



I know some of you may have been thinking that I've been writing these devotions for a little over six months and not once - at least to my recollection - have I mentioned my favorite musical artist. Well, put your minds at ease. That ends today, because Bruce Springsteen's new album, *Letter to You*, drops later this month. In many ways it's a nostalgic look back on the rocker's career. Having just turned 71 (gulp), I suppose that's what one does. The E Street Band is still intact with notable exceptions Danny Federici and Clarence Clemons, both lost to death in their prime. In a tribute to the band's history, *Ghosts* provides a heartfelt recap of a long journey among friends and bandmates who have seen their share of sorrow as well as joy.

*It's just your ghost
Moving through the night
Your spirit filled with light
I need, need you by my side
Your love and I'm alive*

I don't have any scientific evidence to prove this, but my guess is that the older one gets, the more likely one is to spend time reminiscing about the past. I think it happens when one realizes there's more time behind than ahead. Maybe there's some wishful thinking about "the good old days," mythologized over time into some near utopian existence. Certainly there's some wonder about how things changed so quickly, a look in the mirror and the question of what happened to the person staring back at you. Perhaps all of us, no matter our age, are looking over our shoulders lately wishing we could turn back the clocks at least to pre-COVID times.

The Church is very adept at looking backwards. Like, to the way we've always done things. Or to our "glory days" that seemed to vanish in "the wink of a young girl's eye." (Sorry, it was just too easy to use another Springsteen song quote.) To a time when the pews were full, and the local congregation was the center of a town's social activities. Or when we were growing rather than shrinking. To an era where everything was much simpler and straightforward. Where... well, you get the picture, and I think you understand what I'm talking about.

As good as it might feel to reminisce about the past, our job as Christians is to keep our eyes focused on the future. In his letter to the church at Philippi, the apostle Paul wrote:

"But this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13b-14)

I want to encourage you today to look forward to what lies ahead, and trust that while we can't know exactly what our future will look like, God will be there. Jesus reminded us of that before he ascended into heaven, saying to his disciples, *"And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20b)

Given our current circumstances there is a good deal of uncertainty about the future. But one thing is for sure. Whatever shape the future takes, God will be present with us. We can count on God's promise to bless and keep us. We can be confident that God's face will be shining upon us, and that God will be gracious to us and give us peace.

Pastor Chuck

Let us pray. Holy God, we confess that we spend too much time in the past. Uproot us and get our feet moving forward. In times such as these we need to be focusing on the future. Uplift us with the knowledge that you will be waiting for us, and empower us to move in the future with faith and hope. Amen