

Sunrise Foursquare Church – August 2016

“Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” -Psalm 103:1-2 “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” -1 Thessalonians 5:18

While tearing down an old termite-ridden wood storage cabinet that was attached to our garage, I was pulling out pieces of firewood, only to find a dusty, yet very intact footstool bearing a “tall” painting on its oval top. Skillfully done was a quaint country scene with a church, an apple tree, picket fence, duck, and the words decoratively painted at the bottom that read, “Count Your Blessings.” During this past July while our thirteen month-old grandson, Evan, joined our family, this antique footstool became his most favorite furniture item since it was low enough for him to sit upon easily.

Our friend and also a military chaplain, Joshua Okwori, happened to be in LA for a few days and dropped by suddenly to spend some short, but sweet and precious moments with us, and as our grandson was playing with the stool, the words on it caught Joshua’s attention and he read aloud, “Count your many blessings.” He looked up at us and declared, “Pastor Paul, that is exactly what you must do! Look at how God has blessed you and Pastor Spring.” We laughed together and I reminisced with him of how amazed were Spring’s family and friends in Okinawa on our recent trip when they first saw and met her, since they knew a lot of what she had gone through and the miracle of her being able to travel and be with them. Joshua impressed upon us how grateful we should be for her recovery. Was God was speaking to us about being thankful and counting our blessings?

The following day, Spring had a routine medical check-up at the USC hospital. After dropping her off and parking the car, I walked through the corridors of the main hospital and thoughts of Pastor Spring’s life-saving and life-giving surgeries came to me, accompanied by an overwhelming sense of gratefulness to God. Yes, the Lord was speaking! I am reminded of the hymnist’s words: “When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed [and] when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done” (Johnson Oatman, Jr., 1897).

Sometimes, life must take us to point of being “tempest tossed” and feeling that “all is lost” before we can begin to count our blessings and name them one by one. It is when we no longer have, that we can appreciate what we got. We enjoy many earthly blessings of life such as youthful health and acquirements of diligent work, but now maybe have found that things have changed and been down-sized. It is good to remember that whatever man does will past, but whatever God does will last as well as whatever we do for him. There is an inexhaustible source of refreshment for our spirit when we drink from the bottomless wellsprings of God, drawing from what he has done and seeking for what only he can do in our lives. You are precious to him! Draw near to him and he will draw near to you! ~Pastor Paul Iwata

2017 Springwater Calendars are now available, containing Pastor Spring’s artwork with scripture verses in English and Japanese. \$10 donation and \$3 postage and handling for each.

20th Anniversary Service of Sunrise Church on Sunday, September 25, 2016, 10:30 a.m. at 5853 Laurel Canyon Blvd., Valley Village, CA 91607. RSVP by September 15 to join us for the lunch following.

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