

HOME BY ANOTHER WAY

17 January 2010

2. "Preparing for Departure"

Pastor Duke

INTRODUCTION

1. A secular prologue from a revered and, I think, worthwhile source:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.*

- Brutus to Caesar, Act 4, "Julius Caesar", by William Shakespeare

2. The leadership of this church has prayerfully decided that the heretofore unseen, slightly "left-handed" opportunity to re-locate this congregation to Rohrerstown represents what the ancient bard might have called a "tide" in our affairs, but what we see as a fresh new **movement** of Almighty God in our midst.
3. In saying this, I am not suggesting that the "tide" of God's will has been delayed, as it were, until C.O.S. could find a permanent home. Perhaps we have been so pre-occupied with that search that we have, in fact, missed various tides God has sent our way during these last 15 years.

An admission to this possibility could be tantamount to a confession that we, in failing to recognize – much less seize -- those tides "at the flood" here, in Myersville, have been "afloat" and drifting" toward those dreadful "shallows and miseries". If this is true (and it probably is) we must now humbly confess the sins of spiritual blindness, or fear, or lack of faith and spiritual leadership. FYI, I have already so confessed and repented.

REVIEW

I shared with you last week four questions which have come to my mind regarding this tide, one so obvious that we have been fairly baptized by it!

1. Should we accept this unanticipated gift? **We have done so, Beloved.**
2. If so, when will we be moving? **It now appears that our first Sunday service at "The Rohrerstown Chapel" will be on February 28.**

3. What shall we make of this?

A: It is, as I said last week, a **divine alteration** of the present **course**, but **not** of the ultimate **destination**, of this church's *sacred journey*.

4. How shall we prepare?

a. We **pray** -- and we must pray with **holy expectation** –

(1) for **wisdom** and **discernment** for the COS elders;
ref: James 1:5-8; James 5:16b

(2) for **stamina** and **grace** for the COS deacons;
ref: 2 Samuel 22:1-3

(3) for your ol' **pastor**, that he may be **faithful**, **wise** and **energetic** in the ministry of the Word;
ref: 2 Timothy 4:1-2

(4) for **one another**, that each member of this congregation will develop **spiritual wisdom***.

***What's that?**

A: **Spiritual wisdom** begins with **knowledge**, gradually develops toward **understanding**, starts to produce the confidence of **hope** (perhaps the most under-valued blessing attached to receiving – and not merely “hearing” – the Word of God), and it will finally manifest itself in “*the working of {God's} mighty power*” (the Holy Spirit) *in and through* us.
ref: Ephesians 1:15-19

b. We must make a new **covenant** with one another:

(1) regarding **intercessory** prayer,

(2) regarding **fellowship**, and

(3) regarding our common, active **participation** in the work of the ministries of the Church of the Saviour at the Rohrsersville Chapel, in, around and **beyond** that tiny hamlet.
ref: Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:12-16

- c. We must look to our leaders for **vision** and **guidance**. As we continue to pray for these men, we must – trusting God -- humbly fold our own *personal* notions, inclinations and desires into their stewardship.
- d. We must turn to Scripture for whatever insights God will provide for us in the divine record of His occasional “**re - location**” of His people (sometimes **temporary** – for purposes of additional **tempering** – and other times **permanent** – when He defines the physical / geographical limits of the scope of their ministry) throughout history, *as well as* His attending **Presence** before, during and after those re-locations.

LESSON: Exodus 33:1-17

1. For Moses, the continual “attending **Presence**” of God had been, was now, and would always be the crucial factor in the sacred journey of His people, beginning-to-end. Already God had:
 - a. **delivered** them from the bondage of slavery in Egypt;
 - b. **provided** a divine path through the waters of the Red Sea;
 - c. **protected** them from Pharaoh’s chariots;
 - d. **nourished** them with food and water in the desert wilderness;
 - e. **directed** them to His holy mountain;
 - f. **instructed** them there in His holy law.
2. But throughout the journey His people had been “stiff-necked”: gravely lacking in gratitude, faith and perseverance, and wantonly rebellious and sinful, and God was just about fed up with them. He would, therefore, NOT personally attend them through the last leg of their journey to the Promised Land, but would instead send a protecting angel with them.
3. Moses, to his credit, would have none of that. He **interceded** on behalf of God’s people (who, no doubt, also drove him crazy), and declared that they would not move a step from Sinai without God’s attending Presence.
4. This faithful response, acknowledging complete dependence on Him, was exactly what God wished to hear. He renewed His promise to go with His people, and even gave Moses a “glimpse” of His **glory** (v.17-23).

LESSONS

1. The Land of Canaan as a new homeland was clearly NOT God's **reward** for His people's devoted faithfulness. They had NOT been particularly faithful – especially recently. Nor would it be the final destination of God's people – not by a long shot.
2. The Promised Land was “the **place of promise**”, the **gift** of a new home for His chosen people, one given solely by means of His **grace**. God had been preparing this place for His people since the moment of His calling of their patriarch, **Abraham**. He had been preparing it for **400** years to become an imperfect, not-fully-formed venue – a divinely designed and facilitated “frontier **outpost**” – for the **Kingdom of God**, where His Law would direct the affairs of His people and from which the **light** of His **glory** would shine forth into the greater world. This remote outpost would take root and grow until “*the fullness of time*”, when it would be birthplace of the **Messiah** – Jesus of Nazareth – who, along with His **church**, enabled and empowered by the attending Presence of the **Holy Spirit** – would over centuries usher in the **world-wide** coming of the Kingdom, which would arrive in all its **own fullness** at the second coming of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah!
3. Dear friends, I cannot but see the divine direction of this little church to Rohrsersville in light of all this, and I believe we must prepare accordingly for this “fresh **S.T.A.R³.T.**” God has graciously given us. Let us:

Stop making excuses for our failures of the past: let us **confess** them;

Take inventory: What have we learned in these past 15 years?
What are our present assets? Let us take them;
What is unnecessary baggage? Let us leave it;

Act in faith as we prepare to go;

Repent of our past sins and failures,
Re-commit to the mission to which our Lord has called His church, and
Re-focus on the divine task at hand;

Trust God with the **outcome**, relying entirely on the **Holy Spirit** – God's “attending **Presence**” in His church today – to **guide** us, to **enable** us, to **comfort** and **empower** us, *solī Deo Gloria*. Amen.

ref. **Zechariah 4:6**