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Who Owns This Place? (Elkhorn, WI)

C. William Pollard

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WHO OWNS THIS PLACE?

FAITH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL BANQUET
MONTE CARLO ROOM, ELKHORN, WISCONSIN
THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 AND 29, 1995

C. WILLIAM POLLARD, CHAIRMAN
THE SERVICEMASTER COMPANY
DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS

Judy and I are glad to be with you tonight. We are here because we believe in what you are doing. We are products of Christian education. All of our children attended Christian schools and Christian colleges, and our grandchildren are now attending Christian schools. We have been both a beneficiary and a contributor to the process. What you are about to hear at Faith Christian School is important. Some may even say it is an imperative.

I am assuming that most of you tonight are parents of existing students, that you are experiencing now the benefits of this ministry in your homes. But as we all know, the results of what is occurring go far beyond what we see today in the classroom, the athletic field, or in our families. We are, in fact, talking about influencing the lives of young people, young people who have the potential to be leaders of tomorrow. Yes, leaders for our country and our nation and leaders for the cause of Jesus Christ.

I am also assuming that we have in the room tonight some of those who had the original vision, the vision that involved the founding of Faith Christian School in 1981. Thank you for stepping out, for having an idea and having the will to implement that idea. You are now celebrating your 15th year because there were those faithful few in the beginning.

There are also here tonight those faithful faculty members who have committed of themselves and who too made sacrifices to invest their lives in others. Learning is really a lifelong experience; but without the role model and effectiveness of a teacher, where would

any of us be? And yes I said role model. It is in this special area that the Christian teacher can have a profound impact that goes beyond anything recorded in a textbook.

What I have said about your ministry I have also experienced in relating to your students and your graduates. Last year I assumed the role as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Wheaton College. Mindy Austin was president of the student council at Wheaton. It was the first year that we had a student representative sit with our Board of Trustees. It was a big change for us. It was something that frankly some of my colleagues questioned whether we should ever do. Mindy was a trail blazer. She not only served in that capacity with confidence and trust, but set at ease those who questioned whether it was the right thing to do. It was only one of the many things that Mindy did at Wheaton, but I am very thankful for the preparation she received here as part of her developing process. During the last two summers, I have had the chance to get to know Erin McKendrick in a very special way as she cared for my grandchildren. Her patience, love, and yes maturity certainly reflects the kind of home she has grown up in, but you also had an effect on how she has developed as a teenager and a young woman. Thank you for Mindy and Erin and the many more that they represent.

But how does a school like this survive and grow how will it survive and grow in the future? Only if those of us within the scope of its community pray, participate, and contribute to its success.

We live in exciting times. The events of life that swirl around us confirm that we are living in a world of accelerated change and choice. The changes in the politics and economies of what was the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and what is emerging in China have affected the lives of millions of people. Everywhere one looks there is more freedom. More freedom and certainly more choice and definitely more confusion. What is one to think as they view the current billboard advertising of Calvin Klein jeans? Are there any

restraints left in our society? How are we to handle all the issues of sexual liberties, drugs, violence, failures, or poverty that swirl all around us? Where are our islands of hope?

Confusion and pessimism permeate our society. In a restructured, reengineered world, many American workers are uncertain about their employment or opportunities of the future. The enormity of our government deficit means one thing for certain--the dollar bill in my hand today will be worth less, not more, in the future. Laws and regulations continue to multiply in complexity. We are bombarded on every side of news of variant human behavior patterns, some of which we are encouraged to accept although we have been taught since our youth that they are wrong. Others, by the sheer volume of publicity given them, seem to be more prevalent today than they were in the past. We view the tragedy of O. J. Simpson and his family on live television like it was a Monday night movie.

