

Revival: Strength for the Journey

"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (Luke 24:36). The timing of these words came after Jesus had risen from the dead and the disciples' faith needed bolstering. This morning, one of our fine secretaries, Mrs. Hawkins, commented that for those working with the evacuees from the flood, it was as though Jesus Himself was standing by them. While preparing my heart for the Pastor's Word, I began to think about this beautiful passage of Scripture that tells us of Jesus standing by His disciples. Then I began to pray for our upcoming revival with Mark Bishop and found myself asking the Lord to please once again come stand by His Church in these next few days, especially in the planned meeting we still have scheduled for September 18-20. We have changed a lot of our plans, but let's not forget the need we have of revival.

I have never been more proud of our people, truly being the hands and legs and mouthpiece for our Lord, supplying the needs for some very needy people. I was deeply touched as I saw many of the children from our shelter waiting for the buses to come and take them to school. As I walked through our shelter that is now home to many a person who has no home to return to, my heart was filled with praise. Christchurch, under God you have done well! I am proud to be your pastor.

The timing of our revival could not be better. When we have expended ourselves in the service of the Lord, we need to take back in. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). The promise to those who believe on Jesus is a time of refreshing. Notice, please, that the refreshing comes from the presence of the Lord. God's presence is refreshing! I know this may sound strange, but some of my favorite and most used books in my library are my dictionaries. I may have inherited a love of the English language from my father. Although Dad was reared in the rural south where much education was at a premium during the Great Depression, he never lost his insatiable desire to learn and one of his hobbies growing up was reading and memorizing portions of the dictionary. Needless to say, he became a prolific writer. Among my prized dictionaries is one I received from Dad which is the original Noah Webster, 1828 Dictionary. Many a time I have been frustrated with the slang infiltrated English dictionaries of modern day, and found old Noah Webster's definitions still some of the finest, clearest and yes, in some cases, even the godliest definitions anywhere. Listen to his definition of refresh: To cool; allay heat; to give new strength to; to invigorate; to relieve after fatigue; To revive; to reanimate after depression; to cheer; to enliven; To improve by new touches any thing impaired; To revive what is drooping. My prayer is that our meeting with Mark Bishop will allay the heat of the good fight of faith, to revive what is drooping, improve our service to Christ by His touch that invigorates and gives new strength for the journey!

Revival is needed when we have expended much service for God. God spoke through Isaiah, "To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear" (Isaiah 28:12). Jesus said, "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (Mark 6:31). Whenever I read these words I am always reminded of Vance Havner's comment about this passage, "If we don't take time to come apart and rest awhile, we will eventually come apart." God's longing voice in Isaiah shows our real need to be refreshed by the presence of the Lord. How ineffectual we shall become if we refuse to listen to God on this important matter! We can be so busy working for God, that we lose touch with our worship of God. In our hurry and bother of the activities of any given day we stand in jeopardy of allowing the urgent to take the place of the important. Sometimes God gets lost in our "things to do" list. Revival is not only accepting the finished works of Christ, but appreciating His finished work. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Please notice the contrast of Mary and Martha, Luke 10:40, "But Martha was cumbered about much serving, Luke 10:42, "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part...." Martha was banging around with the pots and the pans, always ready to fix a meal and do things for God. Mary realized her bereft life without God and sought Jesus by sitting at His feet. In the long run, more will be accomplished by leaning on Christ, before trying to stand for Christ. And should you try to run the race without him, tripping up along the way is assured.

The exhausted prophet Elijah was physically, emotionally and spiritually wiped out. Just prior to this, He witnessed God bring fire out of Heaven, now our hero is "burned out." God, in His mercy, delivers Elijah some heavenly food, "And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee" (I Kings 19:7). Lately our people have been busy making sure others have had bread in their mouths. We have had much bread given to our shelter - Namath Naif made the best bread pudding I have ever tasted. So, we have bread! But remember, the ox was permitted while plowing to partake of that which with he was helping. May we also remember - as we represent Christ, we should partake of the sweet fellowship we are promising others. When we are receiving the refreshing from the Lord, the results of our new and improved ministry become phenomenal! "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God" (I Kings 19:8).

So I admonish you, Christchurch, arise, eat and go in God's strength! The Christian life is a journey and on this journey we must be fueled through the presence of the Lord with His people. We are not constructed to make it without Him. We need revival! Mark your calendar - September 18-20, 2005!

- Pastor Pope -

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