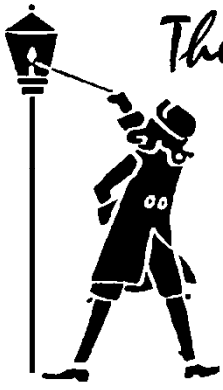

LAKESIDE CHURCH OF CHICAGO

3939 Howard St, Skokie, IL 60076 Fax: 847.763.9719 Phone: 847.763.9720 Email: lakesidechurchofchicago@yahoo.com



LAMPLIGHTER

Rev. Stan Wiedeman, Pastor

Office: 847.763.9725

Rev. Dave Uchizono, Director of C.E.

Office: 847.763.9723

Rev. Mitsuo Suzuki, Pastor, Japanese-Speaking

Office: 847.763.9724

IN CHRIST AND FOR CHRIST - TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN

August 18, 2008

FROM BEGINNING TO END

[This year camp concluded with the baptism of three people. The testimonies of new believers always stirs our hearts as we witness the fruit of the gospel, the evidence of God's mighty work of salvation. I wrote the following article six years ago, prompted by the August 18 baptism. It serves as a reminder of God's work of salvation, from beginning to end.]

Seven people stood there on the beach in their white robes -- four children, three adults. Each had their own unique story. Each had been drawn by God to His Son. Each had encountered Jesus in very diverse circumstances. Each had been led to Christ in different ways -- Christian family, Christian movie, girlfriend, golf buddy. But each one of them had gained entrance into the kingdom of God through the same means: faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ for their sins on the cross, as proclaimed in the gospel.

It was a glorious morning. The sun was gradually warming the cool morning air. The lake was calm. People had been anticipating this event for several weeks. Tears accented smiles, as each individual shared his/her story. God is remarkably powerful as He works to bring rebellious, depraved human creatures to faith, spiritual corpses to new life. Each of these people were testifying to the miraculous saving work of our mighty God, even though some seemed to sound so ordinary and unpretentious. Seven people were baptized, publicly declaring their faith in Jesus Christ, and the angels in heaven rejoiced along with the crowd of humans on the shore.

Each of these people will return home today to face the world just as it was when they left it a week ago -- a world that is hostile to God and His Son; a world that opposes the gospel with lies and deceitful messages daily; a world that will not welcome them as friends, but will oppose them as hated enemies. But I am confident that they will stand, because they possess the life of God.

On Saturday night we heard another testimony, one of the teens, a young man we baptized two years ago. He reported God's powerful work in his life, directing his spiritual growth, enabling him to continue in his faith in spite of some prominent obstacles. He had just returned from a mission trip this summer. He will enter college in the fall, and his faith will be tested in new ways, but I am confident that he will stand because He will stand in the power and life of God, not his own.

Peter puts it this way: *His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust* (2 Peter 1:3,4).

Why do some continue in the faith, while others bail out? Because they have been granted "everything pertaining to life and godliness". Why do some continue to mature spiritually, while others lose interest in spiritual things? Because they have been "called by His own glory and excellence". Why do some emerge from severe trials with a strengthened faith, while others pull out of the race at only the slightest difficulties? Because they have become "partakers of the divine nature" enabling them to endure.

What an exciting adventure this salvation is! Sometimes we are spectators, as we marvel at the testimonies of God's work in others' lives, or observe the persistent growth in those around us. Other times we are the participants, struggling, fighting, but always coming through in the end, enduring with a strength beyond our own capabilities. And in both of these roles, one thing becomes clear: salvation is a work of God, from beginning to end. He draws. He convicts. He regenerates. He justifies. He sanctifies. He empowers. He protects. He preserves. And He will glorify.

There is another scene where believers are wearing white robes. *I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."* (Revelation 7:9,10).

Pastor Stan