THOUGHTS OF MARCH, 2011

1. This is something to rejoice over. Our mayor has become/is becoming the spiritual leader of a certain part of the fabric of our city and area. And, he has lots of spiritual, capable, proven, wise, etc. support from many others in and around the city who are at the top in their fields. It is absolutely amazing. Yet, that is exactly what the Lord said almost 3 years ago – that He was going to pour out His Spirit on the business arena. We are in the beginning of a profound work of God. Our culture will be changed as the church becomes less like the world and more like Christ’s kingdom.

2. There is God, and there is Jesus. When I try to be God, nothing goes well.

3. Vegetarian – one who eats only vegetables. There are some variations from vegetarian to vegetarian, such as eggs and dairy products.

Vegan -- one who eats only vegetables, and who makes a moral judgment of people who eat meat, eggs, and dairy products.

 4. Cowboys knew their stuff, and were quick to pass their wisdom and experience on to others. In the 1880s, Oscar Thompson, a West Texas trail boss and rancher gave the following advice to his son who was soon to head his first cattle drive. 1) When you camp at night, always point your wagon tongue toward the North Star. 2) Never say “no” to your employer. 3) Don’t ever misrepresent anything to your employer; tell it just like it happened. 4) Be ready at all times. 5) Put your best men on point. 6) Water your cattle and fill them up before night. 7) Don’t fight your men unless they jump you. But if they or anyone else jumps you, give them the best you have. 8) Don’t get rattled. No matter what happens, keep your head clear. 9) Don’t say, “You boys do this,” but, “Come on boys, follow me.”

It’s good to see or read of those who had a good head for their situation.

5. Guys, never tell your wife that she looks “fine” when she asks how she looks. There is something terribly wrong with that perfectly good word in that situation.

6. There are scriptures that have been so adapted to local [personal, denominational, etc.] usage that the basic truth or essence of those scriptures have been lost to those who misuse them. Those verses have become so cherished for that which those saints get out of their particular perspective [sometimes accurate, but always partial] that the power in the truth of those verses is lost in favor of favorite understandings, proof texting and preaching topics.

 Example: In the Revelation 3:20 the Lord is shown to be standing at the door knocking, wanting to be heard, to be invited in, and to dine. It is common to hear that verse used to persuade the unbeliever to open his heart and mind to the Lord for Him to come in as the act of initial salvation. However, that verse is instead a word to the saints in the church [the “already saved”] to respond to His entreaties to allow Him to correct basic errors so that they may have a certain quality of fellowship with Him here on the earth, both now and in His millennial reign.

 Be sure that the Lord has sent and anointed you for correction of anyone whom you see in this error. As always, don’t tear down unless you are ready and able to rebuild. In the example above, the tearing down is more broad than it first appears, but the rebuilding is very rewarding.

7. There is a wonderful encouragement to be found in the process of King Nebuchadnezzar’s gradual revelation of the Lord. It didn’t happen quickly. He was granted a revelation, then time to live by it. Daniel and other faithful of God’s children were the Lord’s instruments. Look at the king’s improving revelation of the All-Mighty after 1) the king’s dream of a statue in Daniel 2:47, 2) the king’s golden image in 4:3, and 3) the king’s vision and it’s fulfillment in 4:34-37. We, too, get spiritual and revelational growth spurts. The Lord knows how to raise up His kids.

7. The recent earthquake in Japan left the planet with some permanent (?) changes. Parts of Japan moved eastward 13 feet, and the quake shifted the earth’s figure axis 6.5 inches. That’s some shaking! The only stability available is upward.

8. It is common that people want others to hear the Lord for them and to tell them what to do. In Exodus 20:18-19, God’s people did not want to hear God for themselves. They wanted a/their leader to hear Him for them. Then, in 1 Samuel 8:4-22 God’s people wanted a leader/king, not a God-appointed judge, to rule over them. In both of those examples, following seemed better than self-responsibility. Has it been your experience that much of the church wants the same, and then wants to be free to be their own judge above the leader?

