

May 23, 2020

Good afternoon, Everybody.

If our church had been able to continue with its planned calendar of events, we'd be getting ready for the annual church picnic this afternoon. But the weather has been such that the ball fields would have been muddy and the general feel would have been damp and muggy. But as always, the food, fellowship, program, and board games would have been a delight. So we're going to really miss not being able to get together this year.



Years ago, in the late '70's, the church held a picnic every month in the summer. When Linda and I came in 1980, our first experience with it was at Paris Mountain State Park. Everybody gathered at the log shelter that sits down at the end of the first ball field, right across the road from the lake. Linda was three months from delivering our first child, a little girl with a sunny disposition that delighted us from the very beginning, and whom we named Abigail Phyllis, after both the Bible character and my mother.

I don't remember whether Pastor and Mrs. Boyd were at the picnic in 1980. They traveled for the University in the summers; doing monthly extension classes held at Marquette Manor Baptist Church in Chicago (Wayne VanGelderren Sr. was the pastor), Inter-City Baptist Church in Detroit (William Rice was the pastor), and South Sheridan Baptist Church in Denver (Ed Nelson was the pastor). So they might have been gone already.

I do remember Gary and MaryAnn Wilcox being at the picnic. Gary and I had lived across the hall from one another on the first floor of Graves Dormitory for the 1973-74 school year. We were actually in the same prayer group. But I'd lost track of him after that, so the church picnic six years later was a kind of getting reacquainted, and also a chance to get to know MaryAnn for the first time. Gary was Mount Calvary's first youth pastor, and our families have had a warm friendship ever since; the kind that is low maintenance and that picks right back up almost seamlessly right where you left it months or even years earlier.

What we ate or did at the picnic, I don't recall. The only mental "image" that remains is of someone grilling something out alongside the shelter in the parking lot. Perhaps the church provided food; perhaps we all brought our own. But it was the first opportunity for Linda and me to get to know many of the church folks in a setting other than at services. I do remember being impressed with how **big** the group was. That was because our little church in North Carolina numbered about 20 on Sundays. So to see 50 or 60 people (or however many it was) attending a church **picnic** was impressive!

That first summer Pastor Boyd set up a preaching schedule in which any of the men could request an opportunity if they wished. He assigned me one of the Lord's Day services every week (generally the morning, as I recall), but then one of the other men (an elder, a deacon, a seminary student, or someone else) took the other service that day. Someone else took the Wednesday evening Bible study. So there were three different preachers every week, amounting to probably 20-25 over the course of the summer by the time it was all over. A few of the men had never preached before and probably just wanted to try it out. It was interesting. But it must have turned out alright, because when the Boyds returned, we were still all in one piece.

Pastor Boyd listened to a recording of one of my sermons from that summer. I remember the text and probably still have the outline in file. The sermon included some lengthy explanations of the meanings and tenses of the Greek verbs. On his return, Pastor brought that sermon up and asked if I always went into such detail. I took it as a subtle complement and replied something like, *Not always, but pretty often*. At that, his face sort of changed; not quite into a grimace, but certainly not into the happy approval I'd expected. You'd have to have known his expressions to picture it. But I did go away thinking that there must have been something about that particular sermon that hadn't left him entirely enthused.

Looking back, I realize how truly patient the congregation was with me and with the transition of my becoming Pastor Boyd's associate. I had a lot to learn, and both Pastor Boyd and the church folks were pretty gentle with me. I really do shake my head here in the study sometimes when I recall how much I took for granted and how often someone could have taken offense.

I still marvel, pretty much every week, at how forgiving the congregation is. I think to myself, *I've got to do better*. But any improvement seems to be about as imperceptible as the infinitesimal moving of a glacier. So thank you, all of you, for your seemingly inexhaustible patience and forbearance. It's been one of your great kindnesses through the years (smile).

The Lord's Day

Well, tomorrow is another opportunity to try to do good to one another for the Lord's sake. We're pretty limited as to how much we can do right now, but everyone can pray. Even from the time that you awake in the morning. The Rush family is going to lead the congregational singing in the morning. Kristopher and Kimberly Endean will do so in the evening. They'll also be telling us "goodbye." That's the sad part. We're happy about the wonderful next chapter in their lives. But they're going to leave a big hole in the ministry and in our hearts.

Each Saturday since we began the virtual services, I've been giving you a thought or two from George Swinnock's, *Good Wish for the Lord's Day*. We've reached its conclusion. And fittingly, Swinnock turns his thought to the way he wants his Lord's Days to end.

I desire, finally, that I may not lose the heat of the day in the cool of the evening. I mean that what good I gain from my God through His ordinances in the day may not be lost by my negligence at night; but that as a wise commander, I may double my guard, and expect with much importunity, some evening dews of comfort and grace.

By the Lord's mercies, we'll meet together technologically tomorrow. May the Lord bless you and keep you today.

Praying for You This Morning,

Pastor Minnick