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Where there is no vision, the people perish... Proverbs 29:18 KJV

I want you to imagine that you are on a soccer field with a group of friends. You are all dressed with the same color shirts. You have cleats on your feet, and there is a ball. Also on the soccer field is another group of people you have never seen before in your life. They are dressed in different colored shirts. You look at them. They look at you. Nobody moves.

Suddenly someone in black arrives with a whistle and blows it.

You have absolutely no idea what to do next.

When you play any sport, there is a goal. A desired outcome. Hitting a ball a long distance and watching it roll into a small hole that has a flag attached. Nine times or eighteen times in succession.

When you play soccer, the goal is to.... score a goal. Using your feet to put the soccer ball into the other teams net. Not your own.

You cannot play a sport and win, without knowing the rules, and knowing what it is that works... and knowing what it is you need to do to win. To come out on top.

Where there is no vision, the people perish. Proverbs 29:18 KJV. In the NIV version the same verse reads... where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint. Where there is no revelation... when no one reveals to you your purpose, your goal, then people cast off restraint. They start running around the soccer field trying to work out for themselves how to play the game. They end up playing football or rugby instead of soccer. An entirely different game.

In our culture today, how many people do you know who have a goal, a vision? How many people know exactly where they are heading, and exactly how they are going to get there?

Ever heard the phrase.. aim at nothing, and you will succeed? **Aim nowhere, and you will get there.... Nowhere.**

Successful business people. You may know some. They would not dream of starting a business without a business plan. They would not start without a vision.

An architect, designing a house starts off with a vision. An idea in his head what he wants the house to look like.

A surgeon, just about to operate, has a very definite idea of what needs to be done, in order that the patient can begin to recover. He has a goal. Well we sincerely hope so,

because waiting until the patient is anaesthetized and everyone on the surgical team is waiting for instructions is way too late to start thinking of a plan.

If we look in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel wandered around the desert for 40 years. Forty years, before they finally realized where they were heading, why they were heading there, and who they were following. They were tested many times during that period by God, and each time they failed, which they did, they were sent round the desert again.

There's a lovely ad for cheese on TV at the moment. A man in a white coat comes up to a cheese round and checks off items on his list to see if the cheese is mature enough to be used. The cheese in question fails, because he starts laughing and fooling around, so he is put back in the cooler to chill out for a while. That's what happened to the people of the Old Testament, they were put back in the desert to walk around some more.

In the New Testament, the apostles were given a vision. They were told by Jesus to go and spread the good news, in what is called the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded to you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

And that's exactly what they did. They didn't sit around lollygagging around, starting a soccer league or playing a few rounds of golf... if it had been invented back then. They deliberately began their life's work. The work that Jesus had been training them to do for three years. The work inspired by the life, and death of their Master and Savior, Jesus Christ.

You see when you know where you are headed, it's so much easier, isn't it?

G.K.Chesterton once described the Bible as a guidebook, the kind of guide you buy if you are visiting Europe, or Italy, or France. It tells you what to expect, how things work, and the places you need to visit. The Bible is exactly like that. It tells you who God is, where you can find him, and how your relationship with God works. Any sensible person would never dream of traveling to Australia without doing a little research beforehand. But many people in this world, at the end of their lives have no clue what lies ahead. They have done no research. They have no vision.

We, on the other hand, have been given our vision. Our mission. To make a difference in the world. To be in the world, but not to be of the world.

Paul wrote in the letter to the Romans 12:1-2 NIV: Therefore, I
urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Today, I want us to consider two things. The vision for this congregation, and your own personal vision.

First of all, the vision for this congregation. When the new District Superintendent came to visit last week, he asked you to share your joys, your challenges, and your dreams for this congregation. Where is it that you feel God is leading us? How are we going to get there? What lies ahead in our future, and how can we be prepared for it?

Furthermore, how are we going to exercise the Great Commission here in Milford? How are we going to meet people's needs. How are we going to pass on the vision that we have been given, to them?

People have three major needs:

Physical, emotional and spiritual. How do we as a church meet the needs of those who come? Are we doing all we can as the body of Christ to reach out to others?

When you go camping, you need to take a tent. You need food and water. Sleeping bags. There are quite a few things you need in order to have a good experience. Very often we convince ourselves that we can't do something because we don't have the right stuff. We don't have enough stuff. We talk ourselves out of many adventures in life because we don't think we are ready for them. We will have to wait. Until retirement maybe. Until we have enough money to buy the stuff we need.

When the disciples were sent out by Jesus they didn't take any camping equipment, no Visa card, no car, no toothbrush and toothpaste.

Matthew 10:10-14 NIV:

Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts—no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.

One of the major regrets people have at the end of their life is that they didn't push past their comfort zone and try something totally different. Which brings us to us.... what is your vision for your life? Like they ask at job interviews.. where do you see yourself in 5 years? Maybe it's time for an honest look at your life. Maybe it's time for each of us to stop and press the pause button.

all busy. We are all busy morning till night.
vision? Where are we headed?

Sure, we are
But what is our

Each time I go back to Canada, to visit my children, I have a difficult time leaving them, and returning. I know my ministry is important, but I worry about leaving them. I have doubts. But I trust God led me here for a reason. I trust in His vision for me.

Proverbs 29:18 KJV Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

He that keepeth the law... he that playeth the game knowing the rules, just as a good soccer player knows to shoot the ball into the other team's net and not his own. Just as the golfer knows to acknowledge when his golf ball goes into the bushes, and take a penalty shot, just as each of us, if we keep God's laws, can be happy, and flourish.

Because the opposite of perish is flourish.. and as children of God that is another goal, we want to do well. We want to win the race of life, and be rewarded the winner's crown. Who wants to lose a race? No one enters a race to willingly lose it. We are in it to win it!

As fishermen, Peter and Simon, James and John, knew that to catch fish, they had to cast their nets over the side. The fish were not going to come to them. It's rather like the title of a book I read a while back. If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat.

So today, let's spend some time thinking about vision. The vision for our congregation, and our own vision. Our two Scripture readings this morning give us valuable insights when it comes to the future. **Joseph** interpreted Pharaoh's dream and told him what God had planned for the future of Egypt. **Daniel** interpreted King Nebuchnezzar's dream, and told him what his personal future entailed. The Old Testament prophets, from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, down to Habakkuk, they all came as messengers from God, **laying out his vision for mankind**, for the people of Israel.

Jesus came as the living Word, the embodiment of the Bible, to show us, to illustrate to all that follow him, exactly what lies ahead. We have been promised eternal life. We have been given the gift of grace, the blessings of salvation... knowing that all we have done, or not done in the past is forgiven. That we can move forward, unencumbered by the past, to live fully in the present, and to look forward to a future in heaven.

Life is not a soccer game, or a round of golf, or an afternoon on the lake fishing. They are pastimes... they pass the time. We are here on this earth to live our lives, and to make a difference in doing so. We all want to leave this world slightly better than how we found it.

Jesus put his hopes for mankind in the hands of eleven trusted disciples and friends. We are called to put our hope, our faith, our life in his hands, and to step forward in faith, sustained by the same vision that inspired those first disciples two thousand years ago. The message is the same. 'Hear the good news. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Repent, and turn back to God.' Share the good news, share the vision.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father. Each day we have the opportunity to move closer to You. Let this be the day that we do so. That we trust in your vision for us as a congregation, and that we trust in your vision for us.

In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.