

## Great Things God Has Done

*"Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you"* (I Samuel 12:24). These words were spoken by the prophet Samuel to Israel after they realized the errors of their ways. Earlier the Israelites requested, *"Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God..."* (I Samuel 12:19), and later in the chapter Samuel answered by saying these compassionate words: *"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way"* (I Samuel 12:23). As we end twenty-five years together as a church, hopefully in these next years as God so wills, I shall continue to make it my duty as your pastor to pray for you. After Samuel comforted Israel with the promise to pray, he encouraged them by saying, *"...consider how great things he hath done for you."* Today as we celebrate, there are three considerations of God's greatest to us that I would like to list:

### I. God has been great in answering our prayer.

This is a very general statement I just gave you; allow me to be more specific. God has been great in answering the prayer I prayed approximately thirty years ago and up to when we made the decision to move to Houston. The prayer was, "Lord, please move us to a place where we could spend the rest of our lives. Lord, I moved around so much growing up; please let my kids have the same neighborhood, same schools, same friends, and same church." Our oldest, Heather was three, Juliana had just turned one, and Jonathan and Sean were yet to be born. Since we moved, we have lived in two houses! The last twenty years has been in the same house. From kindergarten to graduation from high school, our kids lived in the same place.

Statistics now show the average tenure of a pastor is one and a half years. By God's grace I have gone over sixteen times that length of service, with one church. I give all the glory to God! It has been a definite answer to prayer. *"But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer"* (Psalm 66:19). May I say it has not been something I have begrudged; it has been an honor and a blessing. Thank you for putting up with me and my idiosyncrasies. I love you! And thank you for loving my family and me. You have truly made us feel part of "the family church."

### II. God has been great in raising up a church where first things are really first.

At Christchurch, Jesus is Lord, *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18). At Christchurch, believers don't just talk about praying, they pray. Prayer is the air we breathe. As the Bible says of Paul, *"...behold, he prayeth"* (Acts 9:11). At Christchurch, the way of salvation is made plain in the Sunday School, Bible Studies, AWANA, and from the pulpit: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Romans 1:16).

At Christchurch, moral lives are lived among the faithful attenders, *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"* (Matthew 5:8). At Christchurch, the family is important: *"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars"* (Proverbs 9:1). At Christchurch, we believe, teach, and preach the Bible as the Word of God. We believe God has inspired it and preserved it! *"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him"* (Proverbs 30:5). *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe"* (I Thessalonians 2:13). At Christchurch, everybody is somebody and they are loved: *"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you"* (John 15:12).

### **III. God has been great in healing at Christchurch.**

One of the most frequent comments about the effect of this church is Christchurch has provided a healing. Families that are falling apart have gotten back together here. Broken hearts are mended, forgiveness is taught and proffered, anger is resolved, and love is freely given. The wounded have found a home and a place to serve God again under the benign roof of Christchurch. I appreciate what someone said who made a profession of faith here and along with his family were baptized. He said, "I went to church growing up and we talked about God and sang about God, but when I walked into this church, it was as though God Himself was here!" There is a strong manifestation of Christ here and when people come with problems of all kinds, they find what was true in the New Testament is true in this place. *"...and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick"* (Matthew 8:16).

Truly, there is no place like this place anywhere near this place; this must be the place! Thank you for twenty-five wonderful years! I love you all!

- Pastor Pope -

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