

The word about life for today
by Michael Curry
Shared at Shadow Rock UCC
January 23, 2011

GOOD MORNING, I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY SHARING A JOKE WITH YOU CALLED, "THE SERMON!" A LITTLE GIRL BECAME RESTLESS AS THE PREACHER'S SERMON DRAGGED ON AND ON. FINALLY, SHE LEANED OVER TO HER MOTHER AND WHISPERED, "MOMMY, IF WE GIVE HIM THE MONEY NOW, WILL HE LET US GO?" I THINK WE ALL FEEL LIKE THAT SOMETIMES WHEN WE ARE LISTENING TO A PASTOR'S SERMON, I KNOW THAT I HAVE FELT THAT WAY MANY TIMES AND I AM SURE ALL OF YOU WOULD AGREE WITH ME.

OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN PASTOR KEN ONCE A MONTH FOR LUNCH AND RECENTLY, I HAVE BEEN IN TALKS WITH HIM ABOUT WHEN I MIGHT HAVE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO PREACH. I VIVIDLY REMEMBER DURING OUR LUNCH IN NOVEMBER OF LAST YEAR, I REMEMBER ASKING HIM A QUESTION ABOUT THE WORDS OF MISSION AT THE END OF OUR WORSHIP SERVICE. I ALSO REMEMBER ASKING HIM, "SHOULD I INVITE YOU BACK UP TO GIVE THE WORDS OF MISSION AFTER I FINISH PREACHING OR DO YOU THINK IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE IF I COULD GIVE THE WORDS FOR MISSION?" I WAS REALLY SURPRISED BY HIS RESPONSE WHEN HE ASKED ME, "WOULD YOU LIKE TO DESIGN AND LEAD A WORSHIP SERVICE?" I WAS ABSOLUTELY SPEECHLESS WHEN KEN ASKED ME THAT BECAUSE I COULD NOT BELIEVE WHAT I WAS HEARING BUT WITHOUT HESITATION I RESPONDED BY SAYING, "YES, I WOULD LOVE TO DESIGN AND LEAD A WORSHIP SERVICE"

one of the things that i began to think about as i sat down to write this morning's message is what i want the members and friends of shadow rock to take away from the message this morning. what i mean by this is that i began to think about my preaching style. the reason behind why i began to think about my preaching style is because i know that i want to preach and teach the word of god. however, i want to use the word of god and his teachings to show each of you how they can apply to our lives today.

ON SEPTEMBER 12, 2010 WAS KICK-OFF SUNDAY HERE AT SHADOW ROCK AND PASTOR KEN DELIVED A MESSAGE CALLED, "OLD WINE IN NEW WINE SKINS" AND AS PART OF MY STUDIES AS A MINISTRY STUDENT I HAD TO TAKE A CLASS CALLED, "INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY METHODS" AND I WAS QUITE SHOCKED TO FIND OUT

THAT I DID NOT MISS A SINGLE POINT ON ANY OF THE PAPERS THAT I HAD TO WRITE FOR THE CLASS.

MY PROFESSOR DR. ROBERT VAUGHN TOLD ME, “THAT, MICHAEL, I HAVE BEEN STUDYING THE BIBLE FOR OVER 20 YEARS.”

I WAS AMAZED TO FIND OUT THAT HE HAD BEEN STUDYING THE BIBLE FOR THAT AMOUNT OF TIME. THE MAIN FOCUS OF THE CLASS WAS NOT ONLY TO LEARN HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE BUT I WAS ALSO LEARNING ABOUT WHAT QUESTIONS I SHOULD ASK WHEN STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES.

IN GORDON FEE AND DOUGLAS STUART’S BOOK CALLED, “HOW TO READ THE BIBLE AND ALL IT’S WORTH” THEY POSE A QUESTION ABOUT HOW TO INTERPRET BIBLICAL SCRIPTURE. FEE AND STUART STATE IN THE CHAPTER CALLED, “INTRODUCTION: THE NEED TO INTERPRET” WHICH COMES FROM THE SUBSECTION CALLED, “THE READER AS AN INTERPRETER” WHICH READS AS FOLLOWS,

“THAT THE FIRST REASON ONE NEEDS TO LEARN HOW TO INTERPRET IS THAT, WHETHER ONE LIKES IT OR NOT, EVERY READER IS AT THE SAME TIME AN INTERPRETER. THAT IS MOST OF US ASSUME AS WE READ WE ALSO UNDERSTAND WHAT WE READ.”