We live in a society where people search for moral pluralism and question whether there are any absolutes or guidelines in life. Some discuss our period of time not only in terms of the post-Christian era, but also in terms of postmodernism and deconstructionism where everything is relative, even the meaning of words. Hunter, the sociologist from the University of Virginia in his recent book on the conflicts in our society, calls it a time of culture wars, where the most fundamental ideas about who we are and how we are to order our lives individually and together are now at odds. His conclusion is that the nub of the disagreement can be traced to a matter of ultimate moral authority. How do we determine whether something is good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable? The division or gap in our society, he concludes, is growing. People living and working in the same community are, in fact, world apart.

To survive in such an environment, we need some anchors, some islands of hope, islands of hope like Faith Christian Academy. The onslaught of technology and

computerization means that the current generation of students have more information and data at their disposal than any other generation. More potential for good and yes more potential for evil. The advancement of technology continues to push and stretch our capability to make choices, even right choices, as things around us change at an accelerated pace.

In addition to this change and choice, there is an increasing diversity among those we work with, those we teach and educate. Diversity, I believe, is part of God's mix; but unless there is some unifying force, it can also be chaotic and divisive.

There is also economic uncertainty in our future. No longer can we look at our own economy as self-sustaining. In fact, we live in a global economy that is interdependent. It is not possible for you or me to buy an American car. Eighty percent of the steel has been imported. The robots that put it together were made in Italy. So let's not kid ourselves above "buying American." The market forces are at work, and the best and cheapest supplier will prevail, regardless of country of origin. Globalism and pluralism are realities.

But with all this change and choice and diversity and uncertainty, there is, I believe, a constant element, an essential ingredient for the future. It is simply our young people. Whether they be in second grade, ninth grade, twelfth grade, or college, they are people with youth and potential who want to learn, who are creative, who can identify opportunities, who want to serve, who need to be nurtured, encouraged, trained, developed, and motivated. They are young people who, frankly, with more information at their disposal will want more choice, will grow up faster, and will want greater participation and flexibility in their school, in their home, and in their workplace. As they grow, they will learn to accept and apply a value system, and their families and schooling will influence the development of this value system. They will begin to exercise judgments within a

framework of this value system. Judgments that will involve their capacity to love and to hate, to care and to hurt, to detract and to contribute. They need a hope, a reference point for who they are and what they want.

In one sense we are all prisoners of our hope. It is our hope that sustains us and our vision for what could be that inspires us.

But where is our hope? We use the term in many different ways. Some of us may be hoping for success in our business. Others may be hoping for a son or daughter who will successfully graduate from high school. Or we may be hoping that Wisconsin will win that football game on Saturday. Some may describe our hopes in terms of relationships. The hope of being accepted although I am different. The hope of being forgiven although I have made a mistake. The hope of being loved although I am unlovely at times. It can also be used in the context of feelings and understandings. The hope of feeling secure. The hope of feeling safe. The hope of knowing joy. Even the hope of knowing. However we use it, it always carries with it an expectation, an expectation of something more than will occur in the future.

Hope is a continuing theme in the Bible. We are reminded that Abraham had hope and believed and so became the father of many nations. For those of us who have committed our lives to Christ, our faith is described as a substance of things we hope for and the certainty of things we do not see. It is the hope of our redemption and the anticipation of more to come in life with our Lord and Savior that is at the heart of our Christian faith.

The opposite of hope is despair, hopelessness, depression, and a feeling of inadequacy. Despair implies the utter absence of hope to the point of giving up. There is much in the world around us that is in despair.

Freud wrote that life as we find it is too hard for us and brings too many pains, disappointments, and impossible tasks. It doesn't take long for a person to realize that life here on earth has an ending and that the hero of our personal story always dies.

