

March

Sat 22 *O Lord, you have freed me from my bonds and I will serve you forever.* —PSALM 116:16 (TLB)

When I volunteered to be an usher at the Largo Cultural Center, our local venue for concerts, plays, and musicals, I was excited that I'd get to see professional entertainment for free.

I arrived at my first gig, quickly found out where the ushers get to sit for the performance, and was happy I'd be able to see it without any problem.

When the show began, I noticed an old woman with her walker, sitting in front of me. Midway through the lively concert, the woman turned and whispered, "Do you know where the restroom is?"

I thought about the two big double-doors leading out of the theater, the wide lobby, and the two doors into the ladies room and knew she couldn't navigate all that herself. "Would you like me to take you?" I asked, feeling a little miffed that I'd miss some of the show.

"Oh yes, thank you."

Inside the restroom, I made lively conversation, handed her dry paper towels, and opened the doors as she scooted out. "How long have you been ushering?" she asked.

"Tonight is my very first night."

"Well, I guess I picked the right usher to ask where the bathroom is," she said, giggling.

Suddenly, my angst about missing some of the concert evaporated. At that moment, I learned that my job wasn't to find the best seat in the usher section, but to make sure that all of the patrons were comfortable, seated, and I could be counted on should anyone need anything.

*Father, thank You for giving me the opportunity to be a servant to others,
for it truly does come back to me a hundredfold.*

—PATRICIA LORENZ

Digging Deeper: MT 20:16; MK 9:33-35

Sun 23

... Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.

—PHILIPPIANS 3:13 (NKJV)

Chuck Lawrence is the minister at Christ Temple Church in Huntington, West Virginia. He's also an accomplished musician and songwriter. In the 1980s, he wrote "He Grew the Tree," which won a variety of accolades, including several Dove Awards. Barbara Mandrell recorded the sacred song about Calvary, which spoke of God nurturing the very tree that would become the old rugged cross.

But today in his sermon Chuck had a different take on his accomplishment. He referred to Philippians 3:13, which says we are to forget those things that are behind us. "I believe that means even the good things. In 1982 I wrote 'He Grew the Tree,' but it's not supposed to be my pinnacle. God wants us to look forward with anticipation to each new day."

Chuck's words gave me pause. The 1980s were banner years for me too. I wrote for ten home-decorating magazines, where my byline was featured. Now, given the many changes in the publishing industry, I'm hard-pressed to find even one of my own articles. Chuck was urging me to look forward—not to yesterday, but to now, glorious today.

Today's a brand-new era, Lord. Help me to really look forward to it. Amen.

—ROBERTA MESSNER

Digging Deeper: JER 29:11; PHIL 3