

Bucket Lists and Dreams –

Ephesians 3:20 (NLT) – “Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”

The mission of Rome First is to Love God, Love People and Serve the World and we envision living out and living into that mission Serving Rome by Loving and Welcoming all as partners in transformation...

What does this mean??? Think about all the ways you already are living out and living into this vision for the future of Rome First. You the members of the Christian Community at Rome First are engaged and involved in a myriad of ways of SERVING ROME... Did you know that each week you give over 1,500 hours to local ministries that are a part of the missionary outreach of Rome First? (An average of 70 people give 20 hours of volunteer service every week x 52 weeks a year - that is 78,000 volunteer hours a year outside the church building.) From the first week of every month at the Community Kitchen to the daily volunteers at the Faith and Deeds Clinic, and countless hours at Hospitality House, Good Neighbor, The Family Resource Center, The Davies Shelter, Mercy Care, and over 25 mission servant opportunities in Rome and Floyd County, Rome First has left the building!

Just think of all the ways you Serve Rome. There is not a non-profit board or mission service agency that doesn't have a member of Rome First serving in some capacity. There are 28 non-profits and service agencies in Rome and all of them except one has a representative from Rome First serving in some capacity. If you add up the time, talents and resources that are given in support of Serving Rome, it is truly amazing!

Giving of oneself is a selfless act. It seems that the mainstream media hypes the mantra of go ahead, get ahead by any means possible. Giving of oneself is rarely seen or lauded today. I submit to you it is not a forgotten ideal from a time gone by, but alive and well in the fabric of the world. Take for example Abbey D'Agostino. Abbey made global headlines at the Olympics in Rio when she fell over New Zealand runner Nikki Hamblin, then helped her finish their 5,000-meter race. It turns out her fall cost her a chance to run in the final race or any race in the near future. She tore a ligament and the meniscus in her right knee and strained another ligament as well.

How did she have the fortitude to get up and help Hamblin get up so they could finish the race together? She told USA Track & Field, "Although my actions were instinctual at that moment, the only way I can and have rationalized it is that God prepared my heart to respond that way. This whole time in Rio at the Olympics - God made clear to me that my experience in Rio was going to be about more than my race performance—and as soon as Nikki got up I knew that was it."

Her testimony is all the more remarkable since she shared it on a secular media platform. She is a terrific example of what James Davison Hunter calls "manifesting faithful presence." Be salt and light where you are, as you are, and the Holy Spirit will use your influence for Kingdom good.

An overlooked teaching of Scripture is that God's people will reign with him in eternity. Jesus promised, "The one who conquers, I will grant him/her to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne" (Revelation 3:21; see 5:10; 20:6). In his classic work, Biblical Basis of Missions, Avery Willis comments: "If we are to reign with Christ in the coming kingdom, we must serve during its rise to power." Then he suggests: "Make a list of the things that you feel you should be doing during the remaining time God has allotted you on earth."

Sounds like the highest and best use of the bucket list concept doesn't it? A "bucket list" as defined by Meriam Webster: a list of things that one has not done before but wants to do before dying. The origin and etymology of bucket list -from the phrase "kick the bucket" (to die). [First Known Use: 2006]

What would be on your "bucket list?" What is it that fills your bucket and how will you choose to use it to make an eternal difference in the world? Missional involvement isn't just going on a journey across the globe – It is also serving right where you are with what you have and using all that has been entrusted to you by God to Glorify Him and serve with joyful hearts!

There are a couple of big audacious dreams on my bucket list... One of the bucket list dreams is to live in a world where every child has a loving home. Along with a loving home every child would have the opportunity to live "into" their full potential, by having a solid foundation of confidence, knowledge and well developed skills that would enable them to fully realize their God given gifts and use them to Glorify God. WOW – that sounds TOO

BIG and certainly unattainable for a group of folks in the northwest corner of Georgia, right???

What if I told you that Rome wasn't built in a day (Neither the one in Italy or the one in Georgia) and that if we pray, purpose and persevere together, we can do all things through Christ.

So where do we begin, By PRAYING...

In Acts 1:14 (CEB)- "all were united in their devotion to prayer, along with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers." In Prayer we are to align ourselves with God's purpose leaving our desires behind and when it's all about God and God's divine will, we can have confidence that our prayers will be answered. If we remember, prayer is about the Glory of God and the advancement of the Kingdom of God right here in our midst.

To PURPOSE means to act intentionally - John W. Gardner, founding chairman of Common Cause, said it's a rare and high privilege to help people understand the difference they can make – not only in their own lives, but also in the lives of others, simply by giving of themselves.

Gardner tells of a cheerful old man who asked the same question of just about every new acquaintance with all whom he fell into conversation: "What have you done that you believe in and you are proud of?"

He never asked conventional questions such as "What do you do for a living?" It was always, "What have you done that you believe in and are proud of?"

It was an unsettling question for people who had built their self-esteem on their wealth or their family name or their exalted job title.

Not that the old man was a fierce interrogator; He was delighted by a woman who answered, "I'm doing a good job raising three children;" and by a cabinetmaker who said, "I believe in good workmanship and practice it;" and by a woman who said, "I started a bookstore and it's the best bookstore for miles around."

"I don't really care how they answer," said the old man. "I just want to put the thought into their minds.

"They should live their lives in such a way that they can have a good answer. Not a good answer for me, but for themselves. That's what's important."

On Purpose to make a difference – and finally to PERSEVERE –

Young William Wilberforce was discouraged one night in the early 1790s after another defeat in his 10 year battle against the slave trade in England. Tired and frustrated, he opened his Bible and began to leaf through it. A small piece of paper fell out and fluttered to the floor. It was a letter written by John Wesley shortly before his death. Wilberforce read it again: "Unless the divine power has raised you up... I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that (abominable practice of slavery), which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, be not weary of well-doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might."

John Wesley's words to William Wilberforce are words for those who will seek to take up a cause and keep on keeping on even in the face of adversity.

Will you join me in PRAYING, PURPOSING AND PERSEVERING?

Through the month of September I invite you to join me in a month long "season of Prayer", Praying together for God's will to be known, God's Will to be Done, and God's Power to be Seen by the transformation of Rome, the State, the Nation and the World.

I believe this is all possible because Jesus is who Jesus said he was, and more importantly that Jesus points us to God who is able to do far more abundantly than we can hope dream or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20)

I'll see you in worship and in small groups as we join our hearts, minds, souls and strength in Loving God, Loving People and Serving the World!

Shalom,
Robert ><>