

**“As I live, says the Lord God,  
this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel.”**

It sounds to me

That Ezekiel, the prophet  
Really did not like this proverb

**"The parents have eaten sour grapes,  
and the children's teeth are set on edge."**

He didn't ever want to hear it again

He heard people use it as an excuse  
To do nothing

They would say,

The Lord is punishing our nation  
Because **our parents** did something wrong  
They're the ones who ate the sour grapes

But we're the ones who have to suffer the consequences

Ezekiel said, "No!"

Living a full life

Is up to you

It's in your hands

Life is futile if you live trapped in your own thinking

But live in relationship with God

And you will have life

Children do have to suffer

When their parents make a mistake

But to take hold of your life

To become an adult

We have to stop blaming our parents

Stop using them as an excuse

And instead, chart our own course

Toward a good life

A good relationship with God

When we make excuses, like those who used this proverb

We are trying to protect ourselves

We are looking for a safe explanation

Guarding our own image of ourselves

### Protective behavior

It's how we were made

It's part of our makeup

When your computer crashes,

Sometimes you can still get it to work in safe mode

Then you might be able to fix the problem

When our brains crash

Our thinking slows way down

Our anxiety speeds way up

We are not very adaptive

But we fall back on behavior we've used in the past

To get out of sticky situations

It would be good in the midst of high anxiety

If we could put our brains in safe mode

In fearful times

It's typical for us to think of our own safety

But there is a different way to live

To live with confidence in Christ

We can live fearfully

Or we can live in Christ's love

Christ calls us again today to live with active love

The chief priests and elders who approached Jesus

Were playing it safe

They did not admit what they were thinking about John the Baptist

They did not want to believe what Jesus was teaching

Unless they could trust his authority

Jesus told them the parable of two sons

One who has safe answers—"Sure Dad, I'll wash the dog."

But then his answers and actions do not agree

The other is honest about his disagreement

But then changes his mind

And does what his father wanted

A young minister graduated from seminary just before World War I  
and he was appointed to a church in a very small town.

He had been there only a couple of weeks  
when he received the call every new minister dreads  
-- the call to do his first funeral.

The person who had died was not a member of his church.  
She was, in fact, a woman with a very bad reputation.  
Her husband was a railroad engineer  
who was away from home much of the time.  
She had rented rooms in their house  
to men who worked on the railroad  
and rumor had it  
that she rented more than just rooms  
when her husband was away.

The young preacher, faced with his first funeral,  
found no one who had a good word to say about this woman,  
until he entered the small old-fashioned grocery store  
on the day before the funeral.  
He began to talk to the store owner about his sadness  
that the first person he would bury  
would be someone about which  
nothing good could be said.

The store owner didn't reply at first ...,  
in his silence, he appeared to make a decision.  
He took out his store ledger  
and laid it on the counter  
between him and the preacher.  
He opened the ledger at random and,  
covering the names in the left-hand column,  
he pointed to grocery bills written in red  
– groceries that people had bought on credit –  
and then the column  
that showed the bill had been paid.

He said, "Every month,  
that woman would come in  
and ask me who was behind in their grocery bills.

It was usually some family  
    who had sickness or death  
-- or some poor woman  
    trying to feed her kids  
    when her husband drank up the money.  
She would pay their bill  
and she made me swear never to tell.  
But, I figure now that she is dead,  
    people ought to know  
    -- especially those who benefited  
        from her charity  
    who have been most critical of her."<sup>1</sup>

She was one who said "No"  
    To being a nice person of the community  
    But later did something with her broken life  
    In her own broken way, she was doing the will of God  
She did not play it safe

The Pharisees played it safe  
    They approached Jesus cautiously  
Paul started out as a Pharisee  
    But in his amazing conversion  
        He went from distrust of Christians  
        To a complete openness to Jesus  
In his letter to the Philippians  
    He described an alternative to playing it safe  
    He invites us to have the mind of Christ  
        Rather than seeking safety  
        Seek to share in all things with Jesus  
            Loving obedience to God  
            The path of servanthood  
            The power of sacrificial love

Many years ago, many churches ago

---

<sup>1</sup> Roger G. Talbott, Good News for the Hard of Hearing, CSS Publishing Company

A friend told me about his first wife  
How he had given himself completely to her  
He loved her with complete abandon  
He held nothing back

When she cheated on him  
He was devastated  
It took a long time to heal

So when he married again  
He never gave himself completely to his new wife  
But he kept the deepest part of himself protected  
He was playing it safe

They've been married for many years now  
And I wouldn't be surprised  
If he would have changed his mind by now  
And admitted that he had completely given himself to her

Paul saw the complete giving that Jesus did  
Not only as an example of what we could do  
But also Jesus giving  
Becomes the energy in our giving  
His mind is at work in our community  
How we think and act as a group of people  
How we give ourselves to each other  
And give ourselves away for the sake of the world

Paul commends to us a way of thinking  
That is not safe mode  
But that is fully engaged in living the mind of Christ

He begins by reminding us of the difference Christ has made in our lives  
There's an implied question  
An invitation to be honest  
Has Christ's love made any difference in your life?  
Are you experiencing any encouragement?  
Has his love healed any sadness  
Created any compassion

Brought you into relationship with his Spirit?

