

The Vision

A sermon by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on the 25th Sunday after Pentecost, November 13, 1988. Scripture Lessons: Daniel 7:9-14; Psalm 145:8-13; Hebrews 10:11-18; Mark 13:24-32.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Daniel had a vision of God in one of the darkest nights in the history of the Jews. He saw what others weren't able to see. He saw that God is in control. He saw that God will have the last word. He saw a marvelous vision of the coming Kingdom of Christ which will one day encompass the whole earth.

That vision of Christ's kingdom is what motivates my ministry. That vision gives me confidence. It gives me confidence that every beast that threatens God's plans will be slain. It gives me confidence that Christ's kingdom will continue and expand. It gives me confidence that no obstacle is so great that it can stand in the way of God's loving purposes for this world. This vision has been what has motivated me throughout my ministry and I believe it motivates the session of our church.

We have a vision of God's glory here at the Oxford Presbyterian Church. We believe the Bible is the Word of God. We believe that the vision of God described in the book of Daniel is true. We believe that nothing is more important in all the world than that men and women and children should see this vision of God and be captivated by this vision of Christ's kingdom. This vision of who God is, and this vision of Christ's kingdom is behind everything we do here in this church. ✓

Why are people coming out on Wednesday nights to this church; some to pray, some to sing in the choir, some to participate in the evangelism course? It's because to some degree, more or less, these people have seen something of this vision of God and the Kingdom of Christ. People who have caught a glimpse of this glorious vision ~~want~~ ^{not to sing} about it and

praise God in song and music. We want to call upon him in prayer because we know God hears and answers prayer. We want to know better how to be a faithful witness of this vision to others.

This vision of God and the Kingdom of Christ is what motivated the session to hire Paul Houseknecht...

This vision of God and the Kingdom of Christ is what ~~the~~ motivated us to rebuild the organ and renovate the sanctuary...

This vision of God and Kingdom of Christ is what has motivate such sons and daughters of this church as Bruce Rigdon... The Murrays... Jim Sumner... Laurie Winchester. Somehow, over the years, past ministers have been able to communicate that vision of the glory of God and the Kingdom of Christ in such a way that these, and so many others, have pursued the vision in greater depth.

~~Discipline~~ We have a vision of the glory of God and of Christ "to whom has been given dominion and glory and sovereignty, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion." That's why we support the General Assembly General Mission. One of the great success stories of Presbyterian missions is still being written in Korea. 100 years ago there were no Christians in Korea. Today over half the people in Korea are Christians and it all began with several

Presbyterian missionaries. Our giving to the General Assembly General Mission enables others around the world to worship and serve Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

I hope we never let money problems stop us from pursuing the vision that God has given us. Money problems may delay us but I hope we will never let them defeat us. Churches rarely have money problems. To often the real problem is lack of the vision of God, lack of the vision of the

*urgency to singles
homeless
shepherding... evangelism...*

*in the future... singles... homeless... shepherding...
evangelism*

Kingdom of Christ, lack of dynamic, need-filling ideas. I hope we never use the lack of money as an excuse to keep us from doing all we can that others might see the vision and worship and obey Christ.

This is the third and final stewardship sermon for this year. If you've been here for the past three week you might get the feeling that this church is always asking for money. But that would be a false assumption. This church rarely talks about money, except in November during the Stewardship campaign and a couple of special mission offerings throughout the year. *and when you think about it,* It's not the church that's always asking for money, it's the world. When did you last go to the grocery store and the checker failed to ask you for money? Your mortgage company asks for money with unfailing regularity. If you are like most people, each month brings a new collection of bills.

Who withholds a percentage of every dollar you earn? Your Uncle Sam does that. Your Father in heaven doesn't. You can attend worship every week- there's no admission charge. It's very difficult now-a-days to get a doctor to make a house call but if you're sick, your pastor will visit you for free. What do you do when your loved one dies? What will it cost? The funeral home will certainly charge for its services. Your church will not. You have to pay taxes to provide your children "free" public education, but your church operates a Sunday School and youth groups which will give quality Chirstian education with absolutely no cost or obligation.

The church requires no membership fee, no annual dues. It never sends its members a bill. Is there any other organization in the world that functions that way? I don't know of one. You see, the truth is the church "asks for money" less than anything else you can think of.

God has many servants who are glad to have a part in providing ministry in Jesus' name through the church. They joyfully give ~~more than their~~ ~~share~~ so that others who cannot or choose not to contribute may receive that ministry at no cost. Consider this paradox. Compared to the government and the bill collectors, the church almost never asks for money. Yet of all the things your money could be used for, very few are more important than what the church provides.

The church is here to share the love of Jesus Christ ~~himself~~. The church is ~~here~~ ^{here} to keep the vision of God before ~~us~~ ^{men + women}. Our money goes to serve him. We will continue to provide ministry in Jesus' name to everyone, whether they can afford to contribute or not. Isn't that something you would like to be a part of?