But by now you may ask, what gives you the right to speak about hope and despair? You are not a minister, a psychologist, an educator, or a psychiatrist. Aren't you a business person who has spent most of his life in the marketplace making money? How can we learn from you on this subject? Simply put, my friend, my life has been filled with hope and some despair. The trappings of success, whether they be title, recognition, or wealth, do not mean lack of despair or the ultimate in hope. The answer for me keeps coming back to fixing my eyes upon Jesus, the perfecter of my faith. Who, for the joy set before Him endured the cross. Jesus, a person, tempted in all ways like me, yet God. Jesus, the servant who became like me so that I may know Him and in so doing He set an example of a servant who acted upon what He knew. The servant who took the towel and the wash basin and washed His disciples' feet saying, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth. No servant is greater than his master. Nor is a messenger greater than one who sent him. Once you know all these things, you will be blessed if you do them." In this one simple act of service, Christ confirmed for all of us that our hope is not in the abstract, nor is it simply in studying or knowing the truth. But it is in the reality of doing, of implementing our faith.

The doing side of the equation provides a reason for the active care and concern for others. Involvement with my fellow employees cannot be limited to a transaction of wages paid for work. Since each of them has been created in God's image and has a unique value and worth, I must take time to understand, to love, to serve them with a clear objective of having the work environment become a positive influence in the process of their development. In so doing I confirm my hope and my faith.

It must also affect my relationship with my family. It is His standard that I love and cherish my wife. I am not the superior. She is not the subordinate. It is not my checkbook, my house, my way. We have become a partnership that is based upon mutual love and trust. Judy and I are committed to each other and must continue to work at the joining together of our separate and distinct personalities. It requires a constant attention to the smoothing of the rough edges. There is always a hope for something more in our marriage.

The single most important product of this love and hope is the children He has given us. Our role has been to provide a home for their development, spiritual nurture, and admonition. Although each child is different and our role has changed with their maturity, we have a continuing responsibility for their development and for their acceptance and love for their choice of a life partner. And now also for the expanded love for our eight grandchildren. They are all God's children as well as our children. For me, there have been those times of doubt and despair, especially through the difficult teenage years and the sudden death of my father when I was a freshman in college. There followed the challenges of finishing college and law school and seeking to establish a home and support a family and finance an education. There were also those feelings of inadequacy and concerns about whether I measured up. There was a drive for success which allowed my law profession to become a jealous mistress, only to be stopped by God's intervention with a serious health condition. This was followed by a dramatic change in my life and the renewing and reordering of my service to my family, to Him, a career change that meant leaving the practice of law and coming to serve as an administrator and faculty member at Wheaton College. It was during this phase of my life that God began to teach me lessons of balance and spiritual maturity. In 1977 my path took another turn as my task at Wheaton was over and I joined the management team at ServiceMaster. We are a

company that seeks To Honor God In All We Do, To Help People Develop, To Pursue Excellence, and To Grow Profitably. Today we are more than twenty times larger than when I joined the company. We are employing and managing over 200,000 people with our services stretching from Karachi, Pakistan to Tokyo, Japan. We are a public company, and yes I live in one of those pressure cooker environments where revenue and profits must be reported quarter by quarter and where profits have been up every quarter for the past twenty-five years. The shareholders to whom I am responsible as a leader vote every day on my leadership. They have a choice to buy, hold, or sell. But the measure of my success as a leader is not in the value of our shares or the profit we produce. My hope comes from the opportunity I have to live and implement my faith and to serve the God I love. It has been an environment that for me is a reminder of my heritage, the heritage provided by my Christian parents and the heritage provided by a Christian education.

One of the greatest tensions in life is the tension between knowing and doing. There is no scarcity of feet to wash. Towels are always available. The only limitation involves the ability of each of us to be on our hands and knees, to compromise our pride, to be involved and have compassion for others, be willing to serve, to be owned by the Lord we love. To act upon what we know.

For you know that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men. It is the Lord Jesus that you are serving.

The world, not just this community at Williams Bay, Lake Geneva, Elkhorn, Walworth County, southeastern Wisconsin needs the graduates of Faith Christian School. Let us not be detracted or divided. This ministry needs our help and support. Remember, the Christ of our hope was in the beginning and was with God and was God, and He

became flesh and dwelt among us. He cared enough to be involved and to serve, so we should do likewise.

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