

July 2007 – December 2007 Devotional Messages From Rev. Bill Masciangelo

July 2007

YOU ARE THE MESSAGE!



"I am the way, the truth and the life." John 14:6. "I am the good shepherd." John 10:14. "Whoever has seen me has seen the father." John 14:9.

Jesus knew he was God and that He was here on earth...He never wavered in that understanding during the entire time of his ministry. His entire earthly life, as we know it, points to the Cross in Jerusalem. He set the example and He showed us the way.

Spiritual Transformation

Somehow, we all must be made to understand that through the miracle of **Spiritual Transformation in Christ**, we too become the message. No matter what words we say or how we act, it is **our deeds** and **our being** that people inside and outside the church remember. You are the only Gospel that some people see and hear about Jesus Christ. What does **your Gospel** story read like?

Being Called to Serve

We must avoid responding to the temptations of Madison Avenue and Hollywood when it comes to our lifestyle. God is calling each and every one of us to find and to live his authentic Christian voice. You see, you and I are the message. We are God's thoughts. We are God's hopes. We are God's dreams. We are God's passions here on earth right here right now. **We are and should be the motion picture of what Jesus can do in a changed and transformed life.**

Show and Not Tell

Remember this. Jesus spent His last night on earth showing His disciples how to serve by washing their feet. He chose to **Show** rather than Tell. Truly, that is the same model for us His ministers in His church today. People who are far from God are rarely more impacted than when they see 21st century Christians-followers behaving as Christ behaved.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, You are awesome, powerful and mighty. You are the God we serve. With you all things are possible. With you we have the mind of Christ. You have instilled in us the realization that we are the messenger delivering your message of Hope and Salvation. Help us Lord to stay true to who we are and true to how we can best serve you doing your works right here, right now. **Amen!**

August 2007

A BARGAIN OF A LIFETIME!



God offers us a bargain of a lifetime. He wants to share with us. But we tend to say, "I have so little to offer and God has so much to give. I am weak and He is strong. I am sinful and He is Holy." It just doesn't seem right. It isn't right. It will never be right...but it is an act of love from God; it is a gift offered to mankind.

What does God want from me anyway?

He is looking for a readiness from us to walk with Him. Are you walking in the right direction?

He is looking for us to do it His Way. Are you still holding on to your way?

He wants us to go in the direction He is going. Did you take a detour somewhere in your life?

He wants us to ask, "What do you have in mind for me Lord?" Are you saying, "This is what I want to do?"

What could you do in me and through me Lord if I gave all of me? Are you prepared to give all? How did you do?

The Good News:

God has given us His blessed assurances that display His character and His support for us. He wants us to be more like Him, and He is willing to help. Here are some excellent examples from scripture:

God finishes what He starts:

(Phil. 1:6) *"And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again."*

God fashions us to perfection:

(Eph. 2:10) *" For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."*

God gives us the strength we need for this trip:

(Phil. 4:13) *" For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need."*

God promises His presence on the journey:

(Exod. 33:14) *"I will personally go with you. I will give you rest--everything will be fine for you."*

God promises comfort and rest when the course is painful:

(Matt. 11:28) *"Come to me, all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."*

Stop thinking and knowing about it...Just Do It!

Like the command Jesus gave to the lawyer in the parable of the Good Samaritan: (Luke 10: 37) *"Go and do likewise."* We must move from **knowing** all the right legal and justifiable answers to **doing the right actions**. That is a huge step for many, but it is a necessary step if we are to be followers of Jesus Christ. God is with us and supports us. He is extending His hand to each of us to pull us from the quicksand of life. Grab His hand today. You will be transformed!

Transformation:

When we take up God's offer to share and to serve, a transformation occurs. The unveiling of a new life takes place. A new and different person emerges. A new life begins that causes people to take notice and comment: "Here is truly a servant of God."

September 2007

LET US PRAY!



"Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours." Mark 11:24

What is prayer?

It is a dialogue between God and God's people. We dialogue with God as a way of expressing our Love for God. We express this love in our response to God and the way God works in our lives.

The Bible teaches us about prayer through some key figures. Abraham prayed to God. David prayed to God. Daniel prayed to God. The believers in Jerusalem prayed to God...and Paul prayed to God...and we could go on and on...but it is important to know that even Jesus prayed to God His Father.

So like some of these great Bible figures and even the Lord himself, we tell God about our needs: Spiritual, Emotional, Mental and Physical. We ask...God answers!

Why Pray?

People have always felt the need to be more intimate with God. God gave us prayer to fill this special need. People pray: To glorify God in thanks for God's greatest gift: Jesus Christ; To feel God's presence and to know God directly in our lives as Christians; For comfort in a time of need. (In His time of greatest need, Jesus turned

to prayer...should we do less?); To experience God's forgiveness that God might know our willingness to do better. Christ Said: *"Pray that you may not come into the time of trial."* Matt: 26:41

So How Do I Pray?

By involving yourself completely with God!

What conditions are needed for effective prayer?