NOW KEEP IN MIND THAT EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US WILL HAVE OUR OWN OPINION AND VIEW ABOUT HOW WE NOT ONLY INTERPRET THE BIBLE BUT HOW WE INTERPRET THE MINISTER OR PERSON DELIVERING THE MESSAGE.

I WOULD NOW LIKE TO GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO FIRST INTERPRET THE WORSHIP SERVICE’S MESSAGE. I MENTIONED THAT BACK ON SEPTEMBER 12, 2010 WAS KICK-OFF SUNDAY AND THAT PASTOR KEN DELIVERED A MESSAGE CALLED, “OLD WINE IN NEW WINE SKINS” NOW AS I WAS SITTING IN THE PEWS LISTENING TO THE MESSAGE ON THAT PARTICULAR SUNDAY I BEGAN TO THINK ABOUT HOW SOMETIMES I FELT LIKE I ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE FOCUSED ON WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME IN THE PAST WHICH HAS MADE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR ME TO FOCUS ON WHERE I AM PRESENTLY ON MY JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE AS WELL AS FINALLY HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS ON THE PATH THAT GOD HAS CHOSEN FOR ME TO FOLLOW OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS OF MY LIFE. I WANT EACH OF YOU WHO HAVE ASSEMBLED HERE THIS MORNING TO FOCUS ON WHERE SHADOW ROCK IS TODAY AND I ALSO WANT EACH OF YOU TO KEEP IN MIND A VIVID IMAGE

OF HOW EACH OF US ENVISION WHERE THE JOURNEY MAY LEAD US AS A CONGREGATION OVER THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS.

WE HAVE BEEN ON THIS AS A CONGREGATION FOR A LITTLE MORE THAN FIVE ALMOST SIX MONTHS NOW AND I HAVE TO SAY THAT EVEN THOUGH PASTOR KEN HAS DEVELOPED A VERY WELL WRITTEN VISION, IT HAS YET TO BE COMPLETED BECAUSE IT IS WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO CALL AN OPEN ENDED BOOK.

THE REASON WHY I BELIEVE THAT THIS NEW VISION FOR SHADOW ROCK SHOULD BE CALLED AN OPEN ENDED BOOK IS BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH PASTOR KEN HAS DEVELOPED A WELL WRITTEN OUTLINE FOR OUR BRAND NEW JOURNEY HERE AT SHADOW ROCK, I FEEL AS THOUGH MOST OF US HERE THIS MORNING DO NOT TAKE THE TIME TO STEP BACK AND REALLY THINK ABOUT THE OBSTACLES THAT WE MAY ENCOUNTER ALONG THE WAY.

AN EXAMPLE OF THIS WOULD BE USING A MAP TO PLAN A TRIP. THE REASON WHY I CHOSE TO USE THIS PARTICULAR EXAMPLE IS BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE PLANNING TO GO OUT OF TOWN AND DRIVE TO YOUR DESTINATION, MOST OF US WOULD USE A MAP IN ORDER TO PLAN HOW WE ARE GOING TO GET TO THE DESTINATION.

HOWEVER, SOMETIMES WE ENCOUNTER OBSTACLES WHICH WE DID NOT PLAN FOR OUR JOURNEY WHICH MAY END UP THROWING US OFF COURSE AND WE MAY BEGIN TO WONDER HOW WE ARE GOING TO GET BACK ON THE RIGHT PATH THAT CONTINUES TO POINT OUR CONGREGATION INTENTIONALLY TOWARDS THE FUTURE AS GOD CONTINUES TO UNVEIL HIS DIVINE PLAN FOR SHADOW ROCK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST.

AT THIS TIME, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK A QUESTION AND THE QUESTION THAT I WOULD LIKE TO ASK IS THIS AND BY A SHOW OF HANDS, “HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE EVER GOTTEN INTO AN ARGUMENT WITH A FAMILY MEMBER OR CLOSE FRIEND?”

I cannot even begin to tell you how many arguments that my brother and I have gotten into over the years. One of the more frequent arguments that we would have would revolve around the volume of the television set in my bedroom. When my brother and I would have these arguments I was not aware that at that particular time that I had been suffering from a moderate hearing loss in both ears.

