

## **BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT (Presented by Jay Minnick 12-23-2013)**

I hope you were here a few weeks ago when the students hosted their fall talent show. It was amazing. As we gathered for that celebratory event, Bruno came up to me and asked if I would come out tonight and share a few thoughts on the words that comprise the GMS motto that adorns the GMS seal and can be found at the bottom of our PTA logo - words that are central to the ethos of this remarkable place. The words are these, **...by faith, not by sight**. In 1979, the board of directors approved the school seal and affirmed these words as their motto, words that the students and staff had selected.

If you will please think with me for a few minutes on these profound words, **...by faith, not by sight**. These are ancient words. Words that date back nearly 2,000 years. Words that were first written to encourage a fledgling faith community in Eastern Europe. As I look back to their origin I realize that despite their birth within a specific religious tradition, they still have a word of grace to extend to us who gather here tonight regardless of our faith tradition. They speak to us in the midst of our shared life experience. Hear them again. Just let them flow over you. Don't analyze them, just hear them: **...by faith, not by sight**.

Beautiful words, but not ones that this world tends to embrace very eagerly. You see we live in a visual world. We tend to live by sight, not by faith. We say things like **seeing is believing**. Or, **show me the money**. Or, **I'll believe that when I see it**. Or, **Keep your hands where I can see them**. We navigate our world with directions like **Look at that?** Or, **Do you see that?** On the witness stand, we convict on testimony that is solicited with these words, **Please just tell us what you...saw**. Our social contracts begin and end with the refrain, **Good to see you** and **See you later**. Even our skepticism is grounded in a visual metaphor - **I didn't think that I would live to see that**.

So what does such a world **view** do to those of us who live in a community where seeing is not the path to believing, a community where there is a depth of life that extends beyond the visual?

Do you remember ROY G. BIV? It was a mnemonic device that allowed me to survive a junior high school science class. ROY G. BIV was not the name of my teacher's long lost uncle. No, instead it was an acronym: Red... Orange... Yellow... Green... Blue... Indigo... Violet. ROY G. BIV is an acronym for the colors that populate the narrow band of electromagnetic radiation known as visible light. When I was a kid I remember being struck by the fact that visible light makes up such a small portion of the spectrum that runs from long radio waves to very short gamma rays.

The question that this begs for me today is this. If the visible spectrum is so insignificant in the scheme of the universe then why in the world do we allow it to be the guiding principle of our lives? I have a suggestion. How about this instead, *...by faith, not by sight*. Can we come up with some new language that will help us embrace a bigger world? Can we come up with something more substantive? *Not good to see you*, but rather *good to be with you*. This would mean living by faith, not by sight! Engaging in relationships by faith, not by sight? Setting priorities by faith, not by sight. Teaching our children to value this world by faith, not by sight. Depth, not superficiality.

In my academic pursuits I spent a great deal of time wrestling with the meaning of ancient words.

Words that were conceived in a different time, place, and culture. Words that found their voice in languages that are no longer spoken. The words *...by faith, not by sight* were written in the language we now called Koine Greek. In Koine Greek, the noun we translate faith derives from the verb pisteuo. Pisteuo means I believe. To have faith in something is to believe something. To believe in something.

This community of amazing people, people both sighted and visually impaired, is a community that is guided not by what it can see or not see but rather by a belief. We are guided by what we believe.

For this school it means to *believe* in its mission.

For us this means to *believe* in our kids.

For our kids it means to *believe* in themselves.

That's what we are doing here tonight. *We are believing*.

*We are living by faith, not by sight.*

