

Goodbye for Now, Mr. President.

I find myself reeling from one emotion to another. I find it hard to escape trying to receive all the information I can about the decease and funeral of our beloved, fortieth president of The United States, Ronald Reagan. On one hand I feel a sense of loss, yet on the other hand a sense of gratitude for having had a president who did so much for all Americans (even for those who don't want to admit it). Frankly, I would be remiss to avoid expressing to you my heart on matters that come to mind on this important week-end.

I. In America there is possibility and hope.

Throughout the past few days a number of reporters and journalists have made reference to our former president's gifts and accomplishments. It seems the most oft asked question is, "Do you foresee or believe anyone on the scene will communicate and accomplish the kind of things Ronald Reagan did?" Let me address that: "Definitely!" As we heard some of the most beautiful music coming from The National Cathedral in Washington D.C., the first thought that came to my mind is both of my daughters sang there on a very special occasion. Access to dreams are available to those who believe. In America, no one has to be consigned to un-importance or normality.

One of the great assurances the founding fathers left us was the dream that in this country, the every-day kind of person could pursue "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." On an occasion such as the past few days, I am reminded that the pursuit of many a person's happiness is not the mediocre. We live in a country that is conducive to the fulfillment of dreams. If dreams don't come true, often times it is not because there is a natural, evolution-type selection process that forbids it...never! We live in a democratic experiment that has over two hundred years of liberty under her belt. Our very laws are ordered to help the average guy be anything but average. No wonder we have inscribed upon a cracked, but precious bell in Philadelphia, "*...and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof...*" (Leviticus 25:10). Notice the promise is to all!

Tonight after church Mrs. Pope and I will be leaving with our teens to youth camp for five days. We are looking forward to this time together. Whenever I preach to young people, I often wonder if in our midst, we have another Billy Sunday, Dwight L. Moody, Charles Spurgeon, Theodore Roosevelt or Ronald Reagan. For over two decades I have believed that somewhere in our midst I have pastored youth who will attain the greatest heights of true greatness our God and country can afford. Those heights may be in the matter of missions, like William Carey, Adoniram Judson or Amy Carmichael. Yet, it may be in matters of politics. It has been said, "The two things you don't mix together if you want to get along with people is religion and politics." Maybe that is a valid point, but wouldn't it be refreshing to see someone come on the scene who is a person who has personal relationship with Christ mixed with true statesmanship? I believe we had that in President Reagan, but may I remind some pessimists out there that God did not die with our fortieth president. I think of the words of Elisha who said after Elijah was carried to heaven on a fiery chariot ride, "*Where is the LORD God of Elijah?*" (II Kings 2:14). Perhaps the question could also be asked today, "Where are the Elijah's of the LORD God?" The truth of the matter is, as long as we have the LORD God, which we shall, "*yesterday, and today, and forever*" (Hebrews 13:8), we shall also have the hope and possibility of having the Elijah's of the LORD God! To borrow and revise a "Reagan-esque" phrase, "It is still morning in America."

II. There is never a dark tomorrow for a child of God.

My old friend, Ben Jordan who majored in drama in college, said every writer and playwright must deal with God." In other words, God is inescapable, so is eternity. Every one of us must deal with eternity. "*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*" (Hebrews 9:27).

What a joy to know that the Bible promises those who believe in Christ for salvation, "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying,*

neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

One day we won a man who was deaf and mute to the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason we had the opportunity to witness to him was because his wife had recently accepted Christ and she had communicated to him (in her sign language, because she was deaf and mute as well) that she had received forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ. So by the time I came to the door of the house where they lived, he was ready. Since I didn't know sign language I had to write out my words on paper and point to the Scriptures. It was beautiful! He prayed and asked Christ to save him and then asked if in heaven he and his wife would be able to hear and talk. We took him to Revelation 21:4 where we have the promise of the former things passing away! We wrote on the paper to the young husband, because he now knew Christ, one day, according to that verse, he would hear and speak because the "*former things*" such as deafness and muteness would be passed away. What a joy to see this man run to his wife who had the same afflictions and point out Revelation 21:4. Then in exuberant sign language he pointed to his ears, then to his mouth, then pointing straight up to heaven, he burst into a grin and a happy laughter followed by a tearful embrace. They were rejoicing that one day they could say to each other, "I love you" and for the first time they would hear those words with their own ears.

I appreciate the words of our President George W. Bush today as he said during President Reagan's last years he saw through a *glass darkly* (referencing I Corinthians 13), but now *face to face*. Yes, for those who know Christ, one day we have it on standing promise, "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).* One day, no more Alzheimer's, heart attacks or cancer, "...*for the former things are passed away.*"

May God in his mercy be kind to the Reagan family and we pray that if any of his friends and loved ones don't know Christ as their personal Savior, they will allow our president's home-going to bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ.

- Pastor Pope -

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