



REFLECTIONS

October 15, 2023

**Remember the people you purchased of old,
the tribe of your inheritance, whom you
redeemed—
Mount Zion, where you dwelt.
Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins,**
Psalms 74:2-3a

Old Country Churches

There are many of them, their shells sprinkled about the countryside. Once filled with life, singing, teaching, preaching, and caring for all those in need of their love, now struggle for breath. Today they stand, mostly dark, to house a diminishing remnant of elderly church veterans who still breathe a bit of life into their decaying walls. One of those old churches clings to life in the small country town of my birth. I once watched it grow, but now I see it face its lesser days.

It saddens me to see the place in decline where once an energized congregation gave birth to a building dedicated to the glory of God. The roots of my own faith were nurtured there. Mom and Dad were leaders there, and many of my friends received their faith with me there. Now, isn't that the purpose the church is supposed to serve?

Looking today past its aging state, the old country church building has lived a productive life. Through wrinkles and all, its beauty smiles through worn carpet, shrinking finances, and graying congregation, at the memories of days gone by. Vibrant days when heavenly light filtered through its stained-glass, music flowed from the organist's nimble fingers, and the love of God echoed from the hearts of every member of its devoted choir, my old country church served God in ways it never dreamed.

Perhaps unknowingly, that old church, together with those who gave it life, took Jesus' commission seriously. Uncounted numbers who grew up there and received spiritual training there became God's hands and feet and ears and voices to carry into the world the message that Jesus Christ is Lord. Lessons from within the walls of that old church, and beyond them, prepared each of us to travel our own unique roads through this world to spread the message in our own gifted ways.

So there it is, my old hometown church, standing among many other old country churches, weathered and worn, still sending their message to the aging few who occupy their pews and to their students, scattered now, who have passed through their doorways, saying:

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4)

"You are the light of the world."

Richard +

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