

### **A Lifetime of Serving Jesus; What an Honor!**

I am surprised at how many people knew it was my birthday. With the induction of internet, social media and easy access smart phones, I have been inundated with Happy Birthday greetings from Europe to the South Pacific. I scarcely have time to express my thanks to everyone who has sent me birthday greetings. Even as I write these words, I am aware that in just a few days what I write here has the potential of going throughout the world wide media, so allow me to share with you some birthday thoughts as a way of saying thanking you collectively to everyone who has been so kind to send salutations.

#### **1. Life is fragile and quick.**

Sixty-two got here fast! *"...All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field"* (Isaiah 40:6). *"My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass"* (Psalm 102:11). *"Remember how short my time is..."* (Psalm 89:47). In the Bible the brevity of life is expressed like the fragile flower or grass. Pick a flower and in just a matter of days the bloom has vanished. Forget to water your grass and it quickly turns brown.

The old saying, "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today" is no longer a trite expression to me, it is a reality. As we grow older we realize we are not promised a tomorrow. The wise man said, *"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth"* (Proverbs 27:1).

#### **2. I am blessed to be getting older with the love of my life.**

I was contemplating Lord George Byron's last poem entitled, "On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year." As a matter of fact, he died prematurely in his thirty-sixth year. In the poem he writes these very pathetic words,  
"My days are in the yellow leaf;  
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;  
The worm, the canker, and the grief,  
Are mine alone!"

How very thankful I cannot say, "The flowers and fruits of love are gone."  
At this age, the flowers and fruits abound more than ever. To contrast poets, Robert Browning who married Elisabeth Barrett and enjoyed the bliss of marriage wrote:

"Grow old along with me!  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made:  
Our times are in His hand  
Who saith "A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

I can claim: Proverbs 5:18, *“Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.”* There is a certain contented happiness that comes uniquely to long term marriages. In A.A. Milne’s, Winnie the Pooh, he has this sentence, “If you live to be a hundred, I want to live to be a hundred minus one day so I never have to live without you.” I can identify.

### **3. I am learning the value of friends.**

In life we have many acquaintances. It has been said, “If at the end of your life you have five good friends you are blessed.” I would like to think I have more than this, however, through six decades of life, I have seen many who were supposed to be good friends in reality were not and many times those we have a tendency to take for granted are in fact the best friends of a lifetime.

Helen Keller made an insightful statement about friendship that is worth noting: “My friends have made the story of my life. In a thousand ways they have turned my limitations into beautiful privileges and enabled me to walk serene and happy in the shadow cast by my desperation.” God’s Word says, *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”* (Proverbs 17:7). A real friend is priceless.

### **4. I have no regrets.**

As I look back I can see a few minor things that I would have done differently, but not on major decisions. I followed the light the Lord gave me. It is sometimes difficult accepting the results of our decisions and lifestyle when they did not always yield what we premeditated, but that is when we accept God’s timetable. He said, *“He hath made every thing beautiful in his time...”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

There are three verses in the Bible that I would compare to the North Star in guidance for me. The first two are Proverbs 3:5 and 6, *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”* If we trust God and not our own weak wisdom, if we acknowledge Him there is no way we are going to make a mistake. The third verse that guides me is Matthew 6:33: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* All things in life are better when we place Jesus as number one in our life. We can trust our decisions when we are fully and wholly consecrated unto Him, for He will add to our life just exactly what we need.

### **5. I am glad to be part of Christ’s Church**

I love the thought of being part of Christ’s body, His Church. This was the motivation behind our name, “Christchurch.” We chose to use the small “c” in church and blend it into one name. This shows to the world we are inextricably in union with our Lord. I love God’s people! *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren...”* (1 John 3:14). I have been

blessed because of the people who have laid down their life in prayer and service with me and for me. I am honored to be in the company of so noble a company. *"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."* (1 John 3:16).

## **6. I love Christ more than ever.**

When I gave my all to Christ in my youth, it was thrilling, dynamic and adventurous. My relationship with the Lord has never really ceased from that joy and excitement, but there is maturity in this relationship that has deepened over the years that goes beyond a lifetime friendship, into an eternal friendship *"...and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother"* (Proverbs 18:24).

We often talk about how the Lord loves us unconditionally and I almost feel irreverent when I say this, but I have developed a love for Him that is unconditional as well. I find in youth we have a tendency to judge the Lord's love to us by what he does for us that we deem positive. At this point in life, the Lord is going to please me by just being Himself. I love Him not for what He does for me, (although He does everything for me); I love Him today for just being Himself! I cannot help but glorify Him when I see Him for who He is: *"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness"* (Psalm 29:2). Prayer has become so much more than a running list of wishes, desires and requests before Him. I find more joy than ever in talking with, worshipping Him and serving Him in a quiet solitude seen only by Him and appreciated only by Him. The personal relationship with Jesus has become so much more personal and special as the days and years have flown by. I have spent my lifetime with Jesus and I want to tell the world that He is worthy of not only our lifetime but an eternity of service. I have served Him in this frailty; I long to serve Him in perfection one day. Thanks be to God I am one day nearer seeing Him face to face and serving Him throughout the ceaseless, search-less ages of eternity! *"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face..."* (Revelation 22:3,4a).

-Pastor Pope-