

# ***The Lakeview Lamp***

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” -Psalm 119:105*

**February 6, 2005**

*That Was MY Invitation*

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It had been another one of those kinds of weeks. You know, when everything seems to go wrong, the whole world seems to be against you, and you have no one who cares that you are hurting and needing a little lifting up. The boss seemed to be watching me, just waiting for me to make a mistake - and I did. Workers around me were snapping and grumbling, grabbing the best materials and opportunities. My bills all seemed to come due, and extra expenses on the old car took too much of my paycheck. Depression had set in, and I just couldn't get my chin off the floor. I just didn't think I could take anymore...

I was sitting there on Sunday morning wondering if life was worth living, if there was any valid reason to go on. Then I thought about religion. It seems that we always think about religion last; at least I did. I began to think about a couple of people at work who always seemed to have a smile, who were always considerate of others, who didn't jump into the “dog-eat-dog” fray, who always had a kind word to say when they

spoke. I also remembered that one had mentioned to me several times that he would like for me to attend worship and study the Bible with him. I hadn't had the time then, but now I remembered. They had said something about the church of Christ where they attended not far from my apartment. I decided to go. I dressed and made my way toward the church building that I had seen from time to time a few blocks away.

Worship had already begun, so I slipped onto a back pew, just to be in an atmosphere of spirituality to see if I could find something - anything - to pull this life back together. The words of the songs seemed written just for me. "Be with me, Lord, I cannot live without You...", "Bring Christ your broken life..." The man who led the prayer seemed tuned in to my problems and my thoughts as he asked the Lord for help for the congregation in ministering to the hurting in their community and for the hurting to come to an understanding of God's willingness to heal and help.

Then, the preacher seemed to be looking right at me as he spoke to my needs. He spoke of a Savior who loved me, who took the time to listen and help others during His lifetime as He taught them of a life that was better than anything they had known. He spoke of apostles and disciples who had spiritual help in bearing burdens greater than mine. Then, he spoke of an invitation offered by Jesus to everyone: "*Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest for your souls*" (**Matt 11:28-29**).

This was what I needed! He said that troubles would still come, but everyone in that building would help me carry the burdens, bear the toil, hold up my hands. He spoke of a new life, a new beginning, "born again" by faith and baptism (**Mark 16:15-16; John 3:3-5**). Surely, this was my opportunity to get a new perspective and a new hope. They all stood and began to sing a song to "invite" me to accept what had been presented out of the Bible. This was *my* invitation...

“I am coming to the cross; I am poor and weak and blind; I am counting all but dross: I shall full salvation find...” My thoughts were racing; my heart was pounding. This was *my* invitation. I started to move - But then I heard something! Young people across from me were playing. They were giggling, talking, rude, disrespectful... Didn't they realize what was going on? My thoughts were interrupted. At the end of the pew two adults were playing with a baby. One lady was picking at her fingernails. Several were just standing, looking around, not singing. Some were packing items into their purses. Two men looked at their watches. Were they not aware that the Lord's invitation was being considered???

One family exited out the back door as they began the next verse. “Long my heart has sighed for Thee; long has evil reigned within; now Thy message comes to me...” Now the young people were dropping scrap pieces of paper on which they had been scribbling onto the floor. One young lady just stood there chewing her gum.

I began to look around the auditorium. Some people *were* concentrating on the words of the song. “Here I give my all to Thee...” Two little boys pushed each other to the floor; the parents laughed. A father picked up his child and walked out into the lobby for a drink of water. What were they thinking? Certainly not about the invitation - *my* invitation. Did they care about my soul, my needs, my pain? They seemed so far away...

I pulled my thoughts back to *my* invitation. “Humbly at Thy cross I bow, seeking Thy salvation now.” The last note was dying away. Many were returning their books to the racks. I wanted to cry, “*Wait!!*” But it was over. Over! The moment was gone, the mood broken. This had been *my* invitation, but now it was past. I gathered up my needs, pain, loneliness, and exited the auditorium, back into the abyss of my empty life. As I walked out among those who had surrounded me in the auditorium, my mind kept repeating, “That was MY invitation...but...” I never went back there again!!!

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The command we have of “*teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*” (**Colossians 3:16**) applies to the invitation song. Are you inviting or discouraging?

“*God is my King from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.*” – **Psalm 74:12**

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"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"  
(Psalm 118:24).