

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, October, 14, 2007
Second Baptist Church, Lincoln, NE, Robert C. Molby, Interim Pastor

A Verse for Us

Ephesians 3:14-4:2 (NIV)

Text: Ephesians 3:20-21: Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The name Walter Brueggemann is a name that causes Bible Scholars to stop and take notice. What he says about the teachings of the Bible is well worth listening to. He has spent a lifetime studying and teaching the scriptures, especially the Old Testament. An adult church school class at Sunset Hills Baptist Church chose a book for study. It was called Struggling with Scripture and it had three authors, the first one was Walter Brueggemann. He gave an account from his personal life that illustrated how the scriptures affected his life. He said that it was the tradition in his church for the pastor to give each of those being confirmed into the faith and the church a life scripture verse. His pastor, who in this case was his father, gave him the verse that many have memorized, “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*” (Psalm 109:105). What an appropriate verse for a young boy who was to become one of the world’s most renowned Bible scholars!

Walter Brueggemann wrote: “He did in fact, more than he knew. Providentially, I have no doubt, he marked my life by this book that would be lamp and light, to illumine a way to obedience, to mark a way to fullness, joy, and well-being. The more I reflect on that moment, the more I am sure that I have been bound more than I knew to this book” (In loc. Cit., p. 7)

I think, also, what an awesome responsibility for a pastor to give a life verse of scripture to those being confirmed into the faith or to be baptized in the faith and become active members of a church!

The college that I attended chose a verse of Scripture to be a guide for a year. That verse was displayed on stationery and various publications sent throughout the year. They still do that and urge alumni to pray for the college and students assigned to them in the light of that verse.

We do that to a certain extent in Nebraska. A verse was picked for the Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center, Isaiah 40:30-31: “Even youths grow tired

and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” The theme was Road Trip and all summer camps were encouraged to follow that theme.

The program committee for our Family Gatherings chooses a verse and developed the program around that, Ephesians 3:20-21, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” Evelyn Durham had it printed on the cover of the bulletin so we could easily see it. Let’s read it together.

I’m thinking that these verses could be our verses for the interim period that we have together as interim pastor and congregation. Let me expand on this verse and see if God speaks to you in the same way that I sense He is speaking to me.

First of all, these verses are not written to an individual like Titus or Timothy or Philemon. In those letters Paul did write to individuals by those names. Ephesians and the rest of Paul’s letters were written to the church. Whenever you see the pronouns “you” or “we” they refer to the church not to an individual. In the passage of scripture read this morning by Joanne Shaw we could read the word “church” wherever we see those pronouns “you” or “we”. We could also read the name “Second Baptist Church” in those places. Let’s do that and see how it fits. Turn to Ephesians 3:14 in your pew Bibles and read with me that passage inserting the name Second Baptist Church wherever you see the pronouns “you” or “we”.

Doesn’t sound too far off, does it? In fact it sounds great!

Now look at the text on the front of your bulletin or the text in the Bible reading we just did. This is a doxology in a prayer Paul makes for the church. “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we all ask or imagine...” God can do more “immeasurably more than we all ask or imagine!” What are you asking for Second Baptist? God can do more than all we can ask! What can you imagine for Second Baptist? God can do more than all we can imagine! Imagine that, if you will, think of all you can ask or all you can imagine and then hear this scripture, God can do more than that! I don’t know a word that can express adequately what this verse can mean. “Wow” does not do it justice!

We need to ask our children to help us. Ted Hartung told me that educators say that the height of our imagination tends to peak when we are around 8 years of age.

By the time we are 20 or so we have lost 50% of that imagination. I don't want to think what the power of imagination is by the time you get to my age. That's why we must ask our children and youth to help us. Children and youth, what can you ask or imagine about Second Baptist Church? Tell us and help us rekindle the gift of imagination that God has given all of us through you.

Study this verse just a little bit more with me. It says, **Now to Him**, meaning God, **who is able to do immeasurably**, meaning we will not have ways to measure what He can do, **more than we all ask or imagine**, we've already talked about those two words, ask or imagine, **according to his power that is at work within us**. What is His power? It is the power that governs the universe and brings all things to their appointed end. It's that same power that is at work in us. **To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus**, it's not for our glory, yours and mine, but God's glory in the church and Christ Jesus. In other words it is about God in the church and Christ Jesus. Why does Paul say, "in the church and in Christ Jesus?" It is because the church and Christ Jesus are complementary parts of one organism. The church is the body and Christ Jesus is the head; the head and the body go together.

And it is **for all generations**, meaning from the youngest to the oldest and from these generations to the next ones that follow! It is another way of saying, **"Forever and ever, Amen!"**

What powerful verses! Do you sense God speaking to you about using these verses for such a time as this? Tell us what you think!

We need a song to sing that would be "our song" during this Interim Time. We would think of these verses and God doing more than we can ask or imagine every time we sing it! With Michael's help we have selected one that might lend itself to that. It is printed on an insert in your bulletin. Let's sing it.

Awesome God

Our God is an awesome God, He reigns from heaven above
With wisdom, power and love. Our God is an awesome God!

Our God is an awesome God, He reigns from heaven above
With wisdom, power and love. Our God is an awesome God!
Our God is an awesome God! Our God is an awesome God!