

“Thirty Years Serving God Together”

1 Timothy 1:12; Philippians 1:3-5

Sunday Morning, January 19, 2020

Introduction: Thirty years as the pastor of the same church is something few pastors and churches experience. As unusual as it is, in the Houston area there have been several long-term pastors.

1. John Morgan was the pastor of Sagemont Church for 53 years.
2. Ed Young has been the pastor of Second Baptist in Houston for 41 years.
3. Ron Lyles has been the pastor of South Main Church for 38 years.
4. L.D. Morgan was the pastor of this church for 33 years.
5. John Bisagno was the pastor of First Baptist Church in Houston for 30 years.
6. My 30 years makes me the “New kid on the block” in the long-term pastor’s group.

What it is like to be a pastor? One pastor described it this way. He said that being a pastor is like trying to nail jello to a tree—it keeps falling to the ground! You get one thing fixed and something else needs to be fixed. You get one group happy and another group is unhappy.

What do I say to First Baptist Church on my 30th Anniversary? I have much that I want to say, but I can reduce it down to two words. The two words are **thank you**.

1. I want to say thank you to God this morning.

First, I want to thank God for calling me into the ministry.

- In his letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul said exactly what I feel.

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Timothy 1:12).

Illustration: Jesus called ordinary men to be His disciples. He chose fishermen not theologians.

Illustration: In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul said that God called the weak and lowly so that no one could boast in what God did (1 Cor. 1:26-28).

Application: I thank God for calling and trusting me to be a minister.

Second, I want to thank God for leading me to be the pastor of First Baptist Church, Pasadena, Texas.

Application: God called me into the ministry. God lead me to First Baptist Church, Pasadena, Texas.

2. I want to say thank you to the church this morning.

- I feel toward this church what Paul felt toward the church at Philippi (Phil. 1:3-5).
- After Seminary, I have only been the pastor of three churches.

- Before going to seminary, I was the pastor of a church in Georgia for almost 3 years while I finished my University work.
- Each was a good church and a good church to be the pastor.
- That said, I need to thank this church for some things.
 1. The people who are positive about the church.
 2. The people's support of the church.
 3. The people's encouragement to the pastor and staff of the church.
 4. The church provides well for the staff
 5. The trust in leadership of the pastor's vision.
 6. Not one time in thirty years have I ever shared with the church a vision that I felt that God had given me that the church did not support it.
 7. Not one time in thirty years have I ever needed anything that the church has not provided.

3. I want to say thank you to the staff and employees this morning.

4. I want to say thank you to Dottie and my family this morning.

- When Dottie and I married, I was in the business world.
- When God called me to the ministry three years later, Dottie supported and encouraged me.
- She insisted that I go back to the University and complete my degree and then go to Seminary.
- I told her that I just wanted to be a preacher and did not care about the University and Seminary.
- She said, "If you do not get an education nobody will come to hear you preach."
- Dottie has encouraged me all these years as a minister.

Illustration: When I moved to Pasadena in January 1990, Dottie and Joel remained in Sulphur Springs until Joel graduated from Sulphur Springs High School in June. Jon and I drove a rental truck to Pasadena with some furniture for the townhouse the church had rented for me. When I walked in my office at church, there was sitting on a table in my office an artificial flower arrangement with a note on it from Dottie. The words on the note read---"it is right—love you Dottie."

Illustration: Dottie is a living sermon to our family and to the church. All my family loves this church and has helped me time and again through these years.

Conclusion: Wednesday at lunch time I walked into the staff break room to speak to the Ministry Assistants who were having lunch. I told them that I was going home for the afternoon to do something I had never done. They looked somewhat startled wondering what it was that I had never done. I said to them, "I am going home to prepare a sermon for my 30th Anniversary." Hopefully, you will remember my anniversary sermon. It is all built around two words—THANK YOU.

Prayer:

Thank You God for putting me in the ministry.

Thank You God for blessing me to be the pastor of First Baptist Church, Pasadena, Texas.

Thank You God for the people in this church who have been “partners in the ministry” these thirty years.

Thank You God for the staff of the church who have helped me in so many ways.

Thank You God for Dottie and my family.

Thank You God for these thirty years, in Jesus Name, Amen.