Paul wrote with the conviction

That he already knew how you would answer

That you would say "Yes."

So he continued, "then, make my joy complete..."

By putting into action

The Yes that you have said with your lips

He then described a way of living that is anything but safe

It is not oriented toward self

Safety is a self-oriented preoccupation

This way of living is oriented toward giving ourselves away

It's not about self, but community

It's about a community putting Christ's love into action

It's about our seeing the Spirit of God

At work in our love

*...be of the same mind,*

*having the same love,*

*being in full accord and of one mind.*

Usually we do not have the same mind

Each of us is motivated by our own goals

Alfred Adler believed that all our behavior

Makes sense

If you can understand what your goals are

With all of us having different goals

There's bound to be competition and friction

But when we turn in the direction of Jesus

When we make Christ our single goal in life

We can then share the same goal

And we are no longer in competition

There is a strange harmony

As our actions all seek the same purpose

<sup>3</sup>*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,*

*but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.*

Usually we are trying to show

How good we are

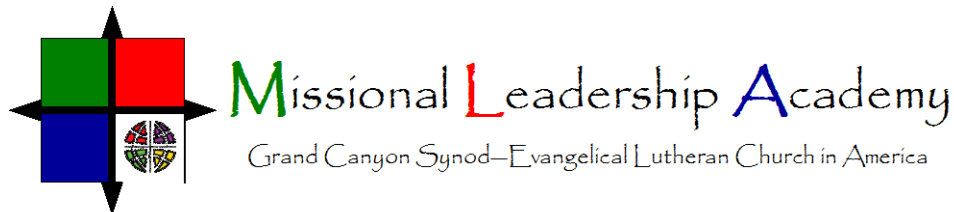
We compete for "Best in Show"  
Like we're all poodles  
Prancing around  
On a leash designed by Madison Avenue or MTV  
We're just not good enough  
Unless we wear all the right fashions  
And have the latest gadgets  
When we fear that our lives are not valuable to others  
We pretend we are better than we are  
We make all our conversations about ourselves  
Or try to make others appear weak and foolish  
But when we know how God sees us  
That in Christ we are forgiven  
That in Christ we are made of the finest materials  
When we value ourselves as redeemed, chosen, and precious  
We can give up our fear  
And not need to show how good we are  
**Humility** means living at peace with who we are  
Accepting our weakness and limitations  
Accepting the powerful love that is at work in us  
Then we can regard others as better than ourselves  
Treat people as though they are more important  
More faithful  
More active in Christ's love  
Not to put yourself down  
But to let the love of Christ  
Turn things upside down in your life  
And create a harmony of Spirit  
That will make others say,  
"See how they love one another."

<sup>4</sup>*Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.*  
Make the other's interests  
Just as important to you as your own  
Rather than having competing interests  
Look out for each other's interests  
Become an advocate for a different way of thinking

Rather than just for your own  
An interesting kind of harmony results  
When Palestinians and Israelis get together  
When Democrats and Republicans listen to each other

<sup>5</sup>*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus*

Today we are beginning a new act  
Daring to step out in confidence  
Please turn to the back page of your bulletin  
The word Missional is not in most dictionaries  
It was chosen on purpose to be something different  
Not for the sake of having something new  
But because we need to see things in new ways  
We need to see the Mission of God in new ways  
And put our loving YES into action



Missional Leadership Academy—class of 2013

**Goals:**

- To help congregations understand the need for adaptive leadership if they are to be vital and thriving centers for missional outreach in the Southwest;
- To equip pastors and lay leaders to be agents of change; To transform congregations from an inward focus of maintenance and chaplaincy to an outward focus of mission, outreach and evangelism;
- To invite congregations to be agents of adaptive leadership and transformation, beyond their congregations both in their community context and in the Grand Canyon Synod;
- To change and transform the DNA of the Grand Canyon Synod to become a Great Commission Synod based on missional principles.

**These goals will be more fully explained as we figure them out ourselves.**

The Lakes leadership team: Mark Myers, Kelly Maguire, Carole Larkins, and Pastors David Hinck and Kurt Sortland

Through participating in an orientation retreat (November 11-12), reading a series of books, attending and assisting with conferences in the Las Vegas valley, and engaging our congregation in projects, the leadership team will work to help our congregation and its leaders accomplish these goals above.

We will begin with an online survey called the Transforming Church Index, asking all who worship and serve Christ here at The Lakes to take the survey and help our congregation understand our readiness for mission. If you need the help, during October there will be volunteers ready to assist you at the computer. There will also be paper copies of the survey to fill out, but only 35 of these are included in our program.

The first book we will read is *A Field Guide for the Missional Church* by Richard Rouse and Craig Van Gender. We will have additional copies available so that you may purchase and read them with the team.

**Our YES is a congregational YES**

**And I am asking you to say YES and be part of putting the YES into action.**

**Amen.**

If we think of our minds as boats

    I want to be at the helm steering

        Rather than letting it wander in no particular direction

    I do not want to steer into dangerous waters

        Or else I may capsize my boat

    I can put up with a little water washing onto my deck

        But if I let too much of it fill up my hold

        I'll worry about sinking

This is a picture of our minds in safe mode

    A boat in treacherous seas