9. Around the world, especially in the more developed countries, germs are becoming more resistant to antibiotics. In the U. S., a number of governmental actions have drastically reduced the discovery and production and marketing of new drugs which could keep us ahead of resistant organisms. One type of organisms, resistant staphylococcal infections are increasing, now causing about 18,000 deaths a year. That resistant germ now accounts for 60% of skin infections seen in U. S. emergency departments. Resistance to available antibiotics has become a major health problem. We could do with less governmental control over pharmaceutical production, etc.

10. Homeschooling is a big thing here in America, and is growing. Twenty percent of our private school population is now being homeschooled, which interprets to 2,000,000 children. That’s 4% of the school-age population, or 1 in 25. Some states are trying to stop what has rapidly become a mainstream education alternative.

 Homeschoolers score an average of 37 percentile points above the national average on standardized achievement tests, something that college admission personnel have not failed to notice. Colleges and universities are attending homeschooling conventions to recruit students.

 However, here in America there is and has always been opposition to homeschooling – but not as much as in some European nations, mainly Germany and Sweden. Early opposition accused the movement of being unable to provide an adequate education. That was disproven. The second criticism was that homeschooling left the students socially inept. That, too, was proven wrong. The latest criticism is that Christian homeschooling parents transmit values to their children that are dangerous to the well-being of both these very children and society as a whole. Specifically, that homosexuality is a sin, that men should be the leaders of their families, that Jesus is the only way to God, and that all other religions are false. All of that really challenges social progressives and social transformers, some of whom are now calling for a ban on religious education in both private and homeschooling contexts. Stand, pray and act.

11. Remember the Black Swan? It is a book that presents the metaphor for Significant Unexpected Events in history. The event has three attributes: 1) It lies outside the realm of regular expectations, because nothing in the past can convincingly point to its possibility. 2) It carries an extreme impact. 3) In spite of its outlier status, human nature makes us concoct expectations for its occurrence after the fact, making it predictable and explainable.

 The Black Swan principle makes logical the illogical. It is capable of convicting the innocent. You know the answer, don’t you? It’s the Lord’s offer to fix our spiritual ears so that we may hear and see that which He designs, works, and knows of the future, despite its total unreasonableness and near-impossibility to the best of our natural senses.

 We can apply the principle to the happenings in Japan – the earthquake and the tsunami, the worst disasters to hit Japan since the atomic bomb devastations at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Years ago, engineers had joined together to create quake-proof buildings, planned back-up generators, and thick containment vessels at nuclear plants. Humankind had triumphed over risk! Then, that which happened was not within the scope of regular expectations, carried an extreme impact, and reflection is telling them/us that it was predictable and explainable. The world is looking for the “ignorant engineers” who designed those nuclear plants.

 But, who could have foreseen the reasonable possibility of a 9.0 earthquake? Who would have expected that their large seawall, built to prevent inland damage by a tsunami, would have to face a tsunami that rolled six miles inland, devastating towns, obliterated villages, and causing partial meltdowns of three major nuclear reactors? No one, except those now succumbing to the Black Swan principle. The disaster was not a failure of human engineering, but of human imagination.

 Black Swans happen. We are not masters of the universe. We are not smart enough to discern and prepare for all of the world’s possible disasters. Human mastery is a myth.

 To many of us, Hurricane Katrina could never do what it did to New Orleans. Walls and pumps could surely handle any water problem. We were similarly mistaken.

 The Wall Street financial collapse of 2008 and 2009 couldn’t happen. We had rules and laws and brilliant people in place to prevent such a problem.

 The real estate market collapse could not happen because “those in the know” assured investors that there was absolutely no risk involved. They were also wrong. The same can be said about the British Petroleum disaster in 2009 in the Gulf of Mexico.

 But, looking around and ahead for more Black Swans, it is noteworthy that Israel’s earthquake preparedness allows for a 7.5 quake that will kill 16,000 people, seriously injure 6,000, lightly injure 83,000, and leave 377,000 homeless. Israel’s minister in charge for preparedness, a geologist, says it is impossible and illogical to prepare for the worst-case scenario [like the 9.0 earthquake that hit Japan]. He says that if the public were to be prepared for such there would be widespread fear. He reinforces his very reasonable position by saying that if people were to prepare for a worse-case scenario before entering their cars they would either stay at home or only drive in an armored vehicle.

