

July 2, 2010

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

How many of you know what it means to 'pay it forward' after the movie from a few years ago. Many of you have heard or know about the book 'The Shack' from a friend how recommended it? Which of you know the latest news about town on who is getting married or divorced? We all know of these things because people tell us. It does not matter if the news is good or bad, if it excites us we repeat to someone else then they tell someone and they tell someone then it goes on and on. In the current language of things, especially on the web we would say it has gone viral.

Most of the time the things which have gone viral are trivial, while they maybe a little unique overall they are mostly unimportant pieces of information except to the one who put it out there hoping to become famous. I could list some of the latest things to go viral, but they change every day or every hour. Yet we all know them because we see them on the news and we get links to them through email in our inboxes.

So what have you passed on to someone else in the last week? What next new thing have you told someone about? What excited or intrigued you so much you could not keep it to yourself? Who did you tell and how did they act? Did they get excited, intrigued and get involved?

July 2, 2010

A couple months ago I almost, and I will stress the word 'almost', got excited about getting a bicycle again. Talking with the couple who used to own Badger Bro Coffee shop just after they sold it, they were telling me of their next big adventure. They were moving back to the west coast, but they were getting there by riding their bikes. They were cutting across Iowa, meeting up with the Lewis & Clark trail then follow the trail to westward. They were taking only basic items, contacting people along the way for guidance and maybe a nights rest along the way using a website. They were excited and they got me thinking it might be a fun way to see country.

A couple weeks that conversation a man showed up for worship on Sunday morning. It was the last day of Sunday school so we invited him to stay and share our cookout with us. During our conversation he told me how he was biking out east to visit family. He was looking for a place to make adjustments to his bicycle and to pitch his tent for the night. It had been forecasted to rain, so Debbie and I invited him to stay with us. That evening as we talked he too intrigued me as to this idea of biking across the country with only the basic items.

The focus, determination, sense of adventure these three had got me wondering about what it would be like riding a bicycle across the country. While I only momentarily considered I quickly decided that was not for me. Peddling a

July 2, 2010

bike up hills or mountains day after day after day seemed more like work which would take all the fun and interest right out of it. Yet I admire them for their determination. I know there have been things in the past after starting them found out they were more difficult than I expected. Then out of a sense of duty or stubbornness I worked to finish the task. But starting a journey like that would be one of those tasks that once you start there may not be any turning back.

Now there are faster, easier, more convenient ways for them to travel across the country and we could name many of them. But would we have to be as determined, or focused or dedicated? Most likely not. The modern world has given us quick and easy ways to accomplish things that used to take much more time. It has also allowed us to easily change course, to change our mind without much thought. If we do not like what we are doing we discard it and move on. Even if we start something we can walk away leaving it unfinished. If we lose interest we set it aside without considering the consequences to ourselves or others. Doing this over and over we soon lose our ability to focus, to remain determined or committed to see something through. If for no other reason, we do it because we can and feel as if no one can tell us we are wrong in doing so.

July 2, 2010

So with all the things we could share with others it seems like that which is most important in our lives, the best news we have to share is the same news we fail to speak about. Why is it we have such a difficult time speaking and acting out our faith in our everyday life? I know most of you do that well as evidenced by the fact you are in attendance here this morning. Yet all of us, including myself need to be reminded of our calling as a worker in the kingdom of God. The harvest is plentiful and there is always a need for laborers to be sent out into the fields to do the important work. God could do it by himself, He does not need us. So our calling to be a worker in the kingdom is for our benefit not God's.

Here in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus has set his face toward Jerusalem. Jesus is singularly focused as he journeys toward the cross. It will not be an easy road and it will take focus and determination to stay committed in fulfilling his mission. Last week Jesus encountered people who wanted to follow him, but upon learning the difficulty they turned away. This week Jesus sends out his disciples to prepare the way for Him with clear instructions as to the journey. He instructs them with both words and actions they are to take.

The seventy are gathered and sent to the town where Jesus is preparing to go. Should the town or place accept them they are to perform acts of love and service. They are to share the peace of Christ, cast out demons and heal the

July 2, 2010

sick and care for the needy. All the while they are to proclaim that “the kingdom of God has come near.” If they are not welcomed they are to do no service, but they are still sent to proclaim the word in telling all ‘the kingdom of God has come near.’ The word is always needs to be spoken.

When the seventy return and they are excited and energized. They come back to Jesus with joy after the experience they had and the reception they received. That is what happens when you are sent out in mission, to serve in the name of Christ, to share his peace and to speak His saving word.

One of the blessings I have had as a pastor is the opportunity to go on mission trips with youth. The frustrating part is getting the youth and families to commit to the journey. Then once you climb into the van or board the bus there is no turning back. The next few hours as you travel full of anticipation and excitement, then you arrive at the site and the reality of what might happen hits you. More than once the youth and even I have wondered or voiced out loud our doubts. We cry out ‘I could be doing something better with my time.’ Then you begin to serve the needy, the elderly, the children as well as each other. Soon you begin to hear their stories of struggle and of blessing. As the days go by and the serving continues you both see and feel the effect of the peace of Christ settling over the people who have welcomed you. While Christ’s peace is sometimes spoken, most time remains

July 2, 2010

unspoken, yet you come to know that the kingdom of God has come near.

You somehow become aware how much harvest is to be done and how many laborers are needed. You return home, exhausted but energized, excited and explaining to anyone who will listen the joy you experienced as you labored in the midst of the harvest.

Now the difficulty of keeping that level of commitment and determination arises for the next 11 months till you go again. Now comes the challenge of retaining that same level of excitement and joy as you travel down the mountain to live in the valley? So how do we stay singularly focused on the mission?

We pray for guidance asking God to open our eyes to opportunities to serve locally. We continue to work for occasions to assist the needy. We remain committed to building relationships with friends and inviting them to come and share in the body of Christ. We persist in being a welcoming place to the stranger and the visitors. We continue to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. We continue to remember we are laborers in God's field bringing in the harvest declaring with joy 'the kingdom of God has come near.'

AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

*Pastor Michael*