

QUO VADIS ~ SEEKING GOD'S KINGDOM

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, April 23, 2006



Introduction of the Concept of Ministry Groups in CBCC

"Standing on the Promises rather than sitting on the Premises!"

We believe that the rediscovery of the power of training and dispatching Christians to fulfill their Biblical calling is **the very nature** of what we have decided to accomplish and ask the Congregation to express its support in the clearest of terms.

QUESTION -WHY ARE YOU IDLE? – WHAT IS YOUR MISSION?

Second Reading

Matthew 20: 1-7

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

CHOOSE YOUR MISSION ~ GET YOUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT!

Third Reading

Matthew 6: 33

"But strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

DO NOT BE AFRAID ~ I AM GOING WITH YOU!

Final Reading

Matthew 28: 16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore 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 that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

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In many different ways, since October 2004, our Church has been asking amongst ourselves, "Quo Vadis?" Where are we going? In times like these, long range planning is not a luxury; it is a necessity for Churches of Jesus Christ, everywhere! We have done some introspection – we have turned to knowledgeable Church professionals – we have looked at statistics and analysis of dwindling Churches from all known denominations, everywhere. We have done our homework and we have come to conclusions. Our stunning, scary but also exciting conclusion is that the Bible, and only the Bible, still provides us with a clear and unmistakable roadmap into a greater future than we could ever dream or imagine for ourselves.

Many of us grew up with the beautiful hymn, Standing, standing, standing on the promises of Christ my Savior; standing, standing, I am standing on the promises of God. Sadly, many of us must acknowledge that we have almost forgotten the age-old directions of the Master. Rather than standing on the promises of God, we have been sitting on the premises of our beloved Church. Talk can be amazingly cheap when lip service is allowed to pass for the real thing. Shakespeare coined the phrase, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. We still say

that ~ when there is the perplexity that "much ado", or a great fuss, is being made of something that is of no significance, "nothing". We live in times when many people talk a great deal, even about their faith, but, when push comes to shove, it is still MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

While still in high school I now and then slipped away to attend services at a little Church near our home, known for its blaring music and noisy services. They were such a lively, even a rowdy bunch. I guess that my obvious enjoyment of their style of worship must have been a source of concern for my dear mother; because I remember her telling me one day, "Freddie, always just remember that it does not matter how high you jump or how loud you shout. It's what you do when you come down that really matters."

Ranking high amongst the many dedicated and faithful people of God that I had the privilege to know and work with in years gone by, was Bonnie Smith, a very active member of our First UCC Church in Orlando. Even when she could no longer drive her own car, she would still set up visits and arrange home-communion for those who could no longer make it to Church. As we crisscrossed Orlando, we often spoke of matters close to our hearts. How vividly I remember the time she said, "In our Church, when all is said and done, there is always much more said than done!"

The passages that we read in Scripture this morning are so powerful and direct to the point – that they need very little explanation. Jesus compared the Kingdom of God with a Vineyard at harvest time. The owner could not bear seeing **workers standing idle in the marketplace**; so he made several trips to also call and give **them** opportunity to labor in his vineyard. **Quo Vadis Sunday, a week from now, will voice God's question in our midst, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?'** If you sense that the time has come to step forward, again or for the first time - you will surely hear the invitation, **"You also go into the vineyard!"**

In the Bible, Jesus also tells us to choose our mission and to get our priorities straight **"But strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."** Matthew 6: 33

1. Being busy in Church is not the same thing as being **godly**. If being busy created **godliness** then bees and ants would be closer to God than human beings." We can be a very busy Church, even be a growing Church, and still be ineffective in the work of the Kingdom if **we do not realize who we are**. Have you noticed how often I dare to address you from this pulpit as "People of God?" We are by **our own confirmation promises** the people of God who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Quo Vadis challenges us to **RECAPTURE A SENSE OF WHO WE ARE!**
2. Quo Vadis is also a challenge **to ask serious questions about our Mission and ourselves**. What is our true mission? Jesus said that our Mission is to Seek God's Kingdom first, before anything else. We will never be devoted to God's Kingdom **unless we carry that conviction in our hearts**, in our personal lives and in our Church life. Quo Vadis challenges us to **RECAPTURE A SENSE OF WHAT WE ARE ABOUT**.
3. The work of Christ is not only the work of the Minister, or a few specialized persons. The work of Christ is the work of us all. **There was not a single ordained, trained clergyperson among those who launched that first community of believers into becoming the most powerful spiritual force in the societies of all time**. Farmers, fishers homemakers, tax collectors, ordinary people **fueled** the Church's growth and influence since Christianity was born! **WE MUST RECAPTURE THE AWARENESS THAT ALL OF US ARE CALLED TO WORK IN THE VINEYARD AND NOT ONLY A FEW**
4. The Church of Jesus Christ in Cocoa Beach has enormous potential. We have a proud history of faithful and loving service to our Community. **Times have changed and we have to keep up with the times and move out into our community with faith, with commitment and with love. We have fallen behind and it is time to catch up!** There is no challenge that we cannot face, **there are victories to be won in the name of Christ**. **That will only happen if we never forget to whom we are connected in faith.** We will lose our Christian character **if we neglect our communication with God** through God's Jesus Christ. Are you aware that the same source of power that gave birth to the Church of 2000 years ago is still with us today? **WE MUST RECAPTURE A REALIZATION OF THE SOURCE OF OUR POWER**.
5. **The final greeting of Jesus in the Bible is, "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."** **As we embark on our Mission into the future – as we accept the chal-**

lenged to be and remain a true church of Jesus Christ ...we hear the echo of the master of the vineyard's voice .....

DO NOT BE AFRAID; I AM GOING WITH YOU!

If Not Now ~ WHEN?

If Not From Here ~ FROM WHERE?

If Not You ~ WHO?

### PRAYER

O God, we your people now unite before you in prayer. We place before you our lives -- fragmented, busy, and tired. We catch only glimpses of beauty and joy. Save us from hurry and worry. We are your church -- forging ministry, caring for the hurt, letting go of the way it used to be. Teach us the way of trust; fill us with your authority to love, care, as we tell the story of faith. We bring before you all those who especially need to sense your loving presence as they struggle with the realities of life. Teach us the sacrament of care, the depths of prayer and daily acts of love.

Divine Spirit, we give thanks for the gift of peace you have bestowed upon us, your followers, by the Holy Spirit. Just as the Spirit moved Christ's disciples throughout the centuries, so we 2000 years later, yearn for your Spirit to excite, motivate and change our lives. Move among us, rekindle our faith, and transform all that is hard and dead within us ~ into new life and new commitment in Christ! Today we **celebrate** your Spirit, which unites your people everywhere, people of every color and of every nation. We **celebrate** the peace of Christ that ties us together, enabling us to be agents of reconciliation in this church and in the world. We **celebrate** the Spirit that moves us to nurture one another, to challenge one another, to **celebrate** with one another.

May the mighty wind of your Spirit lift all of us to higher visions, to greater dreams and to a renewed strength to make those visions and dreams a reality in this world. Open us today to the new creation you seek to bring about within and among us, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

AMEN