

GLCC 21st Anniversary Message by Pastor Robbie A. Casas

Once again we find ourselves at the threshold of a new year in the life of our church. Twenty-one years is no mean feat. Early in my ministry, I was told that for a church, the first seven years was the first major milestone — if a church managed to reach seven years in its existence, chances are it would continue to exist much longer than that. If that were true, then we have crossed the 7-year line three times over.

Of course, church history can prove that many churches that had existed longer than that are no longer around. The bottom-line in all this is not that this is a sort of survival race where we find ourselves congratulating each other for having made it this far by our own ingenuity and effort, conquering every challenge and overthrowing every obstacle by the sweat of our brows and the strength of our resolve. Yes, it is true that to make it this far requires the effort and commitment of our obedience to God. But let us not forget that "... *it is God [ultimately] who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure*" (Phil 2:13).

In that case, ***anniversaries are not occasions for us to pat ourselves on the back but rather a time for us as one church to thank and praise our God for His loving faithfulness and gracious goodness toward us.*** Just recall all the major challenges that He had so mercifully enabled us to hurdle this past year.

Part of our response of thanksgiving and praise is the desire to make fresh, to renew our commitment of devotion and faithfulness to God. We can do nothing less than this for all that He had done these past 21 years. One major area of recommitment is in the area of being faithful to His Word — faithful to revere it, to study it, to meditate on it, to proclaim it and to obey it.

This is why our theme for our 21st anniversary as we enter into our 22nd year is ***"To Be Steadfastly Anchored in the Word"***. The reason for this is two-fold.

First is our great tendency to take God's word for granted.

In our church where we get an abundance of spiritual feeding from God's word — where there is, truthfully, no famine for God's Word — through the Sunday pulpit, the fellowship ministries gatherings, the different Bible studies and cells, the IBI course, the conferences and trainings we conduct and/or promote — how great is the danger for us to get "so used to the Word" that we no longer hunger for it or get excited for it or be profoundly moved by it.

Like, when was the last time we ***really*** thanked the Lord lavishly, profusely for the spiritual feeding that the Lord gives us in this church? Honestly? How much do we prepare ourselves to receive the Word gladly and with a keen desire to ***really*** hear from God so as to know Him more and to submit to and obey what He commands before coming to Sunday service (or attending a fellowship ministry gathering or a cell/bible study)? If we do not do this, let us not wonder if many among us leave this place every Sunday unmoved and untouched and therefore unchanged by what we hear from God's Word.

How terribly great is our need to resolve to renew our commitment to be steadfastly anchored in the Word — to anchor our relationships, our jobs and businesses, our ambitions and aspirations, our plans and decisions, our perspectives and attitudes in the Word of God! Honestly, many of us Christians too easily throw out the window what we know from Scripture when we are suddenly thrust into a situation that intimidates or offends us or shakes or threatens our comfort zones. This is the reason why there are some among us here who have problems that are cyclical in nature — "paulit-ulit lang".

Second is the seriousness of the unpredictability and instability of our present situation in many areas — in the larger scheme of things: in national and in international politics (which can impact certain freedoms we enjoy now), in the local and the global economies; and in the more personal day-to-day circumstances: the temporary and shallow security of wealth and the unreliability of good health that is here today and gone tomorrow, just to name a few.

In view of these reasons, I believe that the Lord is calling us to renew our resolve ***"To Be Steadfastly Anchored in the Word"***.

Our anniversary verse to help us fulfill this theme is **Col 3:16**: ***"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you."***

After laying doctrinal foundations in the first two chapters of Colossians, Paul now applies these truths as part of the manifestation of having put on the new self. Now part of having put on the new self is the letting of Christ's word richly dwell within these believers that would result in their ministering to one another and to God (3:16).

This is a call for Scripture to live richly in the believer. ***It should saturate every aspect of the believer's life and control every motive, every thought, every word, and every deed.*** By study, meditation, memorization and application of the Word, it becomes a permanent, abiding part of a believer's life. ***And when the words of Christ become part of our nature, we begin to think it, speak it, and live it.***

The centrality of the God's Word in the believer's life is crucial. ***It would guide our thinking, direct our perspectives and rule our emotions.*** How critically we need this in both the uncertainty

and perilousness of our times! How desperately we need to be deliberately truth-founded not only because of the times that we face but also because of our tendency to fumble the ball of our faith when even the slight breeze of adversity blows upon us!

Dear beloved brethren of Guiding Light Christian Church, I cannot overemphasize the greatness of the need for us heed the exhortation for us to "*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within [us].*" Yes, this is because of our great tendency to take God's word for granted and because of the seriousness of the unpredictability and instability of our present situation in many areas, as I had mentioned earlier. But there is one other important reason that I would like to add even as I conclude this message.

All the more now the world around us needs to witness those who are followers of Christ living out the truths of Christ as found in His Word. As the darkness in our world continues to deepen, we must all the more desire to let the light of God's truth shine, first through our lives in whatever place in life God has providentially chosen to put us, and then through our message through whatever opportunity He sovereignly sets before us.

Even within the church of Jesus Christ there is a crying need for those who are followers of our Lord who would make a difference within the church through lives that banner His truths, most especially the life-changing truth of the gospel. For this to happen, "*the word of Christ*" must first "*richly dwell within [us].*"

I pray that this would be our deliberate and fervent pursuit as Guiding Light Christian Church throughout this 22nd year of our existence. And may the truth that it bears carry us through whatever it is that may face us corporately as a church and individually as children of God.