

Pastoral Moment

Sunday, December 29, 2019

Dear Cornerstone Family,

I greet you in the joy of Emmanuel. God is with us indeed! This is not only the last Sunday in 2019 this is the last Sunday of the decade. This week we begin not only a new year but a new decade. Rather than having a song entitled “1999,” I wish Prince (May He Rest in Purple Peace!) had written another song entitled “2019.” I know, it doesn’t have the same ring to it as the hit “1999” but it would’ve at least given us cause to sing.

While we have no song to sing (or do we – **remember it’s still Christmas Season**), we definitely have cause to reflect. **Come to think of it, we DO have cause to sing and to reflect!** To this end, I am no longer thinking of Prince’s “1999” but of another song whose author is uncertain. The song is entitled, **“O, Come, All Ye Faithful.”** This is one of my favorite hymns during this Christmas Season. One more of my favorite songs is, **“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”** by Thomas Chisholm with music composed by William M. Runyan.

Unlike the song “1999,” “O, Come, All Ye Faithful” and “Great Is They Faithfulness” draws me to reflect on scripture. Particularly, Revelation 2:10 which says, **“...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”** This last Sunday in the year and the decade provides a moment of **reflection** for me, which I hope, will do the same for you into and throughout the year to come. **It promotes and undergirds the vital importance of being faithful which serves as a counter response to the worldly idol of “success.”**

Christians are not called to be “successful until death” but “faithful until death.” With this call to faithfulness comes the need to define what I mean by “faith.” Paul Tillich, one of my favorite 20th century theologians in addition to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dietrich Bonhoeffer amongst others, wrote in “The Dynamics of Faith” that “faith” is a word that needs healing in order for it to do some healing of its own. So let me repeat a definition of “faith” that I hope will do some healing of its own now and into the future.

The world has fooled the church into thinking that “faith” is “belief without proof.” This definition, for a number of reasons, which I won’t elaborate upon here, is problematic and creates more “heat” than “light.” **Faith is not “belief without proof” but “TRUST WITHOUT RESERVATION.”** How faithful have we been to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? How faithful should we be or can we be? This is the purpose behind the “F” in the phrase, “Following the F.O.R.M.U.L.A.E.” God hasn’t called us to be “successful” but “faithful.” And if our “faithfulness” leads to the trappings of worldly “success” then great! If not, even better! So as we go into a new year and a new decade let us sing and then reflect on the only new years resolution that matters, **“O Come, All Ye Faithful”** and **“Great is Thy Faithfulness.”**

Faithfully yours,

Pastor J.C.

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