

*On Sunday, August 8, 2010 Keith Yezdanian, a Lay Speaker at New Hope United Methodist Church, was called to speak to the congregation on Laity Sunday. Keith preached an inspiring sermon. Keith's ministry activities exemplify the caring, communicating, and leading aspects of a lay speaker.*

*This special man has been blessed with many spiritual gifts that he shares with others: Helping youth and young adults deal with the issues of gang violence, alcohol abuse, and drug addiction; Director of the Youth Ministry at New Hope UMC; and his beautiful and inspirational writings both verse and prose. These are just a few of his spiritual accomplishments.*

*There is no doubt that his life's passion is to help others and give comfort to those in distress. God has called Keith to be a witness to proclaim the presence and power of God through all that he is and all that he does. ~P. Murphy*

## **THANKS BUT NO THANKS! ©**

**By Keith Z. Yezdanian**

A couple of weeks ago I heard a story about a wife who went shopping only to find her husband rummaging through the cabinets when she returned. She curiously asked him what he was doing. He replied with a little sarcasm "I am looking for a snack!" She smiled...well smirked not being pleased with his attitude. She reached into a shopping bag and pulled out some Oreos, but they weren't just any old Oreos they were the "Double Stuffed Oreos". Now, listen she didn't buy these Oreos for him because of something he did, was doing or something he was going to do, she gave them to him out of love. He quickly lost his attitude, hugged her and kissed her and off to the fridge he went for a glass of milk. He ripped open the bag quickly to get to those great black and white morsels of satisfaction and soon he had dunked and consumed a row and a half of them. He thanked his wife once again for the gift and put the remaining row and a half up for later.

Well he soon forgot about those Oreos and went about his life, a life filled with doctors, therapists, Facebook, work, church and family. You get the idea, I'm sure. And soon that snack craving hit him again and once again his wife found him rummaging through their cabinets. She asked curiously, "What ya looking for?" He responded, "A snack!" She asked, "What happened to the Oreos I bought you?" Without thinking he replied, "I forgot all about them" and instantly he could see the disappointment in her eyes. He had taken a gift that was given to him with love and just forgotten all about it. Later, he found the Oreos and once again he went to the fridge and grabbed some milk to get his dunk on, but when he put them up a week earlier he used little care and didn't seal the bag. He bit into a mushy, tasteless mess. He took an awesome gift/snack and with careless thought ruined it and with his actions. He told his wife in essence, "Thanks, but no thanks."

Your eyes are saying how can he be preaching on something as insignificant as Oreos? Well, isn't that how we sometimes think about the gifts that God gives us? We think and treat them with less thought and honor than we do Oreos, a new video game, girlfriend or a job. You see

this is the point that Paul was making in 2 Corinthians 6:1 when he pleaded, “Begged”, with the Corinthians not to accept the Grace of God in vain.

Now what does this mean receiving Gods grace in vain? It means to receive the goodness and favor of God, but not to fully surrender and allow it to work in our lives. Grace is given freely, but how we receive it, care for it and use it will determine how effective the gift of grace will be...Kind of like those Oreos.

We want enough to be saved from sin, but not enough to keep us from sinning. We want enough to help us through difficult times, but not enough to disrupt our lives. We want enough to be called Christian, but not enough so that we can't talk about others. God doesn't want us to receive His grace and become “pew puppets”. He wants to partner with us, He wants us to trust Him, rely on Him and then go out and do the work of and for His Kingdom and that is how we see the work of God get accomplished. And if we choose just to accept His gift of grace and nothing more, we soon become mushy, tasteless and a mess.

Something that helps me keep all that Christ did and is doing for us in perspective is Holy Communion (or the Lord's Supper). We remember His sacrifice. He sacrificed Himself not for our excuses, convenience or satisfaction, but for our sanctification and our salvation. The bread broken...His Body, the wine poured out...His Blood. But I ask you have you ever thought where your name was written that day, the day He died for you? Was it written on a shackle, was it written in a grain of wood, or a grain of sand in His mouth when He stumbled, did it dance on the words of the angry mob, was it in a bruise, a bead of sweat, was it floating in a pool of His blood, was it on a single hair ripped from His head, was it written on a piercing thorn from His crown, was it a deep wound in His flesh, was it written on the cat of nine tails, was it on a nail, in hammer blow, was it written on the sponge, was it in the vinegar, was it on the spear, was it running out of His side or was it in His last shallow sigh?

Now, I ask you should we accept His grace or anything from Him in vain. Could you look Him in the eyes and tell Him Thanks, but no thanks?

*“Thanks But No Thanks!”* was written 13 August 2010