

“A VISION FOR LIFE” (8/8/10)

SCRIPTURES: Proverbs 29 & Luke 12: 22-34

KEY CONCEPTS: Our spiritual commitment to Christ/God will clarify our vision & purpose in life; for as we align our actions & values with God’s leading – our life will come into focus.

INTRODUCTION:

What is your vision for your own life? Do you have a vision for your own life? Spiritually speaking, how does God figure into your overall life vision? And how does God’s overall vision for God’s world impact you? This month as we consider the theme of “Vision Quests” I invite you to open your hearts, minds & lives to what the Spirit of God might have to say to you.

“VISION QUEST” INFORMATION: (ONLINE)

How many of you have ever heard the term “vision quest”? In researching this term “vision quest”, it is most common to define “vision quest” as a rite of passage in many Native American cultures.

Usually, in most Native American groups, the vision quest is a turning point in the life taken before puberty to find one’s self & the intended spiritual path & life’s direction. When an older child is ready, he or she will go on a personal, spiritual quest alone into the wilderness. Fasting is often a part of a vision quest. The vision quest/fasting lasts for a number of days while the child is attuned to the spirit world.

Often, a Guardian animal will come in a vision or dream. The child’s life direction will also appear at some point. The child then returns to the tribe & once the child has grown up, he or she will pursue that direction in life. After a vision quest, the child may become an apprentice for an adult in the tribe that is what the child will become (i.e. Medicine man, boat maker, etc.). The vision quest is both the learning & the initiation process of the child under the guidance of tribal elders. (From: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vision_quest)

The vision quest is also said to help the child establish contact with a spirit or force that can & will guide them into adulthood. And this is the key point that I’d like for us to focus on for today’s sermon (& for the month of August as we celebrate 11 years of progressive Christian ministry here in Athens, GA).

WILL YOU PRAY WITH ME?

PRAYER:

AUGUST 2010:

August 8, 1999. Exactly 11 years ago today, Our Hope Metropolitan Community Church was birthed in Athens, GA. Some of you have heard the story (& can probably tell the story). So, how many of you were at that first service, at the Holiday Inn? Will you please rise in spirit & stand as you’re able...

Exactly 11 years ago, between 120-125 people gathered in the Athena Room of the Holiday Inn to worship a God of love for ALL people. Fifty percent of the people in that room were from Athens & the surrounding areas; while the remaining fifty percent were MCC supporters from Atlanta, Alabama & North Carolina. The leaders of the GLBT community of Athens were supportive (& continue to be so) even these 11 years later.

In 11 years there have been significant changes in Athens, the United States & the world. As we move into our 12th year of ministry, we will need to continue to define (& redefine) our

individual & collective visions as God's spirit leads us. This morning I want to look at several key spiritual concepts found in our texts that might help us in our vision quests.

HEBREW READING – PROVERBS 29 (ONLINE):

The purpose for the book of Proverbs is to communicate ideas & insights to help people learn how to better cope with life. The various teachings encompass the traditions of the elders & life experiences with a practical emphasis on honesty, diligence, trustworthiness, self-reliant & healthy attitudes toward wealth & poverty. Proverb presents a vibrant, feminine personification of divine Wisdom. Individual proverbs are not to be read & simply applied literally; rather they are to be read in creative tension with each other. The book of Proverbs invites the reader to intellectual discipline as a life-giving synthesis of keen observations & reflections, ethical concern & piety.

Proverbs 29, possibly written by officials connected to King Hezekiah, offers a key insight about “vision” – which is also called “revelation” or “prophecy” – in verse 18. This verse is translated in these ways:

- Where there is no vision, the people perish... (Traditional, KJV)
- Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint, but blessed is the one who keeps the law. (NIV)
- Where there is no prophecy, the people cast off restraint, but happy are those who keep the law. (NRSV)

So, what vision/purpose might God have in mind for you in the coming weeks & months both personally & spiritually? And how do we find out what God's vision/purpose might be? I find the reading from Luke 12 (today's Gospel reading) to be insightful.

GOSPEL READING – LUKE 12: 22-34:

Today's reading comes on the heels of Jesus' Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21) which began when someone asked Jesus to “make my brother divide an inheritance with me” & Jesus is credited with these words,

- *“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his/her possessions.’” (v. 15)*
- *“This is how it will be with those who store up things for themselves, but are not rich toward God.” (v. 21)*

By the world's standards, every one of us in this room is wealthy or rich. Now more than likely, most of us do not see ourselves as wealthy or rich – especially when we use the “world's standards of material wealth”. And yet what DOES God say? What does today's Sacred Scriptures say? AND have we forgotten that we claim – as Christians – to follow an itinerate & homeless teacher – Jesus Christ? With this in mind – let's notice some of the lessons from these verses from Luke.

GENERAL LESSONS:

Lesson #1: Stop worrying...about your life, what you'll eat, about your body, what you'll wear.(v. 22-30) Why? Because our lives are more than food & our bodies more than clothing. Worrying doesn't add any value or time to our lives – in fact, it may decrease the length & quality of our lives! Now who's going to worry about that fact? ☺

And note, verse 30-31 – “For it is the nations of the world that strives after all these things, & your Father/Mother God knows that you need them. INSTEAD, strive for God's dominion & These things will be given to you as well.”

Lesson #2: Don't be afraid! (v. 32). Why? Because God **WANTS** to give us God's kingdom which is most accurately defined as being in the presence, the peace & the perfectness of God. According to this passage God WANTS us to have peace of mind, as well as God's very presence. With that going for us, how can we be afraid even as we face some of the harsh realities of our current lives? WE ARE NOT ALONE....

Lesson #3: Use (sell & give) material items to help people since investing in & loving people are the only eternal treasures that live on. Remember I said that, according to the world's standards – when considering how many people worldwide live on less than \$1 a day – every one of us in this room is wealthy? Well, being wealthy or having money is NOT a bad thing. As a matter of fact, having money is one of the ways God blesses us so we can be of assistance to our fellow human beings. Any money we have, make or work for IS ultimately FROM God & as such it might be wise for us to ask God this question, “God, how do you want me to use this money? How can my spending of this money bring honor to you & help others?”

CLOSING:

As I conclude this morning....

In creating our “Vision for Life” we ALL must determine how we'll live in relationship to:

- **Worry** – True, life is stressful & there are circumstances that can cause us to worry. So, how will you create a vision for life that is not overwhelmed by the worries of the world? What worries you this morning? Is your worrying about this person, situation or circumstances making it better? And what if every time we start to worry, we begin to pray until we're less worried?
- **Fear** – There are definitely some people & situations that cause legitimate fear. So, how will you create a vision for life that is not overshadowed by the fears of the world? I don't know about you – but lately, I've been in a “season of death & loss” & although I don't fear death per say, I have begun to fear that next phone call or email that will announce yet another loss of a person I love or care about. I know this season WILL pass & yet, until it does, how do I calm my own fears & not allow them to overshadow the reality of life that is all around me?
- **Money** – And finally, the commodity that possibly encompasses our worries & our fears. What will your vision for life do with regards to money? How will money play into how you live your life? AND it is probably true, that most, if not all of us, could use more money...yet until “more money comes” for you are you currently honoring God with the money God's already given you?

All of us here this morning, need a renewing of our spiritual vision; all of us need God to help us to worry less, fear less & use our money to actively express our love of God & others. How will your “vision for life” encompass God's call to trust, be fearless & share?

Amen.....