I. Quo Vadimus; Sunday, July 18, 2010 (Sunnyslope)

Psalm 19:14

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

A. “Good morning, church!”

B. The title for today’s sermon is “Quo Vadimus”

1. It’s Latin, and literally translated means, “Where are we going?”

2. The phrase pops up in popular culture a lot; it’s the title on several blogs, a television episode once, even a web design company

3. But in today’s context, for the sermon today, it’s a foundational question

4. “Where are we going?”

5. I want to ask that question today and answer it in both the sermon and the business meeting following the service

   a) But I also want you to ask the question of yourself: “Where are you going?”

   b) What are you doing with your life?

   c) What is your mission and purpose?

   d) Where do you go from here?

   e) What is the priority of your life?

   f) Qua vadimus; where are you going?

C. Today, after the service, is our annual church business meeting (and potluck)

1. We’ll be reviewing the business of the church

   a) Our finances

   b) Our ministries
2. And we’ll be ratifying a church delegate and a new Board of Directors

3. These are some of the practical details of fulfilling our mission and purpose

D. But in the sermon, I’m asking a more philosophical, spiritual question in terms of where we are going

1. And really, we need to understand where we are going in the sense of where is our natural tendency to go (without intervention), and then where is it that we ought to go

2. In physics, to determine (or to predict) the future direction of an object, you need to know its direction and its velocity

   a) It helps also to understand its past directions and velocities

   b) ...so to better understand any interactions on the object in the past

3. So too for us, I think to understand where we are going, we need to understand where we have been and how we got to where we are today

4. And then we need to understand what God wants us to be and where God wants us to go

5. Then we need to figure out how to get there

E. After all that, we can truly answer, “Quo vadimus?” (Where are we going?)

II. Church, God has blessed us richly indeed; amen?

A. Let’s look back to where things a bit over a year ago, perhaps back in April of 2009

1. The church was small, meeting in a school building with no permanent storage

2. We met using school chairs and desks and whatever materials we could transport to the location each Sunday morning
3. I remember one Sunday when the school custodian forgot to unlock the building for us, so we were forced to setup church in a nearby bar

B. When Sunnyslope Church of God was formed, it consisted of 11 people

1. The church had virtually no money
   a) There was no seed money or church plant money

2. The church had some assets; the pews, the Bibles and hymnals; but the old piano was unusable

3. Pastor Rae, who helped shepherd the group for a time, was suffering greatly from allergies and other medical problems

4. And church, we had some internal spiritual problems as well:
   a) There was a great deal of distrust in the church (not all of it unjustified)
      (1) Distrust of pastoral leadership
      (2) Distrust of past leads on the Board of Directors
      (3) Distrust even in some cases of whether God would truly bless us
   b) There was anger, resentment, and even some internal strife

C. Yet God did not abandon us

1. Even though we sometimes questioned if God would bless us, God never deserted us

2. God blessed this church

3. By June of 2009:
   a) We had completed our incorporation with the State of Washington
b) We had ratified a new set of bylaws

4. By late August, we were in this building and had our shed installed

D. God didn’t stop there

1. He continued to bless us

2. He took our group of 11 and added to it

3. We have a bit over 30 folks now who consider this their church home

4. Now, yes, we could do better on our Sunday morning church service attendance; but that’s a quo vatimus sort of thing

E. We prayed, we read Scripture, we called on the Holy Spirit to heal our hearts; and we were healed

1. Do we trust completely? No.

2. Do we no longer have any anger or resentment in our hearts? No.

3. But we’ve come a long way

4. We’re no longer defined by our distrust, anger, and resentment...

5. ...but instead by our hope, our love, and our fellowship

F. Has the Holy Spirit finished its work within us?

1. Of course, no

2. We have a long way yet to go

3. But look back at how far we’ve come in such a short time

4. And imagine where we’ll be in another year’s time
III. So to answer quo vadimus, we need to return again to the foundational questions of this church

A. We need to ask again:
   1. What is the church?
   2. What is our purpose and mission?
   3. What are the aspects of a healthy church?
   4. And what are we being called to do now?

B. So what is the church?
   1. What is a “Church of God”?
      a) Not a Church of God, Anderson Indiana, but a Church of God, a church that is of God
   2. What makes a good Church?
      a) What are the traits of a good church?
      b) If asked without much warning, we might answer with traits in human terms:
         (1) Strong attendance, a growing congregation
         (2) Outreach ministries
         (3) Financial stability
         (4) Good fellowship
      c) And all these are certainly fruits of a healthy church; but they are fruits, not what actually makes a healthy church
         (1) The fruit of a fruit tree doesn’t make the tree healthy
         (2) The fruit of a fruit tree merely indicates the tree is healthy
      d) A church is a Church of God when it follows God’s will.
But also consider that when a fruit tree bears rotten fruit or half-developed fruit...

...it indicates something is wrong

Look at the fruit of your own life

Does it indicate a healthy or unhealthy tree?

e) Just as the church needs to follow God’s will to be healthy, so we each need to follow God’s will to be healthy

C. So then if we the congregation are the church, and we are a church of God when we follow God’s will, what then should be the purpose and mission or our church?