 The unexpected overwhelms us when our egotism and fears do not allow for considering otherwise than the reasonably expected. Pride often comes before a fall. Faith in our selves, in our own beliefs, is without substance. That kind of faith puts our trust in the works of our own hands where good results can be confused with Divine protection. Temporary success of our limited knowledge indicates to us that we possess infinite wisdom. That’s what the devil offers us – that nothing is impossible for the human spirit -- but that sort of thinking has not even worked for him.

 There we have another reason to walk humbly together with the Lord.

12. Mothers, don’t let your daughters dress for thrill. Don’t let them dress for sex [even under a different label]. It will be regretted, belatedly. You will have to understand this first, then be convicted of its truth, then interpret it to your daughter, and enforce it in most cases. The world wants to steal your child. It is already molesting her mind. If you don’t think so, try a bit at reestablishing modesty in her dress and make-up.

13. Don’t circle your wagons. Keep going.

14. Mark Twain: “If you don’t read the newspapers, you are uninformed. If you do read the newspapers, you are misinformed.” Apply that with discernment and live circumspectly.

15. If you travel in certain circles, such as universities, and you are simply verbal about your Christian beliefs, such as Jesus is the Truth, the only Way, etc., you will often be asked a question like “Why does truth matter?” Believe it or not, that is a common and seemingly reasonable question these days and among certain groups. Consider this answer: “Do you want the truth or a lie?” if you are talking to a real thinker, that will be something substantial for him to think about.

16. Have you heard something like this within the church: “The church does not need to impact the world; it now has its own culture.”? With that mindset, the church can prosper by feeding on itself. It can easily produce its own CDs and DVDs, and make millions selling them to Christians. It no longer needs to face the world. It no longer needs to be part of the world. It may sound good to some, but not to me.

17. This year, Pentecost occurs on June 8th. That means at 6:00 PM in Jerusalem. There is reason to wonder if the rapture will occur on a Pentecost. If it does, several things would have to happen first. Among them would be Egypt and Syria [and thus Lebanon] attacking Israel. Israel would have to strike fast and hard, such as destroying the Aswan Dam and Damascus with nuclear weapons. Remember that Damascus has never fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy in chapter 17. Russia, Iran, et. al. will have to be in on the action, and Russia is already a strong force in the area. Russia could come into the fray before Israel nuked those two sites, or afterwards as a mandate from the U. N. I’m watching there and upward.

18. When we speak of having or not having the heart for something, we are speaking of motivation. We are truly motivated or partly motivated or not motivated. If we are moderately motivated we are half-hearted. Enthusiasm is whole-hearted. Jesus said that we are motivated according to the value to us of the item/project/person/etc. – Matt. 6:21.

19. Orthodox rabbis in Israel are gearing up for the end times [as are “believing” Muslims]. The turmoil in that area is leading them to focus more on end time prophecy. That which they are saying on the subject sounds like Evangelicals and other prophecy watchers. When religious Jews, and Bible-believing Christians begin to say that prophesied events are about to be fulfilled, pay attention.

20. Why did the eleven not complain about Judas’ theft of their funds? Possible answer: He was part of the team. That means a lot of forgiveness, trust beyond that warranted, hoping for better in the future, etc. Those who have been a team member can relate to that, whether such was a factor with the 11 or not.

21. In his classic treatise, The Art Of War, Sun Tzu, a Chinese general in the 5th or 6th century B. C. in the Kingdom of Wu in eastern China wrote: “Thus we may know that there are five essentials for victory: 1) He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight. 2) He will win who knows how to handle both superior and inferior forces. 3) He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all its ranks. 4) He will win who, prepared himself, waits to take the enemy unprepared. 5) He will win who has military capacity and is not interfered with by the sovereign.

 As said before, I appreciate good thinking, straight talking and right acting.

22. Overheard: “It is an absolute tragedy that youth is wasted on the young.” I want to shout to everyone that life only gets better. It’s good if you are surrounded in one’s long and latter years with those who love you and you have all needs met, but that has little [or “nothing” but, I confess, I am not quite there yet] to do with life only getting better. Life, meaning LIFE, is good – under all circumstances. We will see how the Lord calls my hand on that.

Blessings and peace in the hearts of all who labor to lay it all down for the Lord.