



REFLECTIONS

January 28, 2024

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,

Jeremiah 29:11

On the List

For weeks we debated the subject up to the deadline. For almost twenty years, the Men's Retreat at Laity Lodge was my highlight that marked the beginning of a new year; but this year I felt a need to further transition into the new phase of life Janice and I had entered. Besides, I didn't know anything about the speaker or the topic he would teach, and I was so familiar with the program format that I felt like I could easily pass on this year's event. But Janice, my beloved wife and life companion, wouldn't hear of it.

"Richard. Don't think about what you take from the retreat," she said. "Think about what you might bring to it."

Her point brought me great pause. "I had not thought of it that way," I confessed.

The fresh point of view poured all kinds of thoughts through my mind. How selfish of me to think only of my personal agenda without thinking about what God's plans might be. I wondered if I contributed to the retreat or an attendee's life there, would it fill me with sinful pride? Or am I *already* prideful from such a thought? Then I noted that even those thoughts focus on *me*, not on God or what His plans might be. After all, He has plans for me too.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord. Those plans may include simple roles like just being there. We know little about several of Jesus' disciples, but their names are on the list. And what about Mizraim? Whoever gave him a second thought? But look at Genesis 10:13. He's on the list.

And what about Jesus? Did He come into the world seeking something for his own benefit? That's not what He told us. *"For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* (Luke 5:32) And there was at least one assignment Jesus didn't want to do: *"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me."* But here's the kicker: *"Yet not what I will, but what you will."* (Mark 14:36)

So, I attended the retreat. And I did find some meaningful takeaways from being there. But only God knows if I brought anything to it. But maybe the most important thing was this:
I was on the list.

"You are the light of the world."

Richard +

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