1. Simply put, in a single sentence, “Our purpose and mission is to do the will of God.”

2. That’s it

3. Do the will of God

4. The end

5. Everything, really everything else we do, say, be, portray, profess… it all should come out of doing the will of God

D. To go just one step deeper, let’s review four short parts from our church bylaws

1. The four parts that review our mission and purpose:

   a) The purpose of Sunnyslope is to study and declare the Bible and use all Scripture for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that every member may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Colossians 1:28)
b) The mission of Sunnyslope is to proclaim Jesus Christ, make disciples, baptize, and teach to obey the Christ’s commands (Matthew 28:19-20) and to teach and encourage disciples to be able to always give a reason for their faith in Christ. (1 Peter 3:15)

c) In all these things, Sunnyslope will discern and follow God’s will and will conduct its affairs with Christian love and charity. (1 Corinthians 13)

d) Sunnyslope affirms that when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, God places that person in the church. (Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:18)

2. So we have from this, from these parts of Scripture, the scaffolding of our church

a) We are a Bible church, using Scripture for teaching and training

(1) But part of really following Scripture means also holding ourselves accountable to following God, which means using Scripture also for rebuking and correcting

(2) This way, with both training and correcting, we can equip ourselves and others for the work God has for us

b) We are an outreach, evangelical church; meaning we evangelize to the lost, striving to spread the Word of God

c) We can only be successful if we discern and follow God’s Will

d) And we have no distinctions of seniority in this church

(1) When someone accepts Christ as their Lord and Savior, they are a member of this congregation
(2) Someone black with sin who accepts Christ today is then no different in our eyes than someone who has walked with Christ their whole life.

(3) Both are brothers or sisters in which the Holy Spirit is at work, bringing about sanctification.

E. A key part to who we are and quo vadimus (where we are going) is the Great Commission

1. I don’t think it’s possible to have a church that follows God’s will and not have a significant part of the focus of that church be based on the Great Commission.

2. What is a commission?
   a) I think of a commission as a job that is given
   b) Christ gave us a very specific job to accomplish

Matthew 28:18-20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

3. Christ explained first that all authority had been given to Him in heaven and on earth.
   a) Of course, He always had all authority.
   b) But here He was speaking of authority as Head of the new creation, the Church of God on earth.
   c) Since His death and resurrection, He had authority to give eternal life to all who believed in Him and accepted salvation.
John 17:2
For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

4. Once Christ’s authority had been established, we are then given our marching orders

5. The Great Commission contains three commands

   a) First, we are to make disciples of all nations

      (1) Part of this means of course spreading the Gospel, witnessing to everyone

         (a) But it goes beyond just that

         (b) Christ didn’t say, “Spread the good news to all the nations”

         (c) He said, “Make disciples of all nations”

         (d) So we need to ask, “What’s the difference between spreading the Word and making disciples?”

      (2) Discipleship-making isn’t just about sharing Scripture

         (a) It’s about holding believers accountable and encouraging them with love and sacrifice

         (b) To aid the Holy Spirit, to be an instrument of God, to bring about in the new disciple a full sense of him or herself being an aid to the Holy Spirit and an instrument of God

   b) The second command of the Great Commission is to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
While baptism is not a requirement of salvation, it is what God expects of us.

We have the responsibility to teach baptism and obey God by being baptized and baptizing those who desire to follow God.

c) And then third and probably most often forgotten in today’s modern church is the command to teach them to observe all things that Christ has commanded.

The Commission goes beyond evangelism.

It’s not enough to simply make converts and let them fend for themselves.

New disciples must be taught to obey the commandments of Christ.

The essence of discipleship is becoming like Christ.

This is brought about by systematic teaching of and submission to the Word.

F. Other aspects of a Church of God include unity, holiness, and the supremacy of Scripture.

1. D.S. Warner identified: Unity and Holiness

a) Unity

1 Corinthians 1:10

I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

b) Holiness
1 Peter 1:13-16

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

c) Rick Warren wrote in “How God Uses Suffering in Our Lives”...

A silversmith doesn't need a fancy formula for calculating purity. He knows the silver is free of dross when he can see his reflection in the liquefied metal. When are we pure? When Christ looks at us and sees his reflection.

2. Gilbert Stafford, a professor at Anderson University noted some other traits of a Church of God:

a) Not just a Biblical foundation, but a Biblical supremacy

(1) A church of God is a church where the Bible and Bible teaching is supreme above all other interests.

(2) Galatians 1:6-9

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

b) Not just teaching from the Bible, but living those teachings

(1) A church of God is a church that studies, teaching, and preaching scripture, and lives according to its message.

