

Twenty-Three Years Ago Today

When Mrs. Pope and I along with our two young daughters, Heather, who was three, and Juliana who had just had her first birthday moved down to Houston we were excited about what God was doing and what He was going to do. Dreams of a lifetime were prayed over and fulfilled. We prayed that we might move to a place where we could spend the rest of our lives and see a work of the Lord raised up for His glory. We prayed that such a work would be on display that did not have human explanation. How we thank God for seeing this come to pass! Let me tell you what we see in Christchurch:

I. We see a place where the name is a definition.

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:30).

It is not unusual to be shaking hands with people at the back of the church or sometimes seeing them in public and silently I begin to be in a sense of awe. I am awed by the deep, real dedication of our people to their Lord. I am told of missed human opportunities because of a violation of convictions. I am told of a word they received while in prayer earlier in the week. I am told of something God showed them in the Bible.

I will preach around the country and meet all kinds of people, but never will you see a group, a church who love their Lord better than the citizens of Christchurch.

Surely, by calling ourselves Christchurch we have much more than a name; we have a definition! *"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"* (I Corinthians 3: 9-11).

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter 2: 5-9).

II. We see a place where a church has prayed the price.

The world of business will say to succeed you must be willing to pay the price. At Christchurch we fellowship with a people who have prayed the price. You will see this evidenced should you come to our church at 5:00 a.m. and hear the conversation our men (and often some ladies) are having with their Lord. Jesus said, *"What, could ye not watch with me one hour?"* Matthew 26:40.

Just let one of us hit a catastrophe and the ladies' prayer chain is activated. This place and her members are covered in prayer. Christchurch has advanced on her knees!

III. We see a place where everybody is somebody!

There is no artificiality here; for twenty-three years I have seen a pattern of Christian hospitality that is quite remarkable! A man who drives a luxury automobile will sit near a man who had to wire and jump-start his old car to be in church. A man wearing an Armani suit will be seen embracing the neck of a man who is wearing the latest style that Salvation Army had to offer. If there is a need, a lady will open up her Dooney & Bourke purse ("Dooney bag") pulling out a generous gift incognito as another lady opens her

Wal-Mart “blue-light special” contributing her last “two mites.”

In this place there is no caste system; everybody is somebody!

IV. We see a place where families are of primary importance.

The men who are heroes in our church are men in love with their wives. The ladies who are stars are ladies who are unequivocally devoted to their husbands and children. The children who are lovingly obedient to their parents are congratulated. This is a place where we encourage our boys to be Daniels and Josephs, not Absoloms or Demases. *"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world..."* (II Timothy 4:10). This is a place where we encourage our girls to be Ruths and Esthers, not Jezebels or Delilahs.

We have been called the family church, not just because we love each as a family, but because we emulate the God given, old fashioned nuclear family.

Allow me to say happy anniversary to the wonderful people of Christchurch!

- Pastor Pope -

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