.

You and I must have the foresight to see the fruits of our work. We must understand that eternal life is at stake for our friends, family, our children and grandchildren and others.

Faith means action and action means results. Our faith will determine our actions and our actions will influence our results. It all starts with faith and we must have the faith to take action.

Our text tells us that the results are ever so important. We must keep teaching the word of God so the children can know Him. We must stay diligent with our ministries so our youth can experience Him. We must tell our message so families can stay together through God’s grace.

Those who hear and keep the word of God will be happy and live peaceful lives. This is what we all desire and it is available through God. We do not desire to see any perish and God desires that none should perish but that they would have eternal life.

When Jesus was teaching, a man brought his son to him and explained that his son was possessed with a spirit. His son could not talk and would become stiff, foam at the mouth and gnash his teeth. Mark 9:22-24 indicates the man said to Jesus...

²²“But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” ²³“‘If you can?’” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” ²⁴Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” Mark 9:22-24

We must ask God to help us overcome our unbelief and move forward with our vision. We must see the work before us and move forward with faith understanding the fruits of our labor.

Conclusion

Illus: A 5th grade SS class was asked to go home and count the stars in the sky as part of their next SS lesson. They came back with various numbers. Some said 100, some said 1000 and some said a million. Finally the teacher asked a little boy who had said nothing, "How many stars did you count?" He replied, "3." The teacher asked, "How did you only see 3 stars?" He said, "I guess we just have a small backyard."

For many of us that is the problem. We have a small backyard. Our faith needs to be strengthened. Ask God to give you a vision of how you can serve him and the faith to trust the results to Him.