(2) 2 Timothy 3:14-17
14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

c) Acceptance of Christ as Lord is the only means of membership
   (1) A church of God is filled with those whose hearts are aflame with the Holy Spirit. It is a church made up of people who know God not only with their minds but also with their hearts.
   (2) But this does not mean known only with our hearts and not with our minds. A Church of God also instructs, teaches, preaches, and trains its members.

d) Pure love shared between all
   (1) A Church of God is a church where people love God wholeheartedly.
   (2) As an indication of that love of God, the people love each other wholeheartedly.

e) Fellowship in all things
   (1) A church of God is a church that reaches out in fellowship to everyone. It is a church that thinks of itself as an expression of God’s universal church.

f) Disciple-making
A church of God is a church whose purpose is to follow God’s will and whose goal is to make disciples, to reach out to both those who are saved and those who are unsaved.

A disciple is not a passive and faithful attendee but an active participant in the mission of the church.

There really shouldn’t much of a difference between a “pastor” and a member of a congregation in a church of God. The pastor just has to know all those crazy seminary words like sanctification, transcendence, predestination, and paraclete.

g) Accountability

A church of God is a church whose congregation holds itself and others accountable to Biblical teaching.

Sometimes we can be so preoccupied with not pointing out the plank or board in someone else’s eye that we forget that we’re commanded by Scripture to rebuke evil deeds, loving the sinner but hating the sin.

A Church of God is not afraid to stand up against sin and evil, both from the secular world and from within the Church.
IV. So then those are the traits of a church; that’s what makes a church of God; and now we need to discern quo vadimus, where are we going, what should we focus on in the coming year?

A. First, I think we need to work at both the individual and corporate level to be open to hearing the God’ will, His message from Scripture

1. Sometimes the hardest thing to do with Scripture or a sermon message is apply it to our lives on a real, personal level

   a) For many of us, it’s easier to make the application for other people

   b) One pastor became acutely aware of this when a church member consistently met him after the service and said, “You sure preached to them today.”

   c) The pastor dreamed of someday hearing this person take the message personally

   d) He thought he had finally gotten the chance when one Sunday a severe storm prevented all but the pastor and the one person from showing up

   e) After the message he knew she couldn’t quote her standard remark. She didn’t.

   f) Instead, she said, “Too bad they weren’t all here, because you sure preached to them today.”

2. The first priority of hearing any message, either from the pulpit or the Scriptures or from God through prayer is for personal application and transformation

   a) I could have illustrated this point with a slightly different story:
(1) A member of the congregation saying sermon after sermon, “Your words spoke to me,” but never truly taking the words to heart and making a change

b) We need to consider what we hear from Scripture and hear from the Holy Spirit on our hearts when in pray to be for us first, not lessons intended for others that we overhear

B. Next, we need to continue to cultivate a sense of expectant prayer

1. Consider how the early Christians prayed

   Acts 1:14
   
   They all joined together constantly in prayer.

2. They had no signs, no reasons to believe anything would happen except for what Jesus had told them earlier:

   Acts 1:8
   
   But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

3. Ask in faith and you will receive, which means expecting that God will be faithful to your prayers provided you pray in accordance with His will

   John 14:12
   
   I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

   James 1:5
   
   If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

C. We need to continue to realize that all are called

1. There’s no retirement for disciples
2. There’s no side-lines Christianity
   a) Christianity that doesn’t include service is incomplete
   b) Faith without works is dead
3. God calls each and every one of us to some form of ministry, one way or another
4. It’s easy to say, “I couldn’t possibly do that or that or that.”
5. But God uses the least likely all the time, and He picks the least likely for a reason.

   1 Corinthians 1:26-29
   26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

6. We each as individuals and collectively as a church need to come to understand that God has a personal calling for each and every one of us as well as a calling for this church

D. We have a great opportunity in Port Orchard and Sunnyslope in particular with this style, to reach those “burned” by past church experiences

1. There are many (and church, I do mean many) out there in our local community that are searching for meaning, searching for answers, and want to be part of a church like ours but are uncomfortable or in some cases even terrified at the prospect of visiting a formal church organization

2. They’ve been hurt, often deeply and personally, because of things that have happened in past churches

3. As a church that recognizes:
a) No difference between the recently converted in which sanctification as just begun to work and the long-time church member who has professed his or her faith for decades...

b) And as a church that has therefore no hierarchy, no pretenses, and no judgments...

c) ...we are a safe place for those burned by their past to rediscover the love of Christ

4. But to do this, we need to be a church that puts aside grudges, judgments, and worry so visitors will see only Godliness through us

V. Now yes, I realize that all this put together is a tall order; there’s a lot of stuff there we need to work on, do, be, or go through

A. And it’s easy to think we don’t have what it takes to be successful

B. But hear me church: Do not be daunted!

C. Search your heart for feelings of worthlessness or inadequateness so you can give them over to God

D. God doesn’t use the great, the powerful, the large, the successful, the influential, or the respected; He uses the weak, the small, the foolish, the despised

E. Why?

F. Because when God uses the weak and small, it negates the possibility that the results were man-made; it demonstrates that God’s hand was at work

G. Let’s rally together church in this next year to:

1. Encourage one another

2. Hold each other accountable

3. Teach and train each other
4. Lift up and love each other

5. And most of all, follow God’s call on our lives as individuals and collectively as a church