My brother would ask me to turn the volume on my television and I turned it down but still had the volume up enough so I could hear what the person was saying on the show that I happened to be watching at the time. Even after I had turned the volume down on my television, my brother would still complain and sometimes he would bang on his bedroom wall which would make my bedroom wall shake, not to mention scare the crap out of me as well. The arguments between my brother and I would have about how loud the volume on my television should be would mostly be verbal arguments. Although sometimes the arguments that my brother and I had would turn physical but, when it is all said and done we may go to bed angry at each other but the next day we apologize to each other, we share a hug and we tell each other that we love each other, just like we always will no matter how many fights we have throughout the rest of our lives, I hope my brother knows how much I love him and I have always got your back bro because I know that you will always love me and that you will always have my back no matter how many fights that we have.

OUR WORD ABOUT LIFE THIS MORNING CAME FROM THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS 4: 1-6 WHICH SAYS, “¹ AS A PRISONER FOR THE LORD, THEN, I URGE YOU TO LIVE A LIFE WORTHY OF THE CALLING THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED. ²BE COMPLETELY HUMBLE AND GENTLE; BE PATIENT, BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE. ³ MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH THE BOND OF PEACE. ⁴ THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT- JUST AS YOU WERE CALLED TO ONE HOPE WHEN YOU WERE CALLED. ⁵ ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM; ⁶ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, WHO IS OVER ALL AND THROUGH ALL AND IN ALL.“

Last November, I had the opportunity to attend Profound Journey Dialog event that was held here at Shadow Rock. The event was led by John and Lynda Cock and our Pastor Ken Heintzelman. Even though I did not end up staying for the entire weekend, I received all of the materials that were associated with the class and one of the diagrams that was in the notebook was A big letter X and it had four things written in the open sections of the big X and the four things that were written in the open spaces were as follows:

1. THE PAST IS APPROVED.
2. ALL IS GOOD.
3. I AM RECEIVED.
4. THE FUTURE IS OPEN.

THE FUTURE CONTINUES TO OPEN BRAND NEW DOORS HERE AT SHADOW ROCK.

ONE OF THE THINGS THAT I ENCOURAGE YOU TO REMEMBER NOT ONLY AS PEOPLE OF FAITH BUT ALSO AS THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF SHADOW ROCK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IS ONE PARTICULAR VERSE FROM OUR SCRIPTURE THIS MORNING.

AND THE VERSE THAT I WOULD LIKE YOU TO REMEMBER FROM THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4 IS VERSE 2 FROM OUR WORD ABOUT LIFE THIS MORNING WHICH SAYS, “²BE COMPLETELY HUMBLE AND GENTLE; BE PATIENT, BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.” BECAUSE AS A PEOPLE OF FAITH, IF WE ARE NOT ABLE TO REMEMBER WHAT EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4 VERSE 2 SAYS, THEN THE NEXT QUESTION THAT POPS INTO THE BACK OF MY MIND IS THIS.

AND THE QUESTION IS, “HOW, AS A PEOPLE OF FAITH, IF WE ARE NOT ABLE TO REMEMBER EPHESIANS 4:2 WHICH SAYS AS I REMIND YOU AGAIN BECAUSE I WANT THIS PARTICULAR VERSE FROM THIS MORNING’S WORD ABOUT LIFE TO BE STUCK IN YOUR HEADS FOR THE NEXT WEEK, “² BE COMPLETELY HUMBLE AND GENTLE; BE PATIENT, BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.”

THE REASON WHY I WANT EACH OF YOU WHO HAVE GATHERED HERE THIS MORNING TO REMEMBER THIS PARTICULAR VERSE IS BECAUSE IF WE ARE ABLE TO REMEMBER THIS PARTICULAR VERSE FROM TODAY’S WORD ABOUT LIFE, I FIRMLY BELIEVE, THAT, AS A PEOPLE OF FAITH, WHO HAVE ASSEMBLED HERE THIS MORNING AT SHADOW ROCK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING AND CONQUER ANY OBSTACLES THAT GOD DECIDES TO THROW OUR WAY. BECAUSE AS LONG AS WE REMAIN UNITED AS ONE BODY, ONE LOVE, AND ONE SPIRIT, I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE AS WE CONTINUE TO WRITE AND ADD A BRAND NEW CHAPTER TO THE HISTORY BOOKS HERE AT SHADOW ROCK.