

Thoughts From The Shore

This past week Barbara and I were flown to West Palm Beach, Florida. I spoke at Jupiter, the most eastern point in the Atlantic Ocean in the state of Florida. It was a joy to be on the beach in prayer at sunrise on all the mornings we were there. Having spent many of my childhood years in the sunshine state, it was like going home. While meditating on the unoccupied beach, some great thoughts came to mind:

1. The tide governed my walk.

The tide ebbed at 9:30 a.m. and high tide came at 4:30 p.m. The sand on Jupiter Beach was so soft that the best place for sure footing was in the wet sand near the surf. Although it is a simple understanding that I was walking further inland in the late afternoon than in the morning, we find a parallel in life. As I preach conferences, I see that the age of my audiences varies more. It is not that I have escaped preaching to youth as much as it has widened to a more mature crowd. "God leads His dear children along," as the song says. So in our advance through life, may God keep our ears open, eyes looking, and feet responding to His (Christ's) every call and direction. In my travel across the beach, I noticed that a set of footprints were being washed away with the foam. There is an old saying, "Only one life, it soon will be past; only what's done for Christ will last." Even though our work on earth may not be remembered by mortal man, God is keeping the record. Thank the Lord, our deeds are not recorded in sand, but in Heaven! "...and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16). "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Peter 1:4).

2. There were big fish in deep waters.

Along the shore you can easily find the remains of struggling shell fish washed in through the long night, many of which are not palatable. Even the jack fish are available, and although they are easily caught near the shore and grow to be quite big, they are thrown back because they are not good to eat. Ah, but if you want the delicious grouper, you must go out into the deep waters.

When we want the big edible fish, we must be willing to be evangelistic adventurers and risk-takers. The Word of God says, "*They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep*" (Psalm 107:23,24).

3. It is difficult but rewarding standing against the tide.

One morning I was caught up in prayer and was just standing stationary by the shore in my long pants, shoes, socks and all. Before I knew it, I was hit by a wave nearly up to my knees. I was startled, cold, and rocked. I nearly fell in, but I remembered I had my wallet in my pocket, so I dug in and stayed firmly planted in the sand, but not without a struggle. If I fell, I would have a much greater mess on my hands.

In our Christian experience we will be hit by worldly waves that will nearly knock us over in the surf of carnality. We will struggle, but the reward will be worth not getting washed out! Standing against the tide is something too few Christians are willing to do. "*Stand fast therefore...*" (Galatians 5:1). "...withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:130).

4. Every shore needs light.

In the 1850s a young lieutenant by the name of George Meade, was the architect and designer of the famous lighthouse on the Jupiter Inlet. There was an already accomplished engineer in the United States Army, a successful young general named Robert E. Lee who had previously surveyed the area around this part of Florida. Years later they were to meet on the blood-drenched fields of Gettysburg as opponents. In later years, George Meade said his greatest moment in his illustrious military career was not when he defeated the famed Lee at Gettysburg, but building lighthouses for our government. The lighthouse he constructed on the Atlantic seaboard in Jupiter was the only light for that area of Florida. It

was said before he built that lighthouse, there was a dark hole at that coast. In the 1600s the Spanish ship, Saint Michael the Archangel, wrecked there. Although some of its riches have been recovered, the total estimate that was lost in this treasure ship has been estimated to be (in modern money value) one hundred million dollars. Gold doubloons and silver scattered on the bottom of the ocean over 600 feet below, basically because there was no light on the shore to guide them through the waters.

As we stood one hundred and twenty feet high in Meade's lighthouse overlooking what is still called the Treasure Coast (because of the several treasure ships that were sunk in these waters), I was inspired with the need we have to keep The Light of The World shining from His Body, The Church. So much more than money will be lost if The Light is not seen. At what shore has God called us to shine? *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

- Pastor Pope -

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