

“CAN YOU SEE WHAT GOD IS DOING?”

by Rom A. Pegram † 5/1/16

What is vision? Today, we begin a series called “Vision for Life,” based on the scripture that says ... if we don’t have it, we’re going to perish! So, it’s something we need in order to sustain life—to be the church that doesn’t just exist ... but that *really lives*! But, what is it? And, in particular, what is it for us—the congregation called Trinity United Methodist Church? Let’s begin today with our scripture—a key verse from Proverbs *for today ... and for this whole series ...* and I’ll share it in a couple different versions...

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”
–Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)

“If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.” –Proverbs 29:18 (*The Message*)

George Barna, in his first book entitled *The Power of Vision*, describes it this way: ***Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.*** For our purposes, in this series, we’re going to go with that definition. It’s a clear image of **a preferable future**—being able to see something that’s coming down the road. It is something that **is imparted by God**—the source of any *true* vision. It’s **truth doesn’t waver from our knowledge of God, self, or our environment**—it fits our circumstances for today. So, with this definition in mind, what is God’s vision for us here at Trinity UM Church?

I’ve said it before ... and I’ll say it again: I do dearly love Martin Luther ... and I believe in ‘*the priesthood of all believers*’ as he did! Martin Luther believed that God had a unique plan, a unique purpose for each and every life—a *unique vision*, if you will. It wasn’t only pastors and priests that were ‘*called*’ to do ministry. Carpenters were called to be carpenters; bankers were called to be bankers; farmers were called to be farmers, and so on. God has a unique plan or *vision* for each one of our lives...

In the same way, God has a unique plan or *vision* for each congregation within His Kingdom—each Body of Christ! And *God has made it so that the visions that he has for our individual lives will also fit into his plan for the overall Church!* So, what is God’s plan for *our church*? *Can we see what God is doing here?* Do we know what direction we’re to be moving in? These are all questions that will be answered, as we go through this series...

What is God’s *clear mental image of a preferable future* for us, right here in Dodge County Wisconsin and surrounding area? This is what we’re going to be talking about for the next several weeks. But, first, I want to take just a few moments and talk about what it means to *have* vision ... and what it means if we *don’t* have a vision from God for our lives—for *this church*. Let’s start here—the *contrast we need to be considering*. First...

LIFE WITHOUT A VISION... Folks, all too often, a life without vision can be a devastating thing—not just inconvenient!

What's one of the number one illnesses in this country today? Can anyone guess? One of the number one ailments that this country suffers from is *depression!* *Why are so many people depressed?*

Well, we can start with our teenagers. I think that too often it begins there. What's a very common comment that we hear from teenagers? "I'm _____!" (Yes, *bored!*) Many times, people of all ages will just set around not knowing what to do and be miserable ... and that leads to *boredom*. Now, if you go through a long period of time where you don't have anything to look forward to and you remain bored, that will eventually lead to ... *depression!*

I believe that's at least one reason why *depression* is so prevalent in our society today! People are bored; they don't really know where their life is going! It's a life with no hope and no excitement. There's no hope even for their immediate future...

It's a bit like being lost (fellas), when you're traveling somewhere. When I'm lost, that's depressing! Why? Because I hate to stop and ask for directions! Can anybody relate? It's so unnerving, not being able to see clearly where you're going ... and struggling with asking for directions...

But, *we must!* For it's only through prayer that we can know God's vision for our lives ... and it's only through prayer that God's vision for the life of this church will be revealed! ... But it's kind of depressing to have a life with no vision. So, what's the opposite like? Let's talk about that. *Let's contrast a life without vision with...*

LIFE WITH A VISION... Life WITH vision is a life that is exciting ... a celebration every day ... because *we know where we're going!* A life *with* vision is exciting because *you can see what God's doing:* In your life ... and in the life of your church ... and in the life of your community. A life *with* vision means we begin to think 'God-sized' thoughts and not just 'human-sized' thoughts for the future. If God is behind the vision, we'll begin to *think big...*

There was a little boy who one day wanted to sell his flop-eared pup. So, he set up a stand on a corner in his neighborhood. A salesman passed that corner each day, and after a week he began to pity the boy who was striving to sell his puppy. The salesman knew the boy didn't 'See It Big.' He stopped and said, "Son, do you really want to sell this dog?"

The boy replied, "I certainly do."

"Well you're never going to sell him until you learn to 'See It Big.' What I mean is, take this dog home, clean him up, doll him up, raise your price, make people think they're getting something big, and you'll sell him."

That noon the salesman came by and there was the boy with a puppy that was groomed, perfumed, and beribboned alongside a big sign:

TREEMENNDOUS Puppy For Sale--\$5,000...