- **Be prepared** in heart and mind. Put aside other tasks. Read Scripture before praying.
- **Realize the presence of Jesus** in your life: Feel His nearness. *"I am with you always."* Matt: 28:20
- **Be confident.** Pray with faith, expecting your prayers to be answered. *"Whatever you ask for in faith...you will receive."* Matt: 21:22
- **Be receptive** to God's message to you. Accept God's wisdom; don't preach to God.

Examples of prayers are:

- **Thanksgiving:** Thank you God.
- **Confession:** Forgive me God.
- **Praise:** Praise God.
- **Petition:** Help me God.
- **Intercession:** Help them God.
- **Guidance:** Show us God.

The perfect prayer, taught by Jesus Himself, is the Lord's Prayer. Matt: 6:9-13

When should we pray?

Pray at:

- **Special times:** *Here my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the end of the earth I call to you, when my heart is faint."* Psalm 61:1-2
- **In fellowship:** *If two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."* Matt: 18:19
- **Alone:** *But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* Matt: 6:6
- **Anytime:** God does not have office hours.

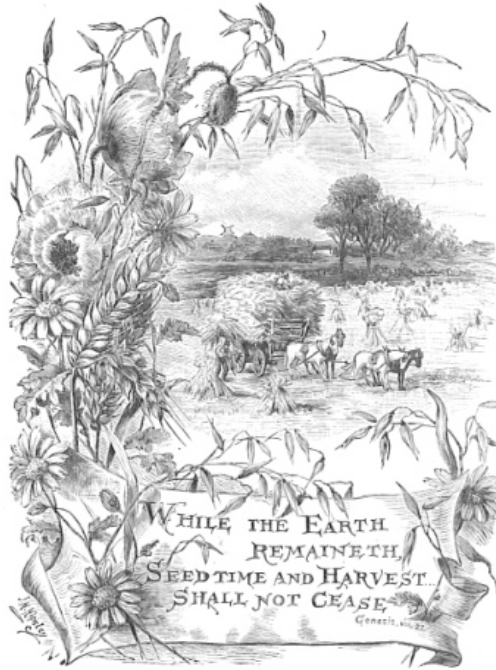
When we pray will our prayers be answered?

Christ tells us that true prayer is always answered. *"Ask and it will be given to you; search and you will find."* Matt 7:7

Prayer is the source of spiritual growth, God's forgiveness, faith building and Christ's guidance.

October 2007

Entering The Harvest Field



Matthew 9: 35-38

There are many people who come to church because they say, "We are here because this is a church that is really doing things...really going places." They want to be identified with a church that has a plan and a vision of doing God's work and making a difference where they live, but they never become a part of any of the ministries of the church. **They have a bobber floating on the water, but they have no hook and no bait. They have no intention of fishing!**

Jesus said, ***"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*** *Matthew 9:37-38*

He Saw the Crowds

The Bible says that Jesus went through all the towns and villages teaching and preaching about the good news of the kingdom, and healing. He became overwhelmed with human need. He saw the people and their problems because He went where they were and allowed them to crowd around him.

Our God came to us in order to put His face in our face. Until you begin to put your face in the face of a person who is in need, you will not see the reality that is all around you. You have to go to where people are. You have to rub shoulders with them, smell their sweat, cry with them and wipe their tears, feel their frustration and experience their feelings of helplessness. **You can't "see the crowds" until you have interacted with the people who make up the crowds.**

He Had Compassion

He not only saw the need, He felt the need. It is one thing to see the need; it is quite another thing to have a heart of compassion.

When we minister to the needs of people, we have to do more than just see the need, we have to feel the need and respond to the need. James wrote: ***"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You***

have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do'". James 2:14-18

Some people talk about their faith and other people just quietly live it.

He Called To His Disciples

He called them to pray, and He called them to be a part of what He was doing. He was calling them to see the harvest. He was calling on them to have compassion. And He was calling them to go into the harvest field with Him. He was also asking them to pray that more would be willing to be workers and go into the harvest field. The harvest was bigger than the workers. It was true then, and it is true today!

What the Lord is asking us to do is to review our priorities and then set our priorities so that we are choosing, not between what is good and bad, or between what is good and what is better — **We must choose between what is good and what is the right thing to do as Christians.**

November 2007

Bring Them To The Father



Veteran's Day was this month. By now the services and ceremonies are over and hopefully you stopped a moment at the 11th hour of the 11th day to reflect and say a prayer for our veterans.

Thank You Vets!

Every year I personally take time to pause and reflect on the sacrifices so many have made for this wonderful country. Whenever I attend or watch services, on this special day, I swell up with pride and just want to shout out "**Thank you Vets!**" For several moments I recall some of those feelings and share them with my family and friends. You see I have been there in combat and I have sent a son to war. This is an important day in my life.

I am especially moved when I hear and read those warm, loving letters home from the front lines or from the loved one's to that special serviceman or woman serving overseas. These letters hit hard and remind me of Psalms and the gut wrenching pleas, affirmations, and emotions of the Psalmists. Psalm 23 is a popular inscription on many military helmet covers.

