**Sermon Summary 12 July 2020**

**Be Thou My Vision:** by Graham Mol

Have your days become a bit of a blur during this lockdown period? Does one day seem to blend into the other? This experience has been especially pronounced in the lives of those who are now working from home or those who are retired and are keeping at home to protect themselves from the risk. Psychologist Sherry Benton comments on this phenomenon: “Anytime we have a big change in routine, this happens. We are accustomed to a certain amount of structure to our days. Moving to working from home disrupts the structure.”

For many of us during this time we’ve gone into a kind of survival mode, taking each day one at a time. That’s very much been how our country is too, taking it a day at a time, and that’s okay. This has been a difficult time for many, it still is. However, we need to be careful that this way of living doesn’t become permanent, that taking things one day at a time does not become our default way of life. That we stop planning, or dreaming or striving towards a goal. For many of us our lives have been put on hold but we mustn’t stay that way.

We can become so comfortable with cautious that we forget what it’s like to be bold. We must be careful that faith does not give way to fear, that we don’t grow so weary in our praying that we stop.

*Please read* **Ephesians 6:9-10**.

***Vision*** can described both as being able to see and in the sense of the ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom. You may have lost track of the days during lockdown but a far worse thing is for life itself to become a blur.

*What is your vision? More specifically: What is your God-given vision? Are you prepared to pursue it?*

You might not have an answer to those questions right now. Maybe you used to, but with everything that has happened, you’re not so sure anymore. Maybe you know the vision but you’re hesitant in pursuing it, fear and doubt are holding you back. If that is the case the opening passage from the book of Joshua may just be what you need to know and be encouraged by.

The book of Joshua begins at the point where Moses, God’s leader of the redeemed Israelite people, has now passed away and the role of leadership has passed to Joshua his assistant. It also marks the end point of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. They are finally ready to enter into the God’s Promised Land, the place of God’s bright vision and future for them. It’s important to note that many years before, not too long after the Israelites were delivered by God’s mighty hand from Egypt and the Egyptian oppressors, the people stood on the verge of entering into the Promised Land. But they allowed fear to prevent them from trusting in God and entering by faith.

The spies that Moses had sent into the land had seen the occupying nations, their size and strength and all but two (Joshua and Caleb) decided that there was no way that they would be able to conquer the land. They turned the people against Moses and angered God who declared that not one of them would enter the Promised Land, only their children would – and Joshua and Caleb. The people had become comfortable with cautious and allowed fear and doubt to prevent them from stepping out in faith. Finally, with the new generation, the day has come for Joshua to lead the people into the Promised Land. However, the occupying forces had not become any lesser in that time. There would be need for courage.

*Please read* **Joshua 1:1-9**.

These are stirring words, powerful words as God lays a vision before Joshua, a purpose for his life. He encourages Joshua to pursue this vision of the Promised Land in the hands of God’s people. Be strong and courageous, this vision will require you to be bold, to be brave. It will require strength of arm and even more so of character.

How will Joshua do this? How will he be able to be strong and courageous? How will he be able to commit and follow through on this vision? God promises to be with him as He was with Moses. He will never leave or abandon Him. But how will Joshua know this? How will He remember that God is with Him when he faces the multitude of enemies and the people face setbacks and struggle? How will Joshua be sure of God’s faithfulness?

We find the answer in these verses: “Observe carefully the whole instruction of the law,” “This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth,” “Meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it.”

“For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do.”

Joshua’s reading, reciting, meditating upon, taking in living out of the God’s word, spoken through Moses, will give him vision to see that God is with Him. It will give him vision to see the path he must follow, to see the promises of God. It will give him the sight to clearly see that no matter what happens, even in the most difficult moments, God has not abandoned him. Therefore he will be both strong and courageous to pursue the vision that God has given him.

I experienced a degree of this, this past week. I had watched video from a seminary professor and pastor about how to pray. In this video the pastor speaks about what he does that has kept his prayer life vibrant and engaging. He prays the Scriptures, praying God’s word and applying it to his situation. I gave it a go this week and found myself praying through **Psalm 18**. There is much to say about this amazing psalm but what stuck with me was: “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer” (see vv. 1-2).

It so happened that that day was one of those days where everything seems to go wrong, just one thing after another. I could feel the stress piling on, or wanting to, but over and over again I came back to those words: “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer.” I found comfort in those words but they also gave me a clearer perspective. God is bigger than all these problems. God is bigger than the gigantic problems we are facing in the world today. As I meditated on these words of Scripture throughout the day they gave me clarity, clear vision. This is what we need right now, as individuals, as families, as a Church family.

This year as a Church our vision has been to Shine! I must admit all that has happened has made it difficult to keep this focus, the need to survive and get through the days has taken our eyes off of it somewhat. And so the need for us to take in God’s word into our lives, to meditate on it and to live it out is indeed great so that we can restore vision to our lives. Vision to see the truth, that God is with us. With Him we can be strong and courageous and therefore pursue the vision He has for each of our lives, for each of our families, for us as a Church and as believers in this world.

*Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart*

*Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art*

*Thou my best Thought, by day or by night*

*Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light*

*Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word*

*I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord*

*Thou my great Father, I Thy true son*

*Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one*

*Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise*

*Thou mine Inheritance, now and always*

*Thou and Thou only, first in my heart*

*High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art*

*High King of Heaven, my victory won*

*May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heav'n's Sun*

*Heart of my own heart, whate'er befall*

*Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all*