The salesman gulped and realized he'd forgotten to tell the boy about 'Keeping It Simple.' That evening he stopped by to tell the boy the other half of the formula, only to discover that the boy was gone, the puppy was gone and the sign lay there with "SOLD" written across it in big letters...

The salesman couldn't believe it. This kid couldn't have sold the dog for \$5,000. His curiosity got the best of him and he rang the boy's doorbell. The boy came to the door and the salesman blurted, "Son you didn't really sell that dog for \$5,000 now, did you?"

The boy replied, "Yes, sir, I did and I want to thank you for all your help."

The salesman said, "How in the world did you do it?"

The boy replied, "Oh, it was easy. I just took two \$2,500 cats in exchange!"

Folks, *if the vision is of God, you'll be thinking big ...* and it'll be exciting! Here's another benefit of a life with vision...

Knowing what God is doing and where we're going will also fill us with JOY ... and we won't be able to help ourselves! Vision will cause encouragement in our lives—filling us with JOY; then we'll be encouragers in the lives of others (it's contagious!)...

One of the things I did not do in the earlier years of our marriage is to go grocery shopping with Jane. Now, I know that I really missed out. It is one of the ways that I most enjoy spending time with Jane these days. But, I have to tell you about something that I've observed while grocery shopping: People don't know what to do with you if you're too happy when you're grocery shopping!

A typical day of shopping goes something like this: Jane and I drive to the store, park in the parking lot, and then proceed into the store. However, more times than not you'll see us holding hands as we walk into the store. (We're *sweethearts*, you know!) And, as we walk into the store, hand-in-hand, we're usually laughing about something, picking at each other, and so on...

Now, no one has ever said anything directly, but I can almost read what they're thinking sometimes just by the look on their face. "What's that old man doing holding hands with that really young-looking woman?" (I'm just kidding. Brownie points!) No. What they're really thinking is, "How can anyone be that happy when they're grocery shopping?"

Have you been to the grocery store lately? I witness husbands and wives bickering with each other. I witness parents getting nasty with their children. I see children not treating their parents with respect. But, very rarely do I see the kind of happiness in others that I experience with Jane most of the time! I almost feel guilty! But, *could it be that we're full of joy because we can see what God's doing in our lives ... and it's exciting?*

Without a vision, the people perish. With a vision from God, people don't just have life; they have an exciting life ... and a life that's *full of joy!* We, folks, can be an example for all the world to see ... if we have God's vision guiding our lives...

So, which way are you going to live? We have a choice. Will it be a boring, depressing life *without* vision ... or a clear-sighted, joy-filled life with vision?

Eight-year-old Frank had looked forward for weeks to this particular Saturday because his father had promised to take him fishing if the weather was suitable. There hadn't been any rain for weeks and as Saturday approached, Frank was confident of the fishing trip. But, wouldn't you know it, when Saturday morning dawned, it was raining hard and seemed it would continue all day...

Frank wandered around the house, peering out the windows and grumbling more than a little. "Seems like the Lord would know that it would have been better to have the rain yesterday than today," he complained to his father who was sitting by the fireplace, enjoying a good book. His father tried to explain to Frank how badly the rain was needed—how it would make the flowers grow and bring much needed moisture to the crops. But Frank was adamant. "It just isn't right," he said over and over.

Then, about three o'clock, the rain stopped. 'Still time for some fishing, so very quickly the gear was loaded and they were off to the lake. Whether it was the rain or something else, the fish were biting big-time and father & son returned with *a full string of fine, big fish...*

At supper, when some of the fish were ready, Frank's mom asked him to say grace. Frank did—and concluded his prayer by saying, "And, Lord, if I sounded grumpy earlier today ... it was because I couldn't see far enough ahead."

No doubt much of our complaining is because ... "we can't see far enough ahead." Folks, let's not allow ourselves to end up sightless! Let's keep our eyes on what God is doing—that we might have an exciting & fruitful future together. What is it that God is doing? Let me give you just a taste...

First, God is calling us to be an incredible people of worship—maybe like no other in our immediate area. Along with that, God is calling us to live as disciples 24 hours a day, 7 days a week—a church where every member is a 'participating member' ... *every member in ministry.* And, I truly believe that the heart of this congregation ... is a heart that longs for mission. What if every member of this congregation would be involved in some sort of mission work at least once per year—one project per year? Folks, what an impact that would have on our community ... and on the world! Why would we be a congregation that'd be about these things? Because of our response to what God's done for us through Christ—*because we love God that much...*

This is where we're going, and what we're going to be talking about over the next few weeks. If our future together is something you're interested in—something you want to

be a part of, *you're in the right place at the right time!* Perhaps God is nudging you to get involved and move ahead with this Body of Christ at this time in history. Don't miss out, folks, as we begin to see what God's already doing right before our eyes!