

In Your Elder Years, Are You Still Ready to Run for Jesus?

This past Saturday, I had the joy of attending the 50th anniversary reunion of my high school class of 1973.

On the one hand, it was sobering to see pictures of 50 of our fellow classmates who have passed away. On the other hand, it was great to hear about the careers and adventures and families of the grads that were there.

One was an accomplished surgeon; another an accountant; another a craftsman; another a lawyer; another a full-time grandparent. Quite a few were on the verge of retiring or had just retired.

But why not? They worked for many years in their field. They put in their time. They are ready for a well-deserved change of pace. Good for them.

At the same time, for most of us in vocational ministry, retirement is not something that we think about. That's because we burn with a calling to see Jesus glorified. We have been given a mission and commission that is far bigger than us. Our vision is multi-generational. Why would we think of retiring?

I realize, of course, that at some point, most of us will have to slow down or transition. And speaking for myself, although I am enjoying vibrant health, I can't boast about tomorrow. None of us can.

But retire? The thought has never occurred to me. And at the age of 68, I have one thought only: I want to burn brighter! I want to experience God more deeply! I want to see the Spirit poured out more powerfully! I want to see more of the Lord's promises fulfilled!

I genuinely feel like a horse in the gates, chafing to get out and run—to run hard and fast, long and strong, to go for it heart and soul, mind and strength, all in, nothing held back.

And the older I get (again, I feel young and full of energy and vision; I'm just talking about the biological clock ticking), the more passionate I feel about running my race even more effectively.

The hour is late. The needs are great. The laborers are few. The years of opportunity are less than they used to be. The time to act is now.

To be clear, I am not spiritually neurotic, as if always trying to work harder to win the Lord's approval.

I am not seeking to earn brownie points from God.

I am not toiling to earn His favor.

To the contrary, it is because I have His favor that I desire to burn more brightly for Him. It is because I have come to a place of spiritual rest that I long to run my race even better. It is because I experience His love so powerfully that I so yearn to see others experience that love as well.

And I recognize that doing more work doesn't mean bearing more fruit. More work doesn't always mean more results. More work doesn't always mean more glory to God.

Often less is better and, for me, I know that being *with* the Lord is even more important than working *for* the Lord. The latter flows wonderfully out of the former.

But the thought of retirement seems very odd to me. Retire to do what? Retire for what purpose? Retire to what end?

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Again, it makes perfect sense for others. They have completed their vocational requirements, sometimes doing difficult jobs for many years. They want to spend more time with their families. They want to pursue other interests. They want to get to their bucket list of unfulfilled dreams. Or, for some, they simply cannot keep the schedules they used to keep. All clear and all good.

But for others, like me (and perhaps like you?) the only question we have is how we can make the best use of the years we have ahead of us, be it 10 years or 20 or 30 or 50 or 80. (I added some of those higher numbers for the younger ones. I don't realistically expect to live to 148!)

For us, it's a question of redeeming the time, of living lives that make sense in the light of eternity.

Of course, I fully understand that there are retired people who live like this as well. They have retired from a job, but not from the service of the Lord. In fact, now that they don't have a 9 to 5 job, they can give more time to prayer and practical ministry. Wonderful!

But again, speaking for myself (and perhaps for you too?), what used to seem like the ceiling now feels like the floor.

What once felt like an obtainable vision now feels like the baseline assumption.

That's why it is so important for me to be a good steward over my body, doing my best to be in the best shape physically and mentally to fulfill God's holy mission for my life.

I truly feel as if I'm just getting started, as if everything I've seen the Lord do over the decades—it is now five decades since my first sermon—is preparation for the days at hand and the years ahead.

Put another way, whereas I once felt we had launched and were

in orbit (to use a figure of speech), I now feel that we have just finished building the rocket.

It's time to launch! It's time to soar! It's time for revival and moral and cultural revolution. It's time for harvest in the nations and for the salvation of Israel.

Will you come alongside and run with me? It's time for our God-given, Spirit-driven dreams to be fulfilled.

Let us seize the moment. It. Is. Time. {eoa}

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