

“HOW’S YOUR VISION?”
Proverbs 29:18
October 14, 2018
Stewardship 2018 – Part 1
Holiday Island Presbyterian Church

INTRODUCTION:

The translation we are reading this morning –

- the New Revised Standard Version –

translates Proverbs 29:18 as:

“Where there is no *prophecy*, the people cast off restraint.”

However, a more accurate translation is:

“Where there is no *vision*, the people perish.”

The primary difference –

- is the translation of the word for *prophecy/vision*.

There is another version - a modern version – that says:

“If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves, but when they attend to what God reveals, they are most blessed.”

I like that translation best

because it makes it crystal clear

if we don’t have a clear picture of where we are headed -

- where God is calling us –

- most likely we will fail.

**The failure and eventual death of most churches
can be directly traced to a lack of vision;**

- no plans for the future**
- unsure of God's calling**

**People end up dissatisfied, perhaps leaving the church
other folks work themselves into burnout
working for the status quo and floundering.**

**Lack of vision eventually breeds confusion,
weariness of body and soul,
the best leaders wear out
and leadership is left to those less qualified to lead.**

No that's harsh.

But it is the plain truth as clearly as I can say it.

**At the very center of who we are as Christians,
as a Church and what lies ahead in our future
is this thing called *VISION!***

This morning,

I want to lead you to look at two types of vision:

- personal vision**
- vision for the church**

PERSONAL VISION:

Let's begin with *personal* vision.

**When people have no divine guidance
ultimately, they rebel against the will of God**

and wander through a spiritual wilderness.

**Instead of having a fulfilled life,
they wander from greed, lust, selfishness,
and self-centered gratification.**

**They find themselves
in a downward spiral that is difficult to escape.
But not impossible to escape.**

The prophet Jeremiah said this:

**11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you
hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11**

**God has a plan for each and every one of us.
Notice I used Jeremiah’s word “plan,”**

**When an architect designs a house
and turns those plans over to the builder
it is up to the builder to follow those plans.**

**An ethical builder, a faithful builder, a good builder
will follow those plans to the letter.**

**So, God, the architect of the universe,
has a plan for our lives.**

It is up to us to read the blueprint and follow the plan.

**Ah, there’s the rub, isn’t it?
We claim we can’t follow the plan
because we don’t know what the blueprints say, right?**

No, that’s not correct.

God has given us guidelines to follow.

**One of the very first guidelines is not to limit God
to that which we are willing to do.**

**Sometimes we are like Christian ostriches –
- God calls us to something so big
we don't see how we can do it.**

**So, we stick our fingers in our ears,
shut our eyes tight,
and stick our heads in the sand
hoping God will go away.**

**It is the very nature of God to call us to huge tasks!
Tasks that are so big and so difficult
there is absolutely no way we could accomplish them
by ourselves, on our own.**

**Then, when we step out in faith,
God takes us by the hand and shows us
what God can do!**

**God sent Moses to Pharaoh,
with the vision that Moses would lead the Israelites
out of bondage and out of Egypt.**

**Moses claimed he was not eloquent enough;
he wouldn't know what to say;
and he wouldn't say it well enough.**

**Then Moses said he was sure that Pharaoh wouldn't believe him.
He's going to toss me out on my ear
when I tell him that God has sent me.**

Then Moses asked God to send his brother, Aaron, instead.

**The vision was too big for Moses to handle on his own
so he tried to avoid and evade –
- excuse after excuse.**

Do you see what God had in mind?

**God didn't expect Moses to be the savior of the Israelites!
God expected Moses to accept the challenge!
And let God do the work!**

Do you see where I am going with this?

**With your input – and God's guidance –
- we – meaning all of us –
- have discerned a plan for next year.**

**It is a big plan – a HUGE plan.
Bigger than we can do by ourselves
– but not bigger than God.**

**If we, like Moses, use every excuse in the book to avoid this plan
we will miss out on the HUGE blessings
God is ready to pour out for us.**

**It will take personal commitment –
- a personal vision of what we can do with God's help –
- to bring it to fruition.**

THE CHURCH'S VISION:

Now, let's look at the Church's vision.

**If the Church was called into being by God,
- and I can assure you it was and still is –
- then God must have a plan for each individual church.**

That plan is called “vision.”

**Vision is the engine that drives the Church
towards a future God is already making.**

**The key to successful, thriving churches
is to discern and follow God’s vision.**

**In churches that are without a vision of what to do,
those church die or divide into multiple splinter groups.**

**The church I served in Oklahoma lost their vision.
The membership dwindled to the point
they could no longer maintain the church.**

**They sold the building;
and a handful of folks are still meeting somewhere.**

**Conversely, where there is a shared vision,
there is vitality and the church is thriving.**

**That is why Solomon said:
“If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over
themselves, but when they attend to what God reveals, they are
most blessed.” Proverbs 29:18**

**The first step towards following God’s will
is to discern God’s vision for us.**

**The word translated “vision” is CHAZON.
It is not a reference to the ability to see the future.
It implies the will and purpose of God being made known,
“inspired guidance.”**

**Over the last 4 months or so,
I have been asking for your vision of what the church needs.**

**You have responded
and a list has been compiled.**

**The session has prayerfully considered each item on the list,
those things we discerned are needed
have been published and reviewed by each of you.**

**I sincerely believe that every item on that list
will strengthen and better the church.**

Every item.

**You are probably asking questions like:
How will a new oven usher in the Kingdom of God?**

**I don't presume to know the answer to that.
However, I can speculate.**

**Someone may have been resisting a call
to help in the kitchen because they hate the old oven
that is difficult to use and is untrustworthy.**

New ovens will remove the barrier to that person' service.

How about the sound system?

**There may be those whose hearing is fading – like mine –
- that will hear the word of God more clearly than before
and will be drawn closer to God.**

**Does a paved parking lot honor God?
Maybe.**

**If it makes it easier for an aging congregation to attend church
and to deepen their spirituality through worship, it sure does!**

You see, we can't limit what God calls us to be and to do.

**We can refuse to do it,
but we can't bargain God into smaller visions.**

God is not a God of small visions!

**Joseph in Genesis was given a Vision.
The bible says he dreamed a dream.
He ended up the number 2 guy in Egypt!**

**Abraham was spoken to in a vision.
Noah had a vision.
Mary, Paul and every godly person in the Bible
had a vision.**

And not a one of those visions was small!

**Martin Luther King once said I have a dream –
- that dream simply changed a nation.**

Vision - genuine vision - will attract followers.

CONCLUSION:

**The session can plan all they want . . .
but unless you, the people, support that plan,
it is nothing more than a dream.**

**There is a story I heard about a session meeting
at the church one evening.**

There were three elders sitting around the table with the pastor.

**The pastor had received a vision from God
and was explaining it to the elders,
saying they should initiate that vision into the church.**

**When they took a vote, the tally was three elders against
and one pastor for.**

**The lead elder spoke up and said,
“Well, the vote is 3-1. You are outvoted, Pastor,
and it is late, so let’s close in prayer.”**

**The pastor, not wanting to give up that easily,
prayed that the Lord would somehow show the elders
that it was not his vision he fought for, but the Lord’s.**

**At that moment, a lightning bolt came through the window,
splitting the table in half
and throwing all the elders to the floor.**

**After they all got up, the lead elder said,
“Well, Pastor, the vote is now 3-2. You still lose.”**

**Are we a good church? Yes!
Are we a faithful church? Yes!
Are we a welcoming church? Yes!**

Are we as good as we can be? Ah, there’s the question now, isn’t it.

**Think of it this way:
We are preparing the Church
for the blessings God is about to pour out for us!
New members, greater spiritual growth,
a well-cared for building.**

We're spiffing up the Church anticipating what God is about to do!

Do I know what that might be?

Of course, not! I am no prophet that can see the future.

**But, I have a long and faithful relationship with God
that reminds me that when God wants something done,
the best I can do is fasten my seatbelt and hang on!**

**There is a single question that started my journey
into seminary and ministry:**

**If I had all the money I needed and all the time and
resources, what would I do?**

This church now faces that same question.

**And you – my beloved brothers and sisters –
are the only ones who can answer that question.**

Don't limit God by what you're willing to do.

PRAYER:

God of all dreams and visions, You have presented us with a great challenge – a huge challenge. We pray that the decisions we have made are in accordance with Your will. We pray for the faith to bring this vision to reality. Bless us with the courage and prosperity needed to move from vision to reality. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.