The Vietnam Memorial

I have fond memories of those well-orchestrated patriotic ceremonies at the Mall in Washington, DC where I served, worked and lived for many years. They are great events that are nationally televised. One of the joys of living in the Washington, DC area was that I was able to be actively involved with many military reunion groups and the local chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).

One year the VVA decided to sponsor a **Sons and Daughters Reunion** ceremony at The Wall for those children (who were now adults) who had lost a father in Vietnam. It was decided to hold this special event on **Father's Day**.

It wasn't until the third year of this event that I became personally involved. Through a veterans magazine I saw that a wife was looking for any vet who may have known her husband; Gunnery Sergeant Pavey. Gunny Pavey was a member of my unit in 1967 who was killed during a major operation in the DMZ. I knew Gunny Pavey as an outstanding Marine leader who took care of his troops. Immediately, I contacted Mrs. Pavey and told her about the Sons and Daughter ceremony for Father's Day and suggested that we could use that occasion to talk. It would be the perfect time for Jill and her father to get connected once again. You see, Jill was only 2 years old when her father was killed and neither Jill nor Mrs. Pavey had ever been to The Wall. This was 32 years later and a long time since March of 1967.

The Invitation

I invited them to Washington, DC for the special ceremony that Father's Day Sunday. I never heard a word from them and was disappointed that Sunday morning while sitting in the stands waiting for the ceremony to begin. Why didn't they respond? Just then, a woman came up from behind me and tapped me on the shoulder..."Col. Masciangelo? I am Mrs. Pavey and this is my daughter, Jill". You can only imagine.

The Reunion

Wow! My emotions ran wild. They did come after all! I got up and gave them both a hug and thanked them for coming...and then I had the special honor of escorting these two women down into the apex of the Vietnam Memorial...to the exact location of Jill's father's name on the Wall. Words cannot describe the joy, happiness and closure that this gesture allowed them to have; being reunited with someone who you love and who loved you and meeting someone who was with her husband and father the day he died. We talked for hours after this visit.

In preparation for this Veteran's Day tribute at our church, I started to think about how we can still be the one who invites someone to be **reunited with our Father**. How can we do something to reach out to those around us to guide them to our Father...**our Father who can provide the hope, love and salvation that is our gift**.

Call To Action

I hope that you will remember Gunnery Sergeant Pavey and all veterans this month. But more importantly, I hope you will look around for just one person that you can invite back to church for a reunion with our Lord. You can do it...all it takes is an invitation, an outstretched hand and the desire to help someone be reconnected to our Father.

May God Bless you and all veterans this November!

December 2007

The Peace of Christ Be with You!



Luke 24: 36-39

Peace be with you. We say it in our service on Sunday. Having prayed to and praised God, having heard and sung and reflected on God's Word and having confessed our faith in a creed we say: **"The Peace of the Lord be with you"**...And you respond...**"And also with you"**. Then, I invite you to share the sign and peace of Christ with each other.

This exchange of word and touch is more than a greeting, more than a handshake of hello: "Good morning. How are you?" You're my friend." It is more than a token of goodwill, the handshake of parting: "Have a good week."

Gift Of Life

Yes, on the human level, outward and visible level, all these things may be going on. But at a much deeper level exchanging the peace is sharing the gift of life, love, presence, power, and the promise that is Christ's resurrection, just as Jesus shared the gift with his disciples.

Imagine

Imagine how the disciples must have felt. They betrayed Jesus, denied Jesus, wouldn't stand by Jesus. They ran away; they showed that they were cowards; and, even when they heard the women's testimony of an empty tomb, they dismissed it as an idle tale (**Luke 24: 10-11**) And now, Jesus himself stood among them. The last thing they expected to hear from him was a word of Peace.

Jesus Responds

How did Jesus respond? Jesus said to them, **"Peace be with you. Touch me; see that it is I myself."** Jesus gave his frightened, flawed, failing followers the life, love, presence, power, and promise of his resurrection.

Christmas Season

Yes, bringing peace is what Jesus is all about. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, we find a foretelling of Christ's coming and promise of peace. Isaiah writes: **"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;...and his name will be called Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6)**When the angel announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds, the angel declared, **"Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth! (Luke 2:14)** In his ministry, when Jesus healed people or forgave their sins, He told them to **"go in peace" (Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50).**

Comforting Words

When we exchange the peace this Christmas season, whether it's a handshake, an embrace, or a kiss, we identify with Christ. We touch and are touched by the resurrected Jesus. We celebrate the victory of his resurrection in our own very flesh. When we receive the peace, we who know ourselves to be frightened, flawed, failing, followers are touched by Christ in the flesh of another; and in the words "Peace be with you," we are assured of Christ's life, love, presence, power and promise.

And when we say "Peace be with you" and offer our hand or hug or kiss, Christ is in our flesh as we bestow and proclaim the Resurrection to another.

**Merry Christmas from your brothers and sisters in Christ
at New Hope United Methodist Church.**