

**“Excel in Eagerness: Anticipating God”**

**2 Corinthians 8:1-9**

**11/1/09**

**Anticipation of what God is going to do everyday. Excitement. Passion. Eager to do whatever God wants. God does not make us do anything, but calls us to be a part of His work. Do it because you want to. Give because you want to. Be generous from the generosity you have received.**

Back in September my family and I took our annual trip to the beach in Ocean City, MD. We have been blessed by friends of ours in PA who allow us to use their place on the beach. It’s been seven years now that we have gone, and never are we disappointed.

In fact, you might say that there is an anticipation that develops a couple months before we go—enough that builds that by the time we are at the week of departure our eagerness transforms into unbridled excitement.

The dining room becomes our central packing facility. Lists are made. Clothes are sorted through. Conversations center around what we will do and see—recalling last trip and all we experienced and felt.

We know that it takes 12 hours to get there, but without a doubt we are all more than willing to make that sacrifice.

Why?

We know the place: It feels like home to us since we have built a relationship with it at this point.

We can count on one thing always to be true: The ocean is always going to be there.

We know that good things are going to happen: We simply enjoy being together on the beach, and we always get good rest.

No, it’s not difficult to get excited and anticipate our journey when we know that something good is going to happen. Because to be honest, I don’t pray for the weather to be perfect or some of the other details you might think of. Oh, those certainly make their way into my thoughts. But my main prayer is always, “God, please just help us have a meaningful, fulfilling, restful time together as a family. The details I cannot control, so you got to trust God with all that. Eagerness.

Paul says the Corinthians:

**Excel in utmost eagerness.**

To use an old cliché: Not only did they talk the talk, but they walked the walk. You could substitute diligence for eagerness here. They excelled in speech, backed up with knowledge—they knew what they were talking about. And so importantly, they fulfilled all that with diligence in doing God’s work. They were driven, eager to be a part of what God was up to.

Why?

Because, as Paul points out earlier in verse 11 of chapter 7, they have repented and given their lives over to Christ, encountering His new life which has produced in them this eagerness to be a part of His work. They have been given much, and so much flows out of their lives as a result.

**Do you anticipate what God is going to do each and every day?**

Are you eager to do whatever God wants?

Are you passionate about all this?

A 2009 article in the *Chicago Tribune* told the story of Bettye Tucker, a Christian cook who works the night shift at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. She has been doing her job for 43 years—28 of them on the night shift. She sees a steady stream of parents in her job, many of them frightened and weary. On one particular night around the time the article was written, Miss Bettye (as she is referred to by all who know her) served food to a mother whose three-year-old fell out of a second story window that morning, another mother whose seventeen-year-old was battling a rare form of leukemia, and a third mother whose eighteen-year-old had endured seven hours of brain surgery. Their stories break the heart of Miss Bettye, and—as one coworker interviewed for the article says—“that's why she feeds every last one of them as if they had walked right into the 'too-small' kitchen of [the] South Side brick bungalow [where she lives].” A member of the hospital's housekeeping crew adds this about Miss Bettye: “You need someone to bring you life, and she brings it in the middle of the night.”

A picture of Miss Bettye that accompanied the article shows a woman with a beautiful smile. It's hard to imagine how much that smile would mean to a suffering parent or child. She says, “When I ask, 'How you doin' today?' and they say it's not a good day, I say, 'Don't lose hope.' When the nurses tell me it's a bad night, I say, 'I understand it's a bad night. But guess what? I am here for you. I'm going to get you through the night.’”

Another picture shows Bettye sitting down, head bowed, over a meal. “I'm a praying lady,” she says in the article. “I pray every night, for every room and every person in the hospital. I start with the basement, and I go up, floor by floor, room by room. I pray for the children, I pray for the families, I pray for the nurses and the doctors. . . . I say, every night while I'm driving in on the expressway, 'Oh, Lord, I don't know what I'll face tonight, but I pray you'll guide me through.’”

The reporter behind the article, Barbara Mahany, offers these words about Miss Bettye: “Just might be, that ‘divine helping on the side’ is the most essential item on Miss Bettye's menu. The one she stirs in every broth, and every whisper. The ingredient that makes her the perpetual light shining in the all-night kitchen.”

*Lee Eclov, Vernon Hills, Illinois; source: Barbara Mahany, "Cooking up compassion," Chicago Tribune (9-20-09), section 6*

### **What is your attitude every day?**

Colossians 3:17 says, “*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*”

Alright God. What's in store for today?

Believe me, this is not a “pie in the sky” sermon—just pray and be happy! No, of course we know that's not how life works.

But we know how God works, and in all things He is present and is always at work within us and around us. With God there is always hope. It's that perpetual light shining in the all-night kitchen.

What is your attitude? Are you eager to get into life with God? What about the church? Do you truly believe that God has great things in store for us?

What is your attitude about our Congregational Forum?

“Let's go and get this over with.” Or, “Let's see what God has in store for us.”

“What a pain to have to sit through a meeting.” Or, “What a privilege to do God's work.”

### **Are you anticipating God doing great things?**

Look around folks—He already is. We get to celebrate with four more persons being baptized today. Four more lives transformed in Christ.

You know, God does not make us do anything. God has made us and given us all we have in life and life eternal in Christ. God could not do anymore for us. But in it all He does not force us to be here.

We are because we want to be here. (Alright, maybe your parent or spouse kicked you out of bed this morning and said, “We’re going to church!”)

But we’re here because we want to be here. We want to be here because God is good and blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. You have responded this day. Something within you, whether named or not, came here because deep down you know that God is up to something. God is going to do something.

We know that because God already has in mighty ways. And He simply wants us to respond and say, “I want to be a part of that. I want to do what I can, give what I can give, share in this generous undertaking as we reach out into the world and turn things upside down.”

Do you believe it?

This is a great day for us to share in Holy Communion—to celebrate what God has done for us in Christ. Life. Healing. Transformation.

Because as Jesus ate with His disciples around the table for the last time, they had no idea what was coming. But Jesus took the bread and blessed it and broke it and said “This is my Body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

He took the cup and said, “This cup poured out for you in the new covenant given in my blood.”

Later the disciples would understand. They would see that from a situation that seemed hopeless, one that would drive them to scatter and hide and Peter to deny Jesus outright, from utter despair and death and darkness, God said “Hold on! I am not done.”

Life emerged from the tomb. And from that day on God made it clear through Jesus that every day and every moment of our existence we have absolute reason to hope and reason to be excited for what God is going to do.

How? I’m sure the disciples couldn’t answer that one as Jesus passed around the bread and cup. But Jesus did.

And now so do we. Because when you eat this bread and drink this cup this morning, you are saying to God I believe. I believe that Jesus is your Son and that you raised Him from the grave. I believe that I can be and am forgiven. I believe that right now a new day has dawned and I have nothing ever to fear.

I believe that we are the church—together in Christ as His Body, stronger than anything in this world, ready to move into the future You have for us God.

So in His Spirit, please join me.

Praise Band Song

Let’s pray...

Deacons.

“This bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ.”

“This cup which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.”