

Greetings to all those whom God is changing,

SCRIPTURE:

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (MSG) – Larger reading: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

“But don’t let it faze you. Stick with what you learned and believed, sure of the integrity of your teachers—why, you took in the sacred Scriptures with your mother’s milk! There’s nothing like the written Word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God’s way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.”

STORY:

After World War I, George Bernard Shaw wrote: “The only man who came out of the war with an enhanced reputation for common sense was Jesus Christ. Though we crucified Christ on a stick, he somehow managed to get hold of the right end of it ... And if we were better (people), we might try his plan.”

REFLECTIONS:

Just 116 years ago the world was a much different place. Very few, if any, of the individuals alive in 1904 are still alive today and if they are, they probably have forgotten about the life they once lived. Here are some facts which should cause us to pause and wonder from that year ... and try not to laugh or shake your head in disbelief:

- *The average life expectancy in the US was 47 years.
- *Only 14% of the homes in the US had a bathtub.
- *Only 8% of the homes had a telephone.
- *A three-minute call from Denver to New York City cost \$11.00
- *There were only 8,000 cars in the US, and only 144 miles of paved roads with the maximum speed limit in most cities 10 mph.
- *Tallest structure in the world: Eiffel Tower.
- *The average wage in the US was 22 cents an hour with the average US worker made between \$200 to \$400 per year.
- *Yearly salaries: An accountant \$2,000, a dentist \$2,500, a veterinarian \$1,500 to \$4,000, a mechanical engineer about \$5,000
- *More than 95 percent of all births in the US took place at home.
- *90% of all US physicians had no college education. They attended medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press and by the government as "substandard."
- *Sugar cost 4 cents a pound; eggs 14 cents a dozen and coffee 15 cents a pound.
- *Most women only washed their hair once a month.
- *The five leading causes of death in the US were: 1) Pneumonia and influenza; 2) Tuberculosis; 3) Diarrhea; 4) Heart disease; 5) Stroke
- *The American flag had 45 stars. Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii, and Alaska hadn't been admitted to the Union yet.

- *The population of Las Vegas, Nevada, was 30!
- *Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn't been invented.
- *There was no Mother's Day or Father's Day.
- *Two of 10 US adults couldn't read or write. Only 6% of all Americans had graduated high school.
- *Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at corner drugstores. According to one pharmacist, "Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach and bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health." (Shocking!)
- *Eighteen percent of households in the US had at least one full-time servant or domestic.
- *There were only about 230 reported murders in the entire US

Hmmm ... I wonder what the next years will bring. Hopefully something much better than what 2020 brought us. I will be around to see some of the changes, but not all of them.

The real question, the proverbial \$64,000 question is: How will I make a difference in the world or will I have come and passed without the world ever knowing that I was here? Kind of depends on which end of the "stick" Christ holds over us, doesn't it? Kind of depends whose plan, Christ's or ours, that we follow?

Christmas ... the Emmanuel event ... the God with us occurrence ... the world changing, life altering situation ... the revolutionary incident to beat all revolutionary incidents. Christmas ... a baby with dirty diapers and a cry for his mother's milk ... some smelly shepherds standing about wondering just what they are looking at ... the world was becoming a very different place ... an invitation would soon come from this baby to become world changers ... to make a difference ... to help turn the world upside down ... to touch lives and help re-shape the community in which we live. Christmas ... a Christ invitation to be changed and to enact change. O come, o come Emmanuel ... make us different ... make us a somebody for the Kingdom ... make us into a change agent for love ... make us anew ... O come, o come Emmanuel!

QUOTE:

"I've always wanted to be somebody, but I see now I should have been more specific."
- Lily Tomlin

PRAYER:

Well, Lord, here I am again and I'm wondering just what I can really accomplish at my age and in my physical condition. Help me to fully understand that all things are possible if I would but surrender myself to you and the power of the Holy Spirit. Help me to stop thinking about what others think! Help me to stop thinking that "little old me" can't really do a lot. "All to Jesus, I surrender, all to him I freely give